# Evidence



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THOMSON

## **EVIDENCE**

#### IN A NUTSHELL

#### FIFTH EDITION

Ву

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610 Opperman Drive

St. Paul, MN 55123

1-800-328-9352

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-0-314-16666-1





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# PREFACE: USING THIS BOOK Fifth Edition

Legions of law students have successfully used Evidence in a Nutshell (1) to study for exams, (2) as optional outside reading during the Evidence course, or (3) as a course-book assigned by the professor. The book is designed to promote understanding and remembering of any Evidence course you might be taking in any law school today. Student-friendly features include:

- -copious sign-post-type headings;
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- —a table of contents that is actually a comprehensive course outline;
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- —sections and subsections are labeled conspicuously with the applicable rule number;
- —each section first succinctly describes the main features of the rule, then gives pithy examples of its application, and finally explores issues like you might get on an exam;
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This new edition includes, *inter alia*, a number of recent developments: The revolution in constitutional confrontation law accomplished by the Supreme Court in *Crawford* and *Davis*; new amendments to the Federal Rules; and some late-breaking matters concerning the

#### PREFACE

constitutional "right to defend" and privileges, to name a few.

Is there one key concept in this book that can unlock the Evidence course? Maybe not entirely, but here we turn to the world's leading cultural anthropologist, who, as part of his examination of legal institutions, studied an earlier edition of this Nutshell, and had this to say, quoting from it:

[T]he rules of evidence...are motivated...by a distrust of juries as "rational triers of fact"...The judge's job in admissibility questions is to decide, as [Prof. Rothstein] finely puts it, when "the trial will be better off without the evidence."

That comes close to a key.

### About the Authors and the Genesis of This Book (For those who like to know these things)

This is the fifth edition of the original ROTHSTEIN'S EVIDENCE IN A NUTSHELL, which proved enormously successful. Rothstein, a law professor at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., is nationally known for his ability to make difficult points of law clear through his writings, lectures, and media appearances.

For the most recent editions, Prof. Rothstein has been joined by an equally talented team: law professors Myrna Raeder and David Crump, prolific writers and award winners in their own right.

The aim of the book, as always, is to provide a simple text and roadmap through the Evidence thicket, with plenty of guideposts along the way. Over the course of the various editions, new subjects and developments have been added. A few have been shortened, such as "Burdens

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Clifford Geertz, Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology, 172 (1983).

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of Proof and Presumptions." A student who wants a really definitive treatment of that subject is referred to the Second Edition. A few subjects that are no longer essential have been jettisoned altogether.

The three authors first met on an American Bar Association committee. Rothstein, the chairperson, had formerly advised Congress during the drafting of the Federal Rules of Evidence. He now felt a study should be instituted by the committee, critiquing the Rules' first decade of operation in the courts. The study lasted several years, with the three present authors in active roles along with other members. At its conclusion, the committee published the results in an influential report appearing at 120 F.R.D. 299 (1987). Many of its suggestions have been enacted into law.

The present authors individually went on to other Evidence and Evidence reform efforts, like the panel amending the Uniform Rules of Evidence. The three combine experience teaching law students, lawyers, bar review courses, and judges; writing books and articles; trying both sides of civil and criminal cases; briefing and arguing cases on appeal (including to the Supreme Court); and drafting and amending evidence rules on the state and federal level. First and foremost, however, the authors are very experienced teachers of Evidence to law students, the people for whom this book is written, and who have contributed valuable insights over the years about how students come to understand things. These insights have helped enormously to make the book a staple at the nation's law schools.

P.F.R. M.S.R. D.C.

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