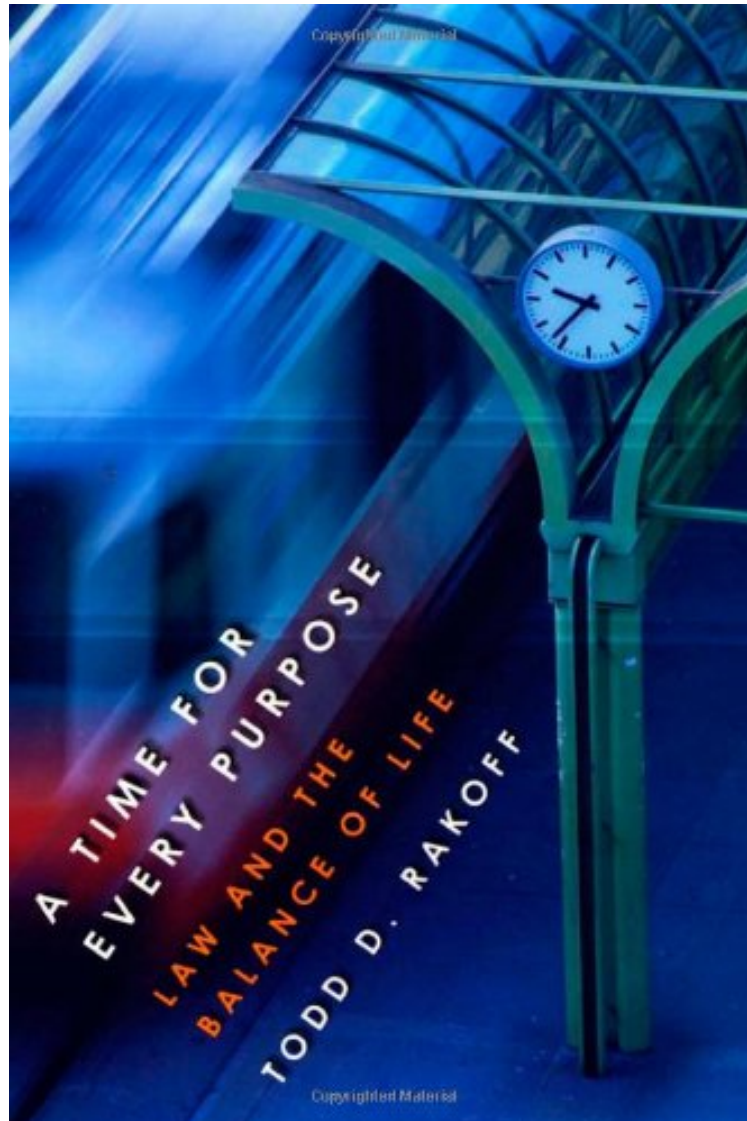


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A Time for Every Purpose: Law and the Balance of Life

Todd D. Rakoff

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Todd D. Rakoff : A Time for Every Purpose: Law and the Balance of Life before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Time for Every Purpose: Law and the Balance of Life:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. How our culture shapes the rhythms of our lifeBy Jon BoorstinIn this cogent and insightful book, Rakoff uses the law's treatment of time to illuminate how we organize our lives, and the sort of choices we make without even knowing we're making them: how things we assume are fixed are the product of social choices, which can be changed; how the usual explanations for such apparently inevitable ripples in

the rhythms of life as time zones or the school year are artifacts of particular times and particular issues in American life. It's a liberating book. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Timely Insights By Steve P This study of the interaction between society and the regulation of time is thoughtful, reflective, engaging, well-paced, compelling, stimulating, and persuasive. It is a work of political economy in the classic, grand sense, and integrates the disciplines of law, sociology, psychology, and economics. Understanding that leisure can be more than a residual category creates the potential for profound change in the workplace and home.

Who organizes our time? Who decides when we must be at work and at school, when we set back our clocks, and when retail stores will close? Todd Rakoff traces the law's effect on our use of time and discovers that the structure of our time is gradually changing. As Rakoff demonstrates, the law's influence is subtle, and so ubiquitous that we barely notice it. But its structure establishes the terms by which society allocates its efforts, coordinates its many players, establishes the rhythms of life, and indeed gives meaning to the time in which we live. Compulsory education law, overtime law, daylight-saving law, and Blue Laws are among the many rules government uses to shape our use of time. More and more, however, society, and especially the workplace, has come to see time simply as a quantity whose value must be maximized. As lawmakers struggle to deal with accelerating market demands, the average citizen's ability to organize his or her time to accommodate all of life's activities is diminishing. Meanwhile, it is increasingly hard to differentiate weekdays from weekends, and ordinary days from holidays. The law of time, Rakoff argues, may need refashioning to meet modern circumstances, but we continue to need a stable legal structure of time if we are to attain the ancient goal of a balanced life: "A Time for Every Purpose."

A first-ever book about the law's regulation of time. Rakoff investigates a number of for--instances--such as the creation of time zones, Sunday closing laws, the length of the work week, school attendance--and argues that the weakening regulation of time has lessened communal solidarity and made more elusive the goal of a balanced life. (Harvard Magazine 2002-11-15) What do blue laws, daylight savings time, the 40-hour work week, and the compulsory school year have in common? In *A Time for Every Purpose* Todd Rakoff argues that this patchwork of laws shapes how we think about time. Unfortunately, he says, they no longer do a very good job of ensuring people can balance their work and personal lives. As Rakoff shows in this curious little book, the modern construction of time doesn't have a very long history...Offering realistic suggestions for fixing these time imbalances proves more difficult than merely detailing the problem. Rakoff reasonably says the law must create more mechanisms to balance work time and other responsibilities. (Seth Stern Christian Science Monitor 2002-10-17) Todd Rakoff argues that temporal "rhythms" like daylight savings time are important for society. Whether by cultural tradition or by law, establishing boundaries to activities, such as the five-day work week vs. the weekend, or the nine-month school year allowed by summer vacation, helps people give structure and meaning to their lives...Rakoff has no quarrels with basic rules such as time zones, he warns the reader that it's a mistake to let "dominant social forces," namely big business, always determine how time is allocated. (J. Williams Gibson Dallas Morning News 2003-02-02) Though we usually take time schedules, calendars, and even how we measure time as givens, Rakoff explores the variety of social choices involved in regulating time--and the risk that some choices will no longer be available, as 24/7 replaces the rhythms separating work and home, week and weekend, and secular and religious time. Crucially, this illuminating and original book demonstrates that the problem with time is not that there is not enough of it; but rather that there are not enough structures to permit coordination with others. The book thereby reveals the deep truth that collective rules, rather than individual license, construct the conditions of freedom. Make time to read it! (Martha Minow, author of *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence*) Examining the intricate relations between the laws of nature and society, *A Time for Every Purpose* helps shed some light on the legal (and therefore inevitably conventional) underpinnings of the way we structure time. A most welcome contribution of legal scholarship to the sociology of time. (Eviatar Zerubavel, author of *The Seven-Day Circle: The History and Meaning of the Week* and *Time Maps: The Social Shape of the Past*) Rakoff's argument makes sense. His book is a significant contribution to our understanding of community and solidarity in the modern world. (Edward L. Rubin, University of Pennsylvania Law School) About the Author Todd D. Rakoff is Byrne Professor of Administrative Law, Harvard University.