

## NONFICTION WRITING FOR LAW STUDENTS

Professor Garrett Epps

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There is no syllabus as such for this class, because the way we proceed will be dictated in significant part by the individual interests of the students enrolled. Just to give a general idea, the class will involve two short (3-5 pp.) nonfiction pieces (one op-ed article and one Supreme Court case preview) written for a general audience; one significant reaction paper on the topic of sexual assault on campus and educational policy; and one large project to be agreed upon between the student and the instructor. The large project will be either (1) a magazine article or essay of roughly 2,500 words or more on a legal topic; (2) a series of connected blog posts of roughly the same scale on a legal topic; (3) a podcast or series of podcasts on a legal topic; or (4) a short internet video on a legal topic.

No matter which option a student selects, the final project will require substantial research and a complete and finished first draft or version to be reviewed by the instructor and fully revised before final submission. The learning outcomes desired—on which the final grade will be based—are (1) increased ability to use non-legal research sources (including but not limited to interviews, library research, and personal observation) to shed light on legal topics; (2) commitment to accuracy and completeness in research and reporting; (3) demonstrated achievement in techniques of rendering complex legal subjects both comprehensible to non-legal readers and useful to those readers in understanding law and society; and (4) skill and care in editing the work of fellow students.

Finally, this class represents a very rare chance within law school to use different kinds of skills than most doctrinal or legal research classes demand. I cannot urge you strongly enough to take advantage of this opportunity by committing early in the semester to plan for and achieve excellence in the work you do. Respect the class, yourselves, and your fellow students by committing to attendance, preparation, and participation. Previous students have found it rewarding and exciting; and it does provide skills training and education that are hard to get elsewhere in the law school curriculum.

The books required for this course are:

Krakauer, *Missoula: Rape and Justice in a College Town*; Johnson & Taylor, *The Campus Rape Frenzy: The Attack on Due Process at America's Universities*; and Zinsser, *On Writing Well*. There will be additional readings handed out by the instructor.

We will discuss this more at the first meeting of the class. In the meantime, here is the first assignment:

Please write a 2-5 page paper telling a story. It must be a true story, one that you either experienced or know about firsthand, about the law. It should be a story that significantly influenced your decision to study law and devote part of your life to it. The point may be

obvious, or it may be subtle. In either case, I do not want you to explain the point—I want you to explain the story and the legal issues that underlie it.

The story should be finished work, edited and proofread, written in 12-point type and double-spaced with generous margins. Your piece will be edited by one of your fellow students and you will edit a piece by another student.