AMERICAN LEGAL SYSTEMS: A RESOURCE AND REFERENCE GUIDE
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AMERICAN LEGAL SYSTEMS: A RESOURCE AND REFERENCE GUIDE

Second Edition

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FOR DESIREE
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Foreword

It is my hope that this second edition of *American Legal Systems: A Resource and Reference Guide* will be a unique addition to the literature designed to introduce students to the U.S. legal systems. While books on legal research, legal writing, and other introductory matters abound, none presents the fundamentals of the American legal systems in a comprehensive yet accessible way.

That is what *American Legal Systems* strives to do. The book provides an overview of American legal institutions and sources of law, and presents a guide to the interrelationships between and among those institutions and legal authorities. It discusses the defining role of the doctrine of *stare decisis* in the American common law system and the critical judicial review function. In addition, *American Legal Systems* shows the reader how to determine and apply the relative priorities of sources of law, all in the context of the legislative process, agency action, and principles of constitutional and legislative supremacy.

*American Legal Systems* ties many of these concepts to the realities of law practice. Portions of the book demonstrate how to locate specific resources, use legal terms, and prepare commonplace legal documents.

Among the main virtues of the book is its “reader-friendliness.” It introduces readers to some extremely complicated issues of American jurisprudence in a clear and straightforward way. It is relatively short and concise, much of it in chart form, allowing the user to quickly find and assimilate sought-after information. *American Legal Systems* also contains a comprehensive index and extensive internal cross-references, enabling the reader to locate with great ease any term or concept used in the book. As such, *American Legal Systems* could be used for reference purposes in conjunction with a student’s substantive course work, or it could be used in connection with an experiential task, such as legal research and writing. Of course, it can also be read on its own.

Given my education and professional experience, I originally conceived *American Legal Systems* for domestic and international law students, but I hope that it will also prove to be a valuable resource for members of the general public and for students of diverse disciplines: government, political science, pre-law studies, paralegal courses, and other areas of instruction. My hope is that *any* student of one or more of these areas will benefit from the foundation in the law presented in this book. While the paradigmatic audience for *American Legal Systems* remains students of law, it should be widely applicable to students in related disciplines.

This version of *American Legal Systems* has reduced the amount of discussion devoted to legal research and related topics given the predominance of fee-based and free computerized research tools.

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New York City

January 2015