A warm-up to *Kingdom City*

George Gollin  
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Kingdom City

*Kingdom City* is a 2014 play by Sheri Wilner. From the La Jolla Playhouse website (where the play was first staged):

“When displaced New York director Miriam finds herself in Kingdom City, Missouri, she reluctantly agrees to direct a high school production of *The Crucible*. As the play unlocks the students’ repressed desires, a local youth minister threatens to cancel the play, creating a firestorm in this small conservative town. A funny and sharp new play inspired by true events.”[1]

*The Crucible* is Arthur Miller’s 1953 play about the Salem witch trials (1692-1693). It was widely interpreted as “an allegory of McCarthyism”; Miller came under significant, alarming pressure from the House Committee on Un-American Activities. [2]
The Wikipedia article “Salem witch trials” refers to them as “one of... Colonial America’s most notorious cases of mass hysteria.” Twenty people were executed (fourteen were women); most were hanged. [3]

There are many issues that we could discuss. Just two, for the moment:

- unreliable eyewitness testimony (relevant for the Salem trials);
- the conflict between community control of curriculum and the (civil rights-driven) federal interest in guaranteeing a proper education.

Jason Mazzone (Professor of Law) will discuss others, no doubt.
Selective attention and eyewitness testimony

From Daniel Simons, UIUC Professor of Psychology [4]

Here’s another from Dr. Simons

Community control vs. federal interest in quality education

*State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes:* the “Scopes Monkey Trial” (1925) [5]

Scopes was accused of teaching evolution in a public high school, in violation of Tennessee’s Butler Act: “An act prohibiting the teaching of the Evolution Theory in all the Universities, and all other public schools of Tennessee, which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the State, and to provide penalties for the violations thereof” [6]

Scopes was convicted and fined $100. The Tennessee Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the law, but overturned the conviction on a technicality. Dramatization: *Inherit the Wind* (1955), by Jerome Lawrence and Robert Edwin Lee.

We see similar pressures on public schools concerning intelligent design and denial of anthropogenic climate change. There is a federal interest in opposing this.
Today’s visitor: Jason Mazzone

He is: Professor, Lynn H. Murray Faculty Scholar in Law, Co-Director, Program in Constitutional Theory, History, and Law.

From the Law School’s website:

References

[7] https://www.law.illinois.edu/faculty/profile/jasonmazzone