What is it?

- **Case Law**: The law to be found in the collection of reported cases that form all or part of the body of law within a given jurisdiction.

General Court Structure

Court of last resort
- Most cases never get this far

Intermediate appellate courts
- Usually where an appeal of a trial court decision goes

Trial court
- Almost all cases will start here

Weight of authority

- Most authoritative for that jurisdiction
- Next best
  - binding on lower courts within direct line of appeal
  - persuasive for other lower courts
- Decision is binding on the parties, but generally not authoritative for other cases
- May be persuasive in the absence of other authority
Case Law defined

Case Law: The law to be found in the collection of reported cases that form all or part of the body of law within a given jurisdiction.

Caselaw, Black’s Law Dictionary (10th ed. 2014)
Federal Courts

U.S. Supreme Court

Circuit Courts of Appeal

District Courts
Federal Case Reporters

U.S. Supreme Court

- U.S. Reports (U.S.) – official
- Supreme Court Reporter (S. Ct.) - West
- Supreme Court Reports Lawyer’s Edition (L. Ed.) – Lexis

Circuit Courts of Appeal

- Federal Reporter (F., F.2d., F.3d)

District Courts

- Federal Supplement (F. Supp., F. Supp. 2d)

How many cases are published?

- All
- Most
- Some
California Courts

California Supreme Court

Courts of Appeal

Superior Courts
California Case Reporters

**California Supreme Court**
- California Reports (Cal., Cal. 2d, Cal. 3d, Cal. 4th) – official
- West’s California Reporter (Cal. Rptr. – Cal. Rptr. 3d)
- West’s Pacific Reporter (P. – P.3d)

**Courts of Appeal**
- California Appellate Reports (Cal. App. – Cal. App. 4th) - official
- West’s California Reporter
- West’s Pacific Reporter

**Superior Courts**
- n/a

How many cases are published?
- **California Supreme Court**: Few
- **Courts of Appeal**: Few
- **Superior Courts**: None
West Digest System

- Research tool for finding cases by topic
- Uses a combination of
  - broad subject areas (topics)
  - specific issues (noted by what they call “key numbers”), and
  - short descriptions of cases (called “headnotes”).

- See Key Numbers and Headnotes video
Broadcom Corp. v. Qualcomm Inc., 501 F.3d 297 (3d Cir. 2007)
Steps to finding a case in print

1. Figure out which case law reporter set you need by going to the Bluebook Table 1 (e.g., what does F.3d represent?)
2. Note any series designation for that reporter (e.g., F.3d versus F.2d)
3. Find the reporter in the LRC
4. Pull the volume
5. Turn to the starting page
Example:
501 F.3d 297
LRC Reference Desk

- lrcrefer@sandiego.edu
- 619.260.4612
- Chat: http://www.sandiego.edu/law/library/