

Book Notice

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Legal Writing, All Business. By J. Scott Colesanti. Carolina Academic Press, 2016. Pp. 246. \$36.

This is a textbook in legal analysis and writing for first-year law students. As its title suggests, its goal is to teach students the skills they will need to land their first job and do well in it. In that endeavor, it succeeds.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One, consisting of six chapters, teaches the fundamentals of legal analysis, reasoning, and writing. Part Two, consisting of eight chapters, applies those lessons to various kinds of documents. Each chapter includes challenging exercises to help students practice the skills being taught.

The lessons in legal analysis and reasoning are things that every practicing lawyer must know. As Colesanti describes it, the “sole goal” of these chapters is “[t]he identification of the relevant law, and its application to specific facts.” These chapters teach students how to draw on the sources of law — constitutions, statutes, and caselaw — to synthesize and articulate the applicable rule and to express that rule accurately and efficiently. They also teach students to distinguish between facts and nonfacts, and between facts that are legally significant and those that are not. Finally, they teach students how to apply the rule of law to the facts to reach a conclusion. For decades, law students have been told to do these things but have not always been taught how to do them. The how-to lessons in this book are what make it valuable.

Part Two includes tips and exercises for writing a variety of legal documents, going beyond the familiar research memo.

Among these are e-mail memos, trial-court motions, accusatory instruments (i.e., complaints and petitions), and settlement agreements — skills that every practicing lawyer needs. Not stopping there, Colesanti includes chapters on writing an agency comment letter (commenting on proposed regulations) and a student-authored law-review article, often the fledgling legal writer's first opportunity for publication.

One might quibble with Colesanti on some relatively minor points. He advocates limited use of legalese (confining it to legal terms of art), which may rile some plain-language purists. And some of the writing conventions he suggests, particularly on matters of typography, are probably okay for beginning legal writers but are not best practices. These include using the Times New Roman font for everything, putting two spaces after a period, and other less-than-ideal conventions followed by too many lawyers. Readers can find different typography suggestions in, for example, the Seventh Circuit's guidelines.¹ Colesanti himself defines these writing conventions as being "commonly utilized but not universally accepted." But we have to remember that the audience for this book consists of first-year law students, whose goals include acquiring legal language and writing in a way that will please prospective employers. No hiring partner is going to reject a candidate for using Times New Roman or putting two spaces after a period. Much more important to prospective employers are the analytical and writing skills taught by this book.

If you teach a first-year legal-writing class, you should consider using Colesanti's book as a text. Its substantive lessons are sound and will serve your students well in law school and beyond.

¹ U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, *Requirements and Suggestions for Typography in Briefs and Other Papers*, <http://www.ca7.uscourts.gov/forms/type.pdf> (last visited Oct. 30, 2016).