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Book Reviews: Technical Books Section



COMPREHENSIVE AND AUTHORITATIVE

Rating : 10
★★★★★★★★★★ (10/5)

Encyclopedia of Law and Society: American and Global Perspectives (3 volumes), edited by David S. Clark, Hard bound, 11.8" x 9.3" x 5.9".
Sage Publications, Inc, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320, USA, 1808 pages, bibliog., Subject index (75 pages I-1 till I-75).
ISBN-10: 076192387X. ISBN-13: 978-0761923879. Publication date: July 10, 2007.

Volume 1 - From "Aboriginal and indigenous peoples, Legal systems of" till "Eyewitness identification" - (lxx + 555 pages)

Volume 2 - From "Factor analysis" till "Organized Crime" - (xxvi + 556 till 1090 pages)

Volume 3 - From "Palestine" till "Zeisel, Hans" - (xxvi + 1091 till 1600 pages)

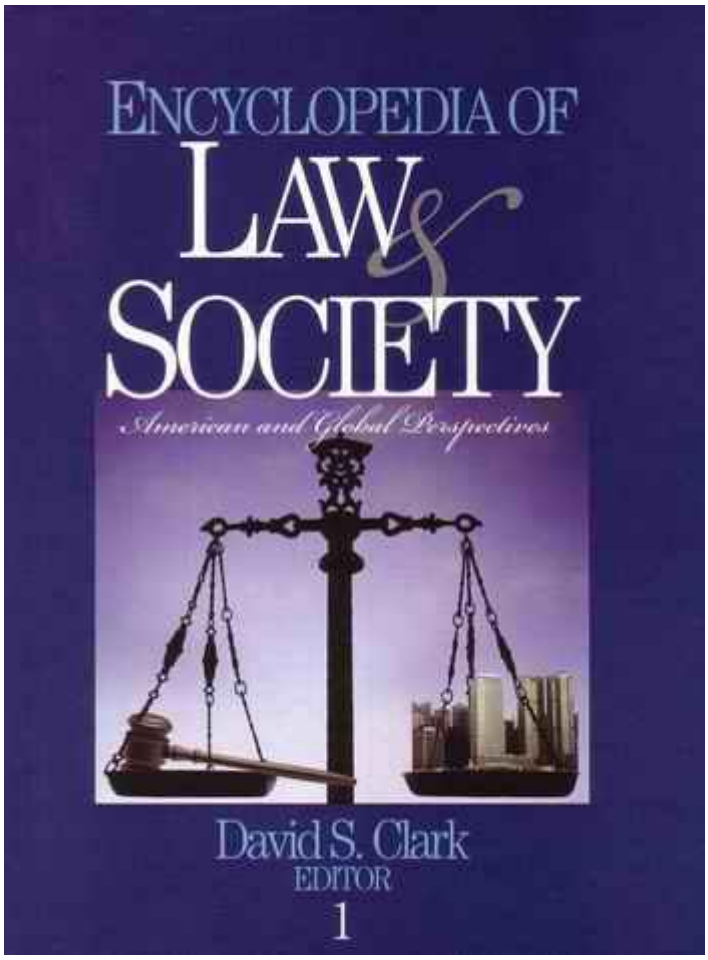
List of editors and editorial advisory board, list of entries, Reader's Guide, About the Editor, Contributors, Preface (by Lawrence M. Friedman), Introduction (by David S. Clark)

Price: $395.00

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Prof. David Scott Clark

David Clark (click picture to enlarge)



Clark, the editor of this encyclopedia is Maynard and Bertha Wilson Professor of Law at Willamette University. He first developed an interest in multidisciplinary approaches to legal issues during law school in the 1960s when the law and society discipline was emerging in its modern form.

This encyclopedia has been in preparation for almost 4 years now, during which Clark worked tirelessly co-ordinating with members of his editorial advisory board and more than 500 contributors. Reading and re-reading entries, coming from a varieties of professionals from different nations, editing, vetting and collating them so no inconsistencies remain was no mean task. Clark has been remarkably successful in this Herculean task.

Readers wishing to know more about him, may visit his official website by clicking here. He can be contacted by clicking here.

The relationship and dynamic interaction between law and society is complex and surprisingly has not been explored in any great depth till now. How do legal systems and laws in a society affect its dynamics, behavior and inner workings? And how does the society in turn work to change laws? These are very interesting questions which need exploration.

Let us illustrate with some examples. Many societies secretly condone and overlook female feticide, even infanticide, because only males are bread winners in the society. They are also warriors (in times of need), who would protect the society. What good are females for? They are good for nothing. They are merely child-bearers (no one seems to think, how without females, more offspring would come in the society, but that is not the issue here). Such societies would - quite understandably - resist the implementation of a law banning female feticide, or certainly if such a law were enacted, the law officers (belonging to the very same society) would be too reluctant to enforce that law. Something similar is happening in India right now. Dowry is an accepted social custom, despite a plethora of anti-dowry laws. Even today, I am surprised to attend marriages, where the giving or taking of dowry is done not surreptitiously but most openly. It is flouted before all and sundry in a most vulgar manner, as if it was something very great or honorable the concerned parties were doing. Who hasn't attended a marriage in India, where they haven't seen a garlanded car (bigger, the better!) waiting at the very front of the gate where marriage guests enter from? When I first saw that, many years ago, I asked someone, what that garlanded car was doing there, and I was proudly told, that it was part of the dowry being given to the groom! One can of course see a number of police officers nonchalantly moving about looking after the security arrangements, completely oblivious of the stark flouting of law right in front of their eyes!

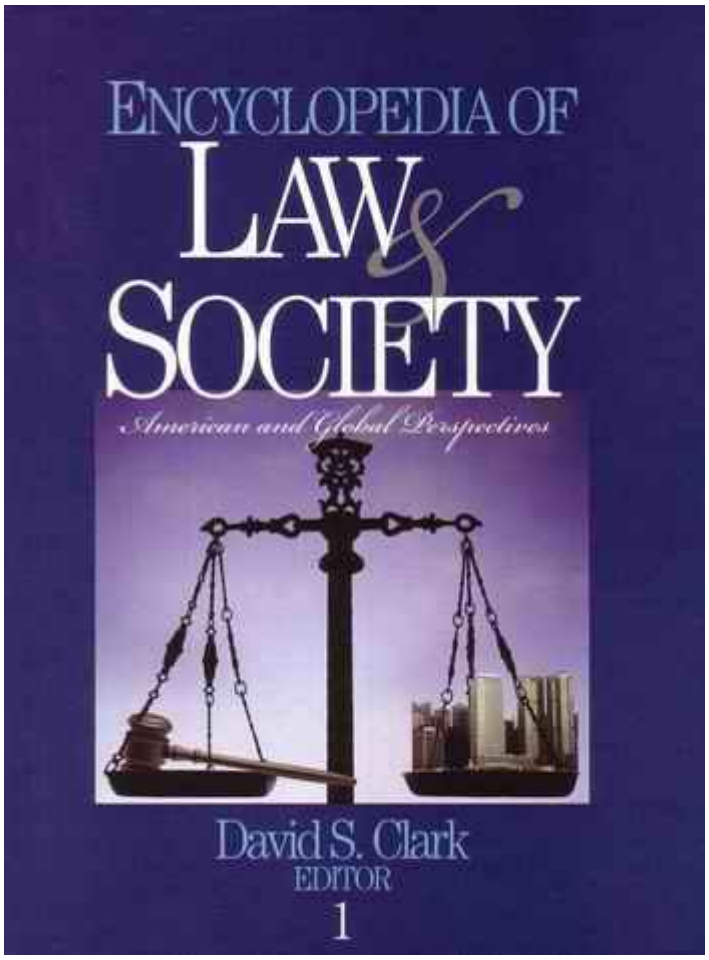
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...The encyclopedia is an absolute must for professionals from a multitude of disciplines, most notably from law, medicine, sociology, criminology, psychology, anthropology, psychiatry, forensic sciences, forensic medicine and police science...

Child marriage is a crime in India too, but it is a common sight for all of us to see group child marriages on TV, and influential people blessing the couples.

Or to come away from gender-related issues, no one in India seems to bother about the alarming levels of air pollution, although there are a plethora of laws against pollution. Has the society influenced in some way a lack of relevant laws or their ineffective implementation? Or to put it another way, why have the laws not been effective in changing our society?

Quick Facts



& Includes more than 700 biographical entries that are historical, comparative, topical, thematic, and methodological

& 62 Editorial advisors and more than 500 authors from more than 25 different nations, covering every single continent of the world.

& Presents the rich diversity of European, Latin American, Asian, African, and Australasian developments for the first time in one place to reveal the truly holistic, interdisciplinary virtues of law and society.

& Absolutely indespensable for students of law, sociology, political science, forensic science, criminology and many other related disciplines

& Written in non-technical language. Even a lay reader would enjoy this encyclopedia.

& Examines how and why legal systems grow and change, how and why they respond (or fail to respond) to their environment, how and why they impact the life of society, and how and why the life of society impacts in turn these legal systems.

Issues like these are often studied under a heading called "sociolegal studies". Sadly, books on such issues are either non-existent, or deal with the issues only very superficially. Till this encyclopedia landed on my desk for review a few days back, I had never seen such a sterling book dealing with this issue in such a comprehensive manner. This three volume encyclopedia, edited by David S. Clark, Maynard and Bertha Wilson Professor of Law at Willamette University, has 62 editorial advisory board members, more than 500 contributors from every single continent of the world, and

more than 700 entries. The entries are arranged in a dictionary like fashion and most entries are between 1000 words and 3500 words long, making for short crisp essays. Although you get to read the entries in an A-Z fashion, the editors, for the benefit of all of us, have provided a section where they group all entries in eleven subjects - biographies in law and society, law and society activities in regions and countries, law and society methodology and research, demography of law, sociology of law, anthropology of law, law and economics, law and political science, psychology and law, criminology and finally legal subjects.

During the last two days, I have been reading this encyclopedia, and every minute it is throwing new surprises at me. It is so full of brand new information on almost every topic that it deals with. Many subjects were entirely new to me. Entries such as behavioral economics, bioeconomics, Coase theorem, conflict pyramid, ethnomethodology, judicial politicization, labeling theory, lay judges, lustration, neuroscience and law, legal pluralism, private legal systems, thick description and utility maximization introduced me to entirely new concepts, which either I had never heard of, or only had a very vague idea about. The entries are so well written, that even an average educated person could understand them easily.

The encyclopedia is an absolute must for professionals from a multitude of disciplines, most notably from law, medicine, sociology, criminology, psychology, anthropology, psychiatry, forensic sciences, forensic medicine and police science. Although I am a professional from the medical side, I had absolutely no difficulty in understanding articles related to other disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology and psychology. The editor must be commended for this, for he has seen that the language remain accessible to all.

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