

[Perry Mason and The Case of America's Favorite Lawyer](#)

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Call for Papers

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Humanities, Journalism and Media Studies, Law and Legal History, Literature, Popular Culture Studies

Perry Mason and The Case of America's Favorite Lawyer

Erle Stanley Gardner's Perry Mason has been a vibrant part of the cultural conversation for nearly 90 years. The titular trial lawyer with a penchant for detective work first debuted in the novel *The Case of the Velvet Claws* (1933), setting in motion a publishing streak that would eventually become the third best selling series of all time. Successful radio, film, and television adaptations soon followed, solidifying the character's presence within the cultural lexicon. Indeed, Perry Mason's crossover appeal demonstrates a cultural importance that transcends medium and generational divide. Throughout all of his iterations, Perry Mason has remained an aspirational figure so synonymous with the pursuit of justice that he was even referenced in Sonia Sotomayor's Supreme Court confirmation hearing testimony. And yet, there is relatively little critical scholarship that explores the Perry Mason phenomenon. This collection aims to address that oversight.

The extraordinary popularity of Perry Mason over such a significant span of time is virtually unrivaled and offers an unusual lens through which to consider the intersection of social norms and definitions of justice - and how both have evolved over time. While most of the popular culture renderings of the character are explicitly white and heteronormative, the recent HBO series (2020) complicates that history by centering race, class, and sexuality within its narrative. This opens up new areas of analysis not explored in the scant critical literature on prior Perry Mason iterations. Similarly, the ongoing propensity to position Perry Mason as a kind of shorthand denoting an *idea* of justice that is both radical and nostalgic suggests a fluidity in the character's meaning that makes it a useful lens by which to explore a variety of disciplines.

We invite submissions on any aspect of Perry Mason for an edited collection that seeks to give the famous attorney his critical due. Emerging and advanced scholars are invited to submit abstracts that explore Perry Mason canon in any of its forms. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Perry Mason as a rhetorical device
- Mason's place as literary and cinematic lawyer
- Adaptation - Perry Mason from novel to television
- Erle Stanley Gardner in the detective fiction genealogy, especially the hardboiled tradition of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Chester Himes
- Depictions of gender, race, and sexuality in the CBS series vs. the HBO series
- Storytelling and narrative structure
- Perry Mason in Los Angeles
- Representations of law and order as antagonist
- Historical representations of crime, guilt, and innocence
- Engagement with literary and film noir
- Gender politics and Della Street
- LGBTQIA+ iconography

Please submit a 300 word abstract and short biography to Elizabeth Erwin (ele210@lehigh.edu) and Dawn Keetley (dek7@lehigh.edu) by January 8, 2023. We anticipate a tentative due date of May 7, 2023, for full essays. We are more than happy to respond to any and all queries.

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