Playing The System

LAW AND SOCIAL CONTROL
With the Law

- What kind of relationship does PG&E have with the legal system at the beginning of the film?
- How do you think representatives of the corporation treat the law? What privileges do they initially have? How does that change throughout the film?
Navigating Social Control

- The law functions as a means of social control, it reinforces and protects the existing social system and hierarchy.
  - Different groups experience the law differently
  - Power relations shape the experience of the law and social control
  - The law can be manipulated and nuanced to provide support for those in power
Law and Social Control

- **Two basic process of social control**
  - Internalization of group norms
    - Consequence of socialization
  - Control through external pressure
    - Negative and positive sanctions

Where does the law fall in this description?
Informal Social Controls

- Folkways – established norms of common practices such as those that specify modes of dress, etiquette, and language

- Mores – societal norms associated with intense feelings of right and wrong and definite rules of conduct that simply must not be violated
Formal Social Control

- Legalization - the process by which norms are moved from the social to the legal level
  - Moral indignation
  - High value on order
  - Response to threat
  - Political tactics
Informal Social Controls

- Informal methods of social control
  - More effective in small groups and societies
  - Face-to-face relationships
  - Division of labor is simple

- Informal social control stronger in communities that are:
  - Smaller
  - Traditional
  - Homogeneous
Formal Social Controls

- Formal social controls are usually characteristic of communities:
  - More complex
  - Higher division of labor, heterogeneity
  - Competing subgroups with different mores and ideologies
Formal Social Controls

- **Formal social controls**
  - Are incorporated into society
  - Characterized by explicit establishment of procedures
  - Delegation of specific bodies to enforce them
    - Laws, decrees, regulations, and codes
  - Seldom exercised through positive sanctions
Formal Social Control

- Criminals are those who reject the law, and attempt to circumvent it.
  - The success of the circumvention of the law, depends on the power and status of the criminal
- Law enacted by legislatures and modified by courts define criminal and delinquent behavior
- Increasing reliance on law to regulate activities and behavior
Formal Social Control

- **Criminal Sanctions**
  - 2010 – 6.7 million under criminal sanction
  - 2010 – 3.3% of American adults
  - 2010 – 2.2 million inmates
  - 10% of federal inmates serving life sentence
  - America has more people in prison and higher incarceration rate than any other country
White-Collar Crime

- White-collar crime
  - Generally crimes of privilege
  - Term coined by Edwin Sutherland in 1949
  - Crimes committed for gain within the job or occupation
  - More serious threat than more traditional crimes
White-Collar Crime

- **White-collar crime**
  - Extent is difficult to assess
  - Activities are hard to discover or hard to prove
  - Incorporates occupational and corporate crimes
  - Until the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, no corporate crime
    - No laws against unethical or dangerous corporate practices
The FBI estimates, burglary and robbery -- street crimes -- costs the nation $3.8 billion a year.

16,000 Americans are murdered every year.

Annual cost to consumers is estimated between $174 billion and $231 billion.

56,000 Americans die every year on the job or from occupational diseases.
White-Collar Crime: Some Examples

- Some comments on recent white-collar crimes
  - White Collar Crime in Action
- Can you think of any other examples of white collar crime?
- How does this us better understand the idea held by some that the legal system can be manipulated?