



## Article

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## Judge Rinder, ITV London (accessed on [learningonscreen.ac.uk](https://learningonscreen.ac.uk))

Robert Rinder has recently been appointed an MBE for his services to Holocaust education and awareness, become Legal Services Ambassador for Shelter, a charity that campaigns to end homelessness and poor housing conditions in the UK, and has continued his work with Buttle UK, to support children and young people facing financial hardship. He frequently uses his public profile to campaign on matters of social justice. This public profile has largely been driven by a television show that has aired on UK television since 2014, *Judge Rinder*.

In spring 2018 inspired by blogs by the University of Law (<https://www.law.ac.uk/resources/blog/judge-rinder-whats-so-wrong-with-a-bit-of-pantomime-law/>) and Legal Cheek (<https://www.legalcheek.com/2015/10/tv-barrister-judge-rinder-urges-serious-law-students-to-lighten-up-in-order-to-succeed/>), I took a group of my business law students to see *Judge Rinder* being filmed at Media City, Salford. The modules I teach are mainly delivered to accounting students, studying law as part of a professionally accredited accounting degree. They can be a challenging cohort, in terms of engagement; their primary focus is often on the numerical aspect of their degree. The day provided us with a fascinating insight into TV production, but, more importantly, allowed us to see the law we had been studying in the classroom, in action.

In practice, Rinder is a criminal defence barrister, specialising in complex financial crime, international corruption, and high-profile fraud cases. However, his show, *Judge Rinder*, covers civil cases including consumer issues, negligence claims and minor disputes between friends and family members. Rinder acts as an arbitrator and the production company reportedly pays out damages that are awarded, up to £5000. The show is known for Rinder's quick-witted humour, and, with his background in the National Youth Theatre, Rinder frequently brings a theatrical flair to the proceedings. Beyond the entertainment value, I think there are some real merits in using *Judge Rinder* as a learning resource for those studying law.

For core undergraduate modules like tort and contract, the show can be used to bring key legal principles to life. With the Covid-19 pandemic, and online learning likely to play an increasing part in legal education moving forward, it is important we look for alternative engaging and inclusive formats. Written scenario questions are at the core of many legal undergraduate modules. Episodes from *Judge Rinder* can provide an alternative medium for this type of learning. For example, a class could watch a case from the programme and discuss the legal principles at play. This would also work as an exercise at home, to reinforce classroom learning. Although many episodes cover very similar themes, a breadth of legal principles is covered across the seven series: from *volenti non fit injuria*, breach of duty and causation in negligence to types of terms and the purpose of damages in contract. Practical considerations which span numerous

areas of law are also highlighted in the programme, such as the importance of getting agreements confirmed in writing and the value of early intervention and communication to avoid escalating disputes.

The cases generally lack the legal complexity and jargon that the student may be used to at law school. *Judge Rinder* also exposes students to the individuals and their stories that sit behind cases. Stories can be a powerful tool in education, providing memorable learning moments. Moreover, in practice, these stories don't come neatly labelled with headings as to which area of law is relevant to them. Determining the appropriate question is a key skill that my students do not pick up readily from a textbook. The ability to explain the law in a way that is accessible to the non-lawyer is another key skill for students to develop during their degree. Rinder provides an excellent example on which students can begin to model their own approach.

Alternatively, to bring in a more technical learning experience, students could be tasked with writing a short summary of facts of the case, along with a supporting statement of the legal principles and case law that could be used to support Rinder's decision, or to establish grounds on which to challenge it.

My recent approach to teaching has been increasingly based on Sara Flowers' Ephebagogy (S. Flowers, "Ephebagogy – A White Paper for Educators and Researchers" (2016)). Flowers focuses on four principles in teaching – relevance, revelation, responsibility and relationships. Relevance is perhaps the most applicable in this context – teachers in higher education should aim to bring the real world into the classroom and provide opportunities for students to see their theoretical learning in action. Students can of course gain this sort of insight in other ways, by visiting the courtroom and through clinical legal experience. I incorporate such experiences into my module teaching. However, the pandemic and the challenges in arranging such experiences in the past year have made me reflect upon other accessible, less resource-intensive, formats. A law degree can be challenging for students at the best of times and in the current climate, a more light-hearted approach to learning, alongside the traditional textbook approach, will hopefully increase my student engagement into the next academic year.

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