
LAW ACADEMICS NOVEL APPROACH TO PRESENTING LEGAL RESEARCH



Ms Priya Singh with her Facebook T-shirt.

School of Law academics from the Pietermaritzburg campus have decided that teaching and learning is not only for the students, but is also a good way to test their teaching and learning skills on each other.

Through a series of innovative seminars, lecturers have “taught” their colleagues the latest developments in the area of law that they were researching, and thereby honed their own teaching skills.

The seminars are used as a platform for academics to test-run a research paper or dissertation they are working on and get valuable input on how they can improve upon it. To make the feature more interesting, the presenter is requested to give a brief synopsis of their topic using a 'tongue-in-cheek' slogan on a t-shirt, and a cake. These two props are meant to illustrate their presentations in a comical fashion, while summarising the essence of the research. The presentations ranged in subject from adultery and poetry.

Academics who have so far presented their topics in this innovative fashion include Professor Shannon Hoctor, Ms Suhayfa Bhamjee, Professor Marita Carnelley, Ms Priya Singh and Mr Khulekani Khumalo.

In his presentation, Hoctor disclosed that law and poetry, despite being seemingly unrelated, do in fact share important elements. They exert mutual influence on each other because they use language as their working medium; they are products of human cleverness, inventiveness, originality and imagination. Law and poetry both reflect the culture and time they are situated in and help constitute the further evolution of that culture.

Bhamjee delivered a presentation on the subject of "Death and Dying in a Constitutional Democracy- Assisted Dying" which considers legal and ethical arguments in relation to euthanasia.

Bhamjee's presentation titled: "Give me Death or Give me Tea" looked at what the global legislative trends are that afford legal recognition of an individual's right to choose the time and manner of their passing in relation to the Stransham-Ford court case.

Carnelley's presentation titled: "Adultery is dead. Long Live Adultery" looked at how - although the third party adultery claim is now history, except possibly in a customary law context - it does not mean that adultery as a phenomenon will decrease or that it is necessarily morally acceptable.

'I found the seminar to be a good starting point for improving one's presentation skills, said Carnelley.

'It was an opportunity to present before different experts in their respective fields. The discussion that followed thereafter was very informative and it provided a different perspective that the presenter probably had not thought about. From my experience, I can say that I walked out of the seminar with fresh ideas for at least two publications,' she said.

'Getting a t-shirt and thinking about an appropriate cake to represent adultery (knife through the heart), made me think,' she added. 'Supportive colleagues who listened with a critical ear and made interesting comments and suggestions made this a morale-building exercise. Suhayfa Bhamjee and Ann Strode should be commended for their enthusiasm and commitment. They managed to get the boredom out of academic teaching and the dullness out of the boring old us,' she concluded.

Khumalo's presentation titled: "Violent Protests – some interesting developments" looked at the nature of the protests organised under the auspices of the *#FeesMustFall* campaign and posed the question whether the said protests were violent or forceful.

'The distinction between these concepts is important because in order for the prosecution to charge the protesters with public violence, it must be proven that the protest was violent, and not merely forceful. The presentation also explored the issue of the appropriate crime with which violent protesters may be charged,' said Khumalo. The School will host three more presentations before the end of the year.

Thandiwe Jumo