

I Agreed to Wear the Badge, Not the Gun:
(Re)Viewing Ethics of Policing through Stories of the American West

Presented at the Western Political Science Association 2016 Annual Meeting
Who Will Watch the Watchers? Panel
San Diego, 26 March 2016

Tim Delaune
Assistant Professor of Political Science
SUNY Cortland

Introduction

In a fantasy sequence styled after the American West, secret agent Number Six, aka “The Prisoner,” is buffaloeed by threats against the life and safety of a vulnerable townswoman into becoming the sheriff for the Town of Harmony (presumably so that the entities holding him prisoner can probe his behavior to learn why he resigned from his position as a British spy). He agrees to take on that role (to wear the badge) but not to do so by violent force (but not the gun). Ultimately, when the woman is killed, he removes the badge, takes up his gun, and exacts revenge.¹

In the introductory episode of the HBO series *Deadwood*, we first meet soon-to-be Deadwood sheriff Seth Bullock as he is performing his final duty as Marshal of the Montana territory, fending off a mob in order that a horse thief receive a legal hanging rather than the fruits of mob justice.² Though he has tired of sherifing, and is headed to Deadwood to open a hardware store with his friend Sol Star, he ultimately finds himself enmeshed in political situation of his new town, and ultimately consents to serve as sheriff when it is clear that no one else has the requisite skills to do so competently.³

In the novel *Warlock*, two men, a Marshal hired by a citizens’ committee of the as-yet unincorporated town to keep the peace, and a Deputy who was once affiliated with the very cowboys who have routinely disturbed the peace,⁴ struggle with the ethical commitments their roles entail, endeavoring to serve the community while effectively having to take the law into their own hands. As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that only one of these two – the Marshal or the

¹ *The Prisoner*, season 1, Episode 14, “Living in Harmony,” first broadcast 29 December 1967 by BBC, directed by David Tomblin and written by David Tomblin and Ian L. Rakoff.

² *Deadwood*, Season 1, Episode 1, “Deadwood,” first broadcast 21 March 2004 by HBO, directed by Walter Hill and written by David Milch.

³ See generally *Deadwood*, first broadcast 21 March 2004 through 27 August 2006 by HBO, produced by David Milch, Gregg Feinburg, and Mark Tinker.

⁴ Though neither character is thus, by definition, a sheriff, both occupy sherifing roles, in the sense that they act more or less alone, exercising discretion on behalf of the town, to enforce the law (or something like it).

Deputy – can effectively serve as peacekeeper in the town.⁵

Beyond these three, there are numerous other examples in film and fiction, not yet addressed in this preliminary research, in film and fiction, of sheriffs who wrestle with the ethics of the difficult position to which they are called, both inwardly, and by the communities in which they live. These works' emphasis on the struggles of law enforcers to keep the peace ethically, in harmony as much as possible with both the law and the needs of the community, form a significant part of American cultural knowledge. Westerns depicting sheriffs as complicated three-dimensional characters striving to do right in murky ethical territory are in many ways central to America's legal and political self-understanding. Yet their messages seem not to have borne much on the world of contemporary policing, as has become all too readily apparent in the last few years.⁶ This essay begins an inquiry into why this might be so, and in particular what insights, if any, our stories about sheriffs might bring to the choices ordinary police officers make – both to become officers, and in their police work.

Law Enforcement as a Calling

In his vocation lectures, Max Weber famously posits work activities to be the result of a “calling” – a deeply felt commitment to a life activity on the part of the individual who engages with her profession.⁷ According to Weber, “nothing has any value for a human being as a human being

⁵ See generally Oakley Hall, *Warlock*. (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2006). The novel is richer and more nuanced by a good deal than the 1959 Henry Fonda/Anthony Quinn film based upon it.

⁶ See, for example, Graham Campbell, “Why Cops Like Me Are Quiet,” *Buzzfeed*, 6 May 2015, available via: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/dreamworks/why-cops-like-me-stay-quiet-about-police-brutality#.xlA1XOGw> (last accessed 19 March 2016); *The Economist*, “Wanted: Cops with People Skills,” 25 April 2015, available via: <http://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21649507-when-law-enforcement-just-about-force-people-are-killed-wanted-cops-people-skills> (last accessed 19 March 2016).

⁷ Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” in *The Vocation Lectures*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, 1-31. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), 1 & n. 1.

unless he can pursue it with passion.”⁸ This does not, of course, mean that people only ever pursue careers or other work activity about which they are passionate. Many view their work activities as drudgery, and this is Weber’s point: what work one does out of motivations that exclude passion – the careers we pursue that are not our callings – is, in his view, valueless to us as humans.

In the three examples of sheriff fiction I have noted above, as (undoubtedly) in many other similar works, one typically sees two types of sheriff portrayed. The first, usually represented only briefly and by way of contrast to the work’s protagonist, is a more or less incompetent sheriff. Such an individual is often disinterested in the work, unprepared for the job, and in Weberian terms, simply not called to be a sheriff. He is usually replaced by a protagonist, who (as with Number Six in “Living in Harmony,” with Seth Bullock in *Deadwood*, and with both Marshal Clay Blaisedell and Deputy Johnny “Bud” Gannon in *Warlock*) though at times deeply ambivalent about his work, seems inescapably enmeshed in it. Number Six and Bullock both seek to leave off sheriffing, only to be drawn back into it in one form or another. Blaisedell is increasingly disgusted with his own role in killing outlaws (who might not always be in the wrong), but can’t seem to quit his calling until the point at which he throws down his guns and flees town. Gannon is at first uncertain about whether he wants to or can hold the middle ground between his outlaw former associates and his newly adopted town, but ultimately declares in a kind of Weberian moment to his lover Kate Dollar his unshakeable commitment to both the town and his role as Deputy in it.⁹

In short, sheriffs – at least the competent ones – are portrayed as called to their vocation.

And while this (as I will discuss below) involves a commitment to ethical complexity and real struggle, both internal and external, the fictional (and not so fictional – Bullock was in historical fact

⁸ Ibid. 8 (emphasis deleted).

⁹ Hall, *Warlock*, 395-96. Cf. Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” in *The Vocation Lectures*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, 32-94. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), 92 (“I find it immeasurably moving when a *mature* human being – whether young or old in actual years is immaterial – who feels the responsibility he bears for the consequences of his own actions with his entire soul and who acts in harmony with an ethics of responsibility reaches the point where he says, ‘Here I stand, I can do no other.’”).

the sheriff of Deadwood) sheriffs in American Westerns not only acknowledge the challenges this commitment entails, but accept them as part of their vocation. Not so, it seems, with many police officers in American cities today. As *The Economist* notes, contemporary American policing involves a good deal more social work than crime-fighting drama: an unnamed officer is quoted thus: “The public want us to come up and deal with a neighbour who is mowing their lawn at 3 am. They want us to deal with their disruptive child. They want us to deal with the crazy person who is walking down the street shouting.”¹⁰ Whether this is, as *The Economist* speculates, a new development coterminous with a decline in violent crime in America beginning in the 1990s, or has, instead, always been part of day-to-day police work is debatable.¹¹ But at least one firsthand account notes that officers, and usually the youngest and least capable among them, are increasingly expected to address the myriad effects of poverty, addiction, and mental illness as much as if not more than serious criminal activity.¹²

One aim of this essay, then, is to probe whether contemporary policing can ever be a calling. If it can be, and if it can be portrayed as such, we might as a society stand a chance of recruiting officers not because they wish to emulate family members, seek ample retirement benefits, or worst, crave power over their fellow citizens,¹³ but because they are drawn to the very difficulties that policing entails, and believe that they are best suited to meet them. To get at this question, I turn next to portrayals of sheriffing, focusing primarily on the Oakley Hall novel *Warlock*, to tease out some of the factors that make that form of law enforcement, specifically in the context of the Wild West, a complex ethical matter.

¹⁰ *The Economist*, “Wanted.”

¹¹ See generally Lawrence M. Friedman, *Law in America: A Short History*. (New York: Modern Library, 2002).

¹² Campbell, “Cops Like Me.”

¹³ As one who teaches college students majoring in criminology, among other topics, I have encountered many who have indicated that they desire to become police officers for these, among other reasons.

Complexities of Ethical Sherifing

Warlock's situation is this: it is an unincorporated mining town, legally suborned to but largely ignored by Bright's City, which is under the military rule of one General Peach, and under the legal supervision of the largely functionary Sheriff Keller. Warlock is a typical wild west town, inhabited and frequented by miners, tradesmen, gamblers, saloonkeepers, whores, and unruly cowboys from the nearby hamlet of San Pablo. These cowboys in particular have caused Warlock no end of trouble; at whim, the San Pablo gang will come into town to raise a ruckus, which often ends in the death of one or more townspeople. Seeking to secure the peace and stability of the town (for commerce and growth, of course) Warlock's leading citizens form a committee and hire a Marshal, crack gunslinger Clay Blaisedell, known for his having cleaned up one or more other frontier towns. A Marshal is deemed necessary in large part because although Sheriff Keller has appointed a Deputy for Warlock, it has been difficult to get anyone to fill that position who will not, when faced with the San Pablo gang, simply run. Warlock's long-term hope is to be granted independent status by General Peach so that it in turn can acquire the monopoly over the legitimate use of violence – in the form of its very own sheriff – that for Weber defines the state.¹⁴

As it turns out, Blaisedell is extremely effective at keeping the San Pablo cowboys at bay. In a series of showdowns, he fends them off (with the help of his utterly unethical gambler friend Tom Morgan), eventually killing several of them, including Billy Gannon, Bud Gannon's younger brother. But each killing weighs increasingly heavily on Blaisedell, and by the novel's end he has resigned and taken up again his commission, and appears before the story's climax to be remaining in town largely for the love of a woman he has met there. Moreover, Blaisedell's authority – he is tasked with keeping the peace generally in cooperation with the Deputy, and particularly with enforcing “white

¹⁴ Compare Hall, *Warlock*, 54 with Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” 33. Warlock's hopes are never realized. Toward the end of the novel, when General Peach and his army move against striking miners at the mine owner's behest, the “miners' angel,” Miss Jessie, reminds him that “[w]e have no government here! . . . Each of us has had to learn to defend his own house!” Hall, *Warlock*, 420.

affidavits” posting unwanted and violent persons such as members of the San Pablo gang out of town – is constantly in question. He has no real legal authority deriving from General Peach or Sheriff Keller. His only legitimacy derives from the aforementioned citizens’ committee, which is an unelected ad hoc group pursuing both independence for Warlock and some means of keeping the peace in town. Throughout the novel, various members of the Warlock community, officials in Bright’s City, and of course the San Pablo cowboys openly question and even defy Blaisedell’s authority. And the Marshal must additionally find ways of working with whomever is Warlock’s Deputy at the time (ultimately Bud Gannon).

Further complicating Blaisedell’s role is his choice of friends. Tom Morgan, while an accomplished marksman who contributes many times to Blaisedell’s own safety when he is otherwise outgunned or outmaneuvered, is essentially a slick thug. He engages in serious violence against his rival saloonkeeper Taliaferro, murders Kate Dollar’s companion Pat Cletus (who has come with her to take revenge on Blaisedell for having shot his brother, Kate’s would-be husband), and generally makes more trouble for the town than even the San Pablo boys. He cannot bring himself to comprehend Blaisedell’s ambivalence and even guilt regarding various men he has shot in gunfights, and in several instances outright manipulates his friend. Blaisedell almost until the very end defends and protects his friend, even where this conflicts with his duties as Marshal.

The other central sheriff-like character is Johnny “Bud” Gannon, who left the San Pablo gang after a particularly murderous ambush against a group of Mexicans who sought vengeance on the cowboys after they rustled the Mexicans’ cattle, traveled to a nearby town to become a telegrapher, lost his job there, and wound up in Warlock. Then-Deputy Carl Schroeder taps Gannon to be his second (this position having been provided for by Sheriff Keller after much pleading by the leading citizens of Warlock), despite serious misgivings on the part of various townsmen who still associated Gannon with his brother’s cowboy gang. Apart from his association

with the San Pablo cowboys, there appear to be fewer reasons to doubt his loyalty to Warlock. But Gannon lacks Blaisedell's fame and gunfighting skill, and is a relatively plain man where Blaisedell is charismatic. Gannon's chief virtue, indeed, seems to be that he doesn't work to please anyone, but instead remains steadfastly committed to his own idea of ethical sheriffing. It is to his and to Blaisedell's ethical quandaries (and their solutions to them) that I now turn.

In *Warlock*, it is often the character of the usually drunk Judge Holloway – like Blaisedell, not a judge in any legal sense, but “on acceptance,” in that the town tacitly agrees to him sitting in judgment over such crimes as are brought before him with the understanding that they could also be brought before a real court of law in Bright's City – who expresses the proper role of a sheriff-like figure in the community, and who passes cold judgment on those who deviate from it. Among his pronouncements are the claim that “[a]ny man . . . who has got himself set over others and don't have any responsibility to something bigger than him is a son of a bitch,”¹⁵ or, in another passage, that “[a]ny man that is set over other men somehow has to be responsible to something. Has to be *accountable*.”¹⁶ In both iterations, these statements are aimed at Blaisedell. In the first, he is contesting the right of the Citizens' Committee (on which he serves) to hire a Marshal not accountable to law. In the second, he is confronting Blaisedell with the accusation that to the extent that his subordination to the Committee alone is something less than subordination to law, he is an illegitimate enforcer.

When, in turn, Blaisedell begins enforcing the Committee's white affidavits, forbidding named San Pablo cowboys (and others) from entering Warlock, the judge hectors him for issuing “banishment-or-death ukase[s]” that are “illegal and outlaw and pure murder,” emphasizing to

¹⁵ Hall, *Warlock*, 20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 95.

Marshal that “[t]here is no law behind you!”¹⁷ Yet the judge, though committed to rule of law, is not a complete stickler for its application in all instances. When Deputy Gannon wants to move against a miner who has shot the mine operator MacDonald, Holloway advises him to steer clear, noting that there are times and places for exercising authority, and times and places for holding it in abeyance (or in his parlance “[i]t is a time for fraud and not for bullheadedness”).¹⁸ The judge’s advice is not always well taken. Various townspeople he harangues take serious issue with him, even sometimes resorting to physical violence against the man (who as it happens lost a leg fighting for the Union in the War). In one particularly telling example, then-Deputy Carl Schroeder reminds Holloway that while the law is indeed the law, “there isn’t enough of it to go around out here. So when we get a good man [Blaisedell] protecting this town from hell with its door open I am not going to see him choused and badgered and false-sworn and yawped at fit to puke by a one-legged old son of a bitch like you!”¹⁹

Holloway’s lectures do seem to move Blaisedell somewhat over the arc of the story. When he first arrives in Warlock and faces down the San Pablo cowboys in a showdown at Tom Morgan’s Glass Slipper, he addresses the leader of the gang, Abe McQuown, thus:

Since there is no law for this town I will have to keep the peace as best I can. And as fair as I can. But there is two things I am going to lay down right now and back up all the way. The first one is this. . . . Any man that starts a scrape in a place wehre there is others around to get hurt by it, I will kill him unless he kills me first.

. . .

Number two is what the Citizens’ Committee has agreed to. . . . If a man makes trouble, or looks to make it and go on making it, he is going to see himself posted out of town. That is what they call some places a white affidavit. It is backed by me. Any man that comes in here when he has got himself posted comes in against me.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid. 127.

¹⁸ Ibid. 358.

¹⁹ Ibid. 151.

²⁰ Ibid. 35-36.

In issuing these edicts, Marshal Blaisedell indeed acts outside the law (though with the support of the unelected Citizens' Committee, and for a time the consensus of the community). Moreover, he speaks as lawgiver, the Committee not having ever empowered him to promulgate the first of the two rules. In this way, he acts as a kind of Machiavellian founder: alone.²¹

But in spite of the fears of Holloway and a few others in town that Blaisedell will run roughshod over the populace, when the Marshall learns that Bud Gannon's younger brother, whom he had posted out of town for participating in a stagecoach robbery (the very one in which Morgan surreptitiously killed Cletus), and subsequently shot for entering Warlock contrary to the posting, had in fact not been present at the robbery, he takes it upon himself to ride to Bright's City to turn himself in and stand trial for murder (for which he is ultimately acquitted). Blaisedell thus shows that he does not see himself as above the law (and indeed, shows Morgan how heavily his various killings in the name of the law or its simulacra have begun to weigh on him).²² This begins to worry the Citizens' Committee, however, whose members understand that they are as much on trial by implication as is their Marshal.²³ Much later in a conversation with Deputy Gannon, Blaisedell appears to have fully come around to something like Judge Holloway's point of view, arguing against Morgan (who thinks rules are ridiculous when it comes to killing someone – you just kill him) in absentia: “[H]e doesn't understand, It is not that at all, for you don't want to kill a man. It is only the rules that matter. It is holding strict to the rules that counts.”²⁴ In the end, after Morgan more or less forces Blaisedell to kill him, Blaisedell himself goes on a rampage, burning down Morgan's rival Taliaferro's saloon, and ultimately fleeing town in disgrace when Gannon prepares to

²¹ See Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius*, trans. Allan Gilbert, in *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others*, vol. I, 175-529. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989), 218.

²² Hall, *Warlock*, 146.

²³ *Ibid.* 153.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 344.

draw on him.

Gannon too evolves as he grows into his role as second, and upon Carl Schroeder's death, first deputy. From the beginning he understands that if he is to enforce the law in Warlock, he must move against his own brother should he violate that law. In a conversation with Holloway, he is asked whether he, as the law's representative, will arrest his own brother should he break the law, and replies that he will. He is then asked whether he leans toward Blaisedell over his brother and former companions, but states that he doesn't take it to be his place to lean either way, as an officer of the law.²⁵ One of the story's narrators, the merchant Henry Holmes Goodpasture, notes sympathetically that Gannon, by revealing to Blaisedell his late-acquired knowledge that his brother Billy had not participated in the stagecoach robbery, has made himself "condemned by some for having attempted to shield a villain of a brother, by others for not having attempted to avenge an heroic one."²⁶ His consistent commitment to siding with no man but only with the law makes him few friends, at least at first.

Later, after Deputy Gannon rides out to San Pablo to try to convince Abe McQuown and the gang not to come into town to back with force MacDonald against the miners, he realizes he has failed, and notes that "where the law was merely a man there had to be some respect for that man or the law did not exist."²⁷ That is, if the law has no independent significance, if left in the hands of any man it would be doomed to failure absent respect (which is fleeting). Finally, as the tale draws to a close with Gannon facing down Blaisedell after his rampage, Gannon thinks to himself again about his role as the (then) only legitimate source of law in the town. He recognizes that "all he served [] was embodied in the vast weight pinned to his vest [his deputy's star], and

²⁵ Ibid. 93.

²⁶ Ibid. 157.

²⁷ Ibid. 301.

knew . . . that he spoke not for himself nor even a strict and disinterested code, but for all of [Warlock].”²⁸ Before committing to face Blaisedell down, he realizes that he has no real decisions to make, only a responsibility, and finds a tremendous freedom in this realization.²⁹ In these moments, we see Holloway, Schroeder, Blaisedell and Gannon working through the ethics of law enforcement in a sheriffling mode. I now turn to analyzing these insights through the political thought of Max Weber.

Weber’s Political Concepts and the Distinction between Policing and Sheriffling

In these various examples from *Warlock* of sheriffling and the ethical problems it raises, one can see a good deal of Max Weber’s thought as revealed in “Politics as a Vocation.” Taking matters somewhat out of order, consider that Weber posits three sources of political legitimacy: custom, charisma, and law.³⁰ Custom plays little or no role in *Warlock*, as it is a frontier town, and indeed is inventing its own customs, in particular by bringing in a Marshal beholden only to an unelected committee of notables. But the sheriffs in this Western, and indeed in at least *Deadwood* and “Living in Harmony,” do invoke or employ *both* charisma and law to support their legitimacy. Obviously Blaisedell, with his lion’s mane of blond hair, his gold-plated sixshooters, and his reputation as a gunslinger, leans more heavily on charisma, whereas Gannon, who comes to town already suspect, must rely more on his embrace of the law. But not exclusively: Blaisedell, by turning himself in for trial in Bright’s City, sacrifices some charisma for greater legal legitimacy. Gannon, by steadfastly abiding by law (even when it might tarnish his reputation in the short term to do so, or lead to the death of his own brother), generates a kind of charisma – he becomes known as someone who can be counted upon to follow and enforce the law scrupulously.

²⁸ Ibid. 465.

²⁹ Ibid. 462.

³⁰ Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” 34.

A further insight from Weber that bears on *Warlock* and other depictions of sheriffing in the American West is that the work of a sheriff appears to involve the resolution of a tension between what he calls the ethic of responsibility and what he labels the ethic of conviction.³¹ The latter, which Weber also refers to as an absolutist ethic, cares not for consequences, but instead focuses on which actions are in and of themselves ethical, and which are not. The former, in which a political actor recognizes that she must achieve particular results for her constituency and her polity, *by any means necessary*, is closer in my view to the role of the sheriff. What we see that is ethically enlightening in depictions of sheriffs, then, is their struggle to embrace the ethic of responsibility. The representative dialogues above among Holloway, Schroeder, Blaisedell, and Gannon, and their internal monologues as well, illustrate that all of them have ultimately committed to that ethic, even if they may have in some way begun with an ethic of conviction. They show willingness, even, to move outside the law's methodological strictures, if this is what is necessary to achieve the law's results. Indeed, they do exactly what Weber holds the leader of a state must do: they "use force to resist evil, for otherwise [they] will be *responsible* for its running amok."³² This insight is particularly valuable for my project, as it is at the crux of what good policing is or should be, provided that the use of force is still cabined by some degree of ethic of conviction. Weber appears to strictly separate the two, but in *Warlock*, *Deadwood*, "Living in Harmony," and I strongly suspect most Westerns that address sheriffs' work, they are in mutually constitutive tension, informing one another, and ensuring in the best of cases (and the most mythic) an ethical practice.

But perhaps the most significant insight from Weber into how sheriffing compares to policing is that on Weber's terms sheriffing may be a fully political vocation, where policing may not

³¹ Ibid. 83.

³² Ibid. 82.

be. For Weber, politics is centrally “every kind of independent *leadership* activity.”³³ He gives such examples of political activity as the political actions of a striking trade union, the politics of a management association’s board, or even a spouse seeking to influence his or her spouse. As we have already seen, politics also for Weber involves a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence, at least when it is the politics of a state.³⁴ Weber goes on to distinguish between on the one hand leaders of various kinds of organizations, who are political given the definition above, and who are called to a political vocation (and so, as he later explains, must participate in ethical choices that flow from their calling), and on the other hand administrative personnel who are bound to obedience to the politicians who rule.³⁵ Extended to the situation in *Warlock*, for example, Deputy Gannon, even though nominally the deputy to the absent and neglectful Sheriff Keller, is a politician, because he exercises independent leadership. His possemen are, however, mere administrative personnel. Blaisedell has independent leadership authority, as witness his charge to McQuown’s gang at the Glass Slipper showdown, issued without any guidance or permission from the Citizens’ Committee that hired him.

Sheriffs in the wild west are politicians. They make decisions for the community, are judged in their legitimacy, and dole out material or prestige rewards of the kind Weber describes.³⁶ But it would seem that contemporary police officers are administrative personnel, at least in the context of their formal powers. Certainly the police chief – especially if independent of the authority of a mayor – might be a Weberian politician. And in any moment in which one officer is able to exercise leadership influence over others, he may be a politician as well. But in the strict context of the act of policing, police are not imbued with the same ethical responsibility in Weber’s terms. They may

³³ Ibid. 32.

³⁴ Ibid. 33.

³⁵ Ibid. 35-36. Here Weber ceases giving examples of nonstate politics, but his introductory definitions make clear that the same insights can be applied at various substate levels.

³⁶ Ibid.

make independent choices, but they are not legitimately authorized to. And indeed, this may be the most significant insight from Weber that this paper has to offer: that the perceived illegitimacy of numerous police actions in recent years derives precisely from the fact that these actions, whether tolerated or even encouraged by superior officers, whether prosecuted or shielded by prosecutors or unions, are, because taken by those possessed of no independent leadership authority, *necessarily* illegitimate.

Tentative Conclusions and Next Steps

So it seems that, at least as read through Weber, policing and sheriffing may be incommensurable, in particular along the lines by which sheriffs are portrayed in the American Western genre. And yet that conclusion must remain tentative, for there are many more Westerns to review, and a spate of police dramas too. Some of the latter, in particular, may help shed light on whether and to what degree police officers can be viewed as independent leadership activity. If not at all, then the source of the problem with policing may be the form of modern American policing itself. If policing does really involve some independent leadership, then it is those qualities that need greater emphasis in academies, in culture, and in recruiting.

The question I began with – whether lessons can be learned from Westerns’ depictions of sheriffs that might be extended to stories about policing that might in turn spur conscientious individuals to take that vocation up as a calling answered ethically – remains unanswered. But the questioning will continue.

Bibliography

- Campbell, Graham. "Why Cops Like Me Are Quiet." *Buzzfeed*, 6 May 2015. Available via: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/dreamworks/why-cops-like-me-stay-quiet-about-police-brutality#.xlA1XOGw> (last accessed 19 March 2016).
- Deadwood*. First broadcast 21 March 2004 through 27 August 2006 by HBO. Produced by David Milch, Gregg Feinburg, and Mark Tinker.
- _____. Season 1, Episode 1, "Deadwood," first broadcast 21 March 2004 by HBO. Directed by Walter Hill and written by David Milch.
- The Economist*. "Wanted: Cops with People Skills." 25 April 2015. Available via: <http://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21649507-when-law-enforcement-just-about-force-people-are-killed-wanted-cops-people-skills> (last accessed 19 March 2016).
- Friedman, Lawrence M. *Law in America: A Short History*. New York: Modern Library, 2002.
- Hall, Oakley. *Warlock*. New York: The New York Review of Books, 2006.
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius*, translated by Allan Gilbert. In *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others*, vol. I, 175-529. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989.
- The Prisoner*. Season 1, Episode 14, "Living in Harmony," first broadcast 29 December 1967 by BBC. Directed by David Tomblin and written by David Tomblin and Ian L. Rakoff.
- Weber, Max. "Politics as a Vocation." In *The Vocation Lectures*, translated by Rodney Livingstone, 32-94. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004.
- _____. "Science as a Vocation." In *The Vocation Lectures*, translated by Rodney Livingstone, 1-31. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004.