



Law Library E-Newsletter The Book Docket

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Article of the Month

- Fifth Annual Survey of Student Engagement

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FIFTH ANNUAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

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The [Law School Survey of Student Engagement for 2008](#) (LSSE), conducted by the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University-Bloomington, surveyed more than 27,000 students at 85 American law schools to measure the quality of law student engagement. Its findings will be of interest to the ABA Accreditation Committee, prospective students and law school educators. The LSSE provides at least partial answers to the following questions about legal education in the United States. What is the effect on learning of the use of classroom computers? Why do American law schools fail to produce students who are capable researchers and writers? Why do law schools fail to produce ethical practitioners?

Classroom computer use is a vexed issue in legal education. Many professors are fully convinced that they are used only for recreation, interpose between the student and what she could be learning in class, and should be banned entirely. In examining the effects of computer use, LSSE makes the obvious distinction between diversionary and class-oriented computing. The latter includes note-taking, refreshing the recollection by looking at notes from past lectures, reading a case brief and accessing LexisNexis/Westlaw. Students who more frequently engage in these activities are more likely to self-report educational gains in important areas (such as critical and analytical thinking) than are students with lower levels of class-oriented computer use, as well as students who more frequently participate in diversionary computing. To the authors, this suggests that when they are used for class-oriented computing, computers can be an aid to student engagement. Interestingly, 3Ls are the most likely to use computers for diversionary activities.

Disappointingly, almost half of the students surveyed reported insufficient practice in developing their legal writing skills in practice-based scenarios. As any writer knows, practice is essential for improvement. This suggests that either legal writing should be taught each year, or that legal writing assignments should be incorporated

into other “substantive” classes.

In the area of how well law schools foster professionalism, LSSE found that smaller schools and schools with religious affiliation are more successful. It is difficult to see how these particular findings can be of any assistance to a large, non-affiliated law school. However, perhaps affording students more opportunities to work with faculty and being sure to emphasize legal ethics in every class would go some way toward addressing this inherent imbalance.

The LSSE also found that students with higher law school grades spend more time participating in co-curricular activities; that students who enter law school right after undergraduate school spend less time studying; and that 60% of students say their school emphasizes the memorization and regurgitation of information as opposed to critical thinking and analysis

Book of the Month: **THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF LAW IN AMERICA**

Michael Grossberg & Christopher Tomblins, eds.

KF352 .C36 2008 Recent Acquisitions on the 2nd Floor

Review by Deborah McGovern

This luxuriantly lengthy three-volume set begins in 1580 with the European colonization of what is now the United States, though it does contain a chapter on Native American law to 1815. The fat volumes look like Victorian novels, and the unhurried pace and exhaustive coverage assure the reader that their education in the history of American law is in the best possible hands. Chapters include Mark Tushnet’s *The Rights Revolution in the Twentieth Century*; Lawrence Friedman’s *The Litigation Revolution*; and Kermit Hall on *The Courts*. Other intriguing chapter titles include *The American Legal Profession 1870-2000*; *Heterosexuality as a Legal Regime*; and *Magistrates, Common Law Lawyers, Legislators: The Three Legal Systems of British America*. Even if you don’t have the time to read the whole magnum opus, you are sure to find an intriguing chapter or two.

URL/Website of the Month

<http://www.commoncraft.com/>

This month’s website is the invaluable Common Craft. Since 2007, Lee Lefever has been explaining nearly everything computer-related to newbies and technophobes. If you spend any time on the Internet, you’re sure to be familiar with his friendly voice, charming paper cut-outs and even his expressive hands, as they dart about onscreen, moving this or that and drawing arrows and circles. So much a part of the mental landscape have these micro-productions become that it’s easy to take the format for granted. The big “Ahah!” moment seems to have come when LeFever’s wife got the

idea of putting the whiteboard on the floor, and since then hands, cut-outs and markers have been gently ushering us all to greater understanding. Watching one of the newest productions, *Twitter Search in Plain English*, will teach you how to follow hot breaking topics on Twitter. A search for #Iran was updated with 200 new results within seconds of the first search.

This month's suggestion courtesy of Alison Rosenberg, Electronic Services & Reference Librarian.

Tech Tip of the Month:

You may not know that, in addition to checking your spelling, Word 2007 has a built-in thesaurus you can summon to your aid when inspiration flags. Just high-light the word for which you want a synonym, and right-click. The second item from the bottom is **Synonyms**, and within that heading is **Thesaurus**.

Faculty & Staff Publications:

Gail Levin Richmond: *Federal Tax Research*, in EFFECTIVELY REPRESENTING YOUR CLIENT BEFORE THE IRS (ABA Section of Taxation 2009).

John Sanchez: *Constitutional Cases Involving Teachers: Teachers' Workplace Rights Have Been Shrinking In the Past Few Decades. In Some Cases, Teachers Can Even Be Fired For Doing What They Are Paid To Do*, PHI DELTA KAPPAN: THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL FOR EDUCATION, June 2009, at 724.

Upcoming Publications:

Joel Mintz: He will co-edit a special issue of SUSTAINABILITY on *Environmental Laws and Sustainability*, to be published early in 2010.

James D. Wilets: *A Comparative Perspective on LGBT Legal, Political and Social Progress and Gender Nonconformity in the Caribbean and Latin America*, in POLITICS OF SEXUAL DIVERSITY IN LATIN AMERICA: A READER (Javier Corrales & Mario Pecheny, eds., Fall, 2009, University of Pittsburgh Press).

He authored chapters on Honduras, El Salvador and Liberia for the GREENWOOD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF LGBT ISSUES WORLDWIDE (Chuck

Stewart, ed., December, 2009, Greenwood Press).

Presentations, Appearances, Interviews, Honors, Accomplishments and Citations:

Gwen Handelman: She participated in the ABA Joint Committee on Employee Benefits 23rd Annual National Institute on ERISA Basics in Chicago. In addition to providing written materials, she was a co-presenter on “ERISA Ethical Issues and Concerns” and “Federal Regulation of Health Plans.”

Florence Shu-Acquaye: She will participate in an NSU panel discussion on June 25 on President Barack Obama’s upcoming trip to Ghana.

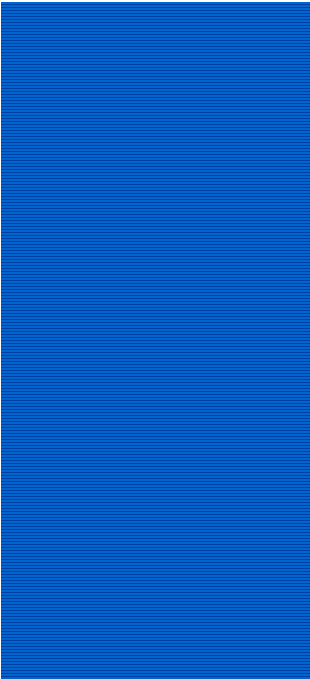
James D. Wilets: He has been invited to teach two classes at the University of Ottawa in 2010 and 2011. The classes will focus on Human Rights and European Union law; the former will be conducted in French.

Joel Mintz: He accepted an invitation to join the editorial board of SUSTAINABILITY, an international, peer-reviewed, open-access journal published quarterly in Basel, Switzerland, by Molecular Diversity Preservation International (MDPI). MDPI is a non-profit organization which publishes several online scientific journals that have a total of six Nobel Prize winners on their editorial boards.

He interviewed ten more present and former enforcement officials of EPA and the Department of Justice in preparation for the second edition of Mintz, ENFORCEMENT AT THE EPA: HIGH STAKES AND HARD CHOICES.

He attended a semi-annual meeting of the Center for Progressive Reform, participating in discussions among member scholars regarding the initial environmental policies of the Obama administration and current proposals for U.S. legislation to curb global climate change.

He attended a Natural Resources Law Teacher’s Workshop in Chico, Montana, in which he participated in open discussions on regional approaches to controlling greenhouse gas emissions, on the



interrelationship between water resource conservation and “green alternative” sources of energy, and on techniques for teaching environmental law and natural resources law.