

Topic Page: [Blue Laws](#)

Definition: **Blue Laws** from *The SAGE Glossary of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*

Laws designed to enforce moral standards, particularly that Sunday is a day of rest or worship. The laws prohibit specific activity, such as sale of alcohol or hunting on Sunday. Most blue laws are no longer enforced or have been repealed.

Summary Article: **blue laws**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

legislation regulating public and private conduct, especially laws relating to Sabbath observance. The term was originally applied to the 17th-century laws of the theocratic New Haven colony, and appears to originate in *A General History of Connecticut* (London, 1781), by the Loyalist Anglican clergyman Samuel A. Peters, who had lived in Hebron, Conn. New Haven and other Puritan colonies of New England had rigid laws prohibiting Sabbath breaking, breaches in family discipline, drunkenness, and excesses in dress. Although such legislation had its origins in European Sabbatarian and sumptuary laws, the term “blue laws” is usually applied only to American legislation. With the dissolution of the Puritan theocracies after the American Revolution, blue laws declined; many of them lay forgotten in state statute books only to be revived much later. The growth of the prohibition movement in the 19th cent. and early 20th cent. brought with it other laws regulating private conduct. Many states forbade the sale of cigarettes, and laws prohibited secular amusements as well as all unnecessary work on Sunday; provision was made for strict local censorship of books, plays, films and other means of instruction and entertainment. Although much of this legislation has been softened if not repealed, there are still many areas and communities in the United States, especially those where religious fundamentalism is strong, that retain blue laws. The Supreme Court has upheld Sunday closing laws ruling that such laws do not interfere with the free exercise of religion and do not constitute the establishment of a state religion.

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blue laws. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/blue_laws



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