



The People's Court

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

What does “the rule of law” mean?

Should anyone be above the law?

- How do people try to ensure the fairness of the legal system in the United States? How do you think your life would be different if you lived in China?
- What are the differences between the Chinese and the American legal systems? How important are the rights of the individual in China today? Do you think a Communist government can protect the rights of the individual?
- What is mediation? What are some advantages it might have over a traditional court hearing? What does it mean to “save face”?
- While the Chinese judicial system is still controlled by the Chinese Communist Party, how did *The People's Court* demonstrate that the changes in the Chinese judiciary can contribute to the long term democratization process in China? Why is it in the Chinese Communist Party's interest to reform the Chinese judicial system? What can go wrong with these changes for the CCP?
- Why do you think political corruption exists in China? Do you think the new legal system will help to stop it?
- The narrator states that most court hearings deal with labor disputes, road accidents, divorce and migrant laborers. Why do you think this is the case? Why is there so much focus on labor issues? What role does wealth play in the justice system?
- Our system is significantly influenced by procedural law — that is, a judge will review how other judges have adjudicated similar cases. With very little case law at its disposal, currently, how is China developing its legal system? What areas appear similar to or different from ours?
- In many advanced nations, including the United States, the judicial branch is autonomous. In China's political system the Communist Party is still in charge of the law. To what degree do you think that the law can be impartial and just without political autonomy? Can any judicial system profess to follow the rule of law when its judges and lawyers are vetted by an organ of a one-party state?

ACTIVITIES

Research and report on the following:

- Are jury trials important? Why? What are your concerns with a panel of judges rather than a jury?
- Our Supreme Court is a panel of judges — how is this different from a panel of judges in China? Explain.