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PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

Teaching Torts (4th ed. 2009) is the teacher's manual for *Studies in American Tort Law* (4th ed., 2009) (SATL), both of which are published by Carolina Academic Press. As a "guide" for torts professors, this book has decidedly modest objectives. It is intended to provide neither an exhaustive discussion of prominent theories of tort liability, nor an encyclopedic compilation of references. Rather, *Teaching Torts* seeks to assist torts teachers by assembling a useful mix of information relevant to tasks of recurring importance, including:

- allocation of course time;
- stimulation of classroom discussion;
- clarification of the existing rules of tort law and of the role that public policy plays in the formation, application, and re-evaluation of those rules; and
- effective drafting of, and preparation of students for, examinations.

In my view, these tasks are an indispensable part of being a good law teacher. To be sure, wisdom and proficiency in teaching torts comes not from any teacher's manual, but from plain hard work: re-reading

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cases before class; consulting treatises and articles; keeping abreast of judicial and legislative developments; thinking about how to teach well; and endeavoring to execute a sound plan each class period. I hope that this book helps to make some of that hard work easier for law professors.

The main part of *Teaching Torts* (Chapters 1 to 23) corresponds to the organization of SATL. For each chapter there is a set of introductory notes, followed by questions and comments relating to each of the principal cases. The notes suggest, in rough terms, how many class sessions may be needed to cover the material in SATL, and which portions of the text may be omitted if time is short. Some thoughts are also offered about which topics deserve the greatest attention (or at least should not be overlooked), and about strategies for efficiently teaching certain groups of cases. Occasionally, an excerpt from a particularly interesting case or article is quoted. Miscellaneous teaching tips, as well as selected references to collateral reading, are also provided. Some of the notes offer an economic analysis of legal questions.

The information relating to the principal cases is arranged by chapter, in the same order in which the cases appear in SATL. Typically, there is a brief statement about the point of the case, or why it was included in the book, followed by questions about the decision or related materials in SATL. Some of the proffered questions are obvious and elementary, others are more complex. Some inquire into the holding of the case or the opinion's relation to other decisions; others explore issues of public policy; and still others vary the facts of the case or present related hypothetical queries. While many of these questions might be used verbatim in class, they are probably more valuable simply as a list that a professor can look over in advance of class to begin thinking about issues that might be explored in dialogue with students. In some instances, "answers" are offered. In many cases, answers have been omitted, not because the questions are difficult, but because the lists of questions will be used by experienced law teachers to whom the answers (or the ways to arrive at answers) will be readily apparent.

Appendix A contains a syllabus suggesting how assignments might be allocated in a five-credit torts course meeting 70 times during the year and proceeding through the materials from front to back. An effort has been made to divide the coverage into relatively equal assignments, taking into account the need to identify logical stopping points and to make allowance for especially easy or difficult materials.

Appendix B contains several essay questions that I have used in past torts classes. The general scope of each essay question (*e.g.*,

“negligence and simple intentional torts” or “defamation and privacy”) has been noted. Professors are invited to use these questions in any way and for any purpose that seems desirable. One possibility is to distribute the questions to students, or place them on reserve, for use as practice problems. If you are considering using one of these questions on a final exam, be sure to vary the facts substantially because these questions are in the public domain.

I have a long-standing interest in classroom technology and have argued that many students are more comfortable with abstruse discussions of legal theory if they know that periodically the basic path will be made clear. I use Power Point and a document projector in virtually every class, and would be happy to provide you with my Power Point file, which contains approximately 230 slides (vjohnson@stmarytx.edu).

Alan Gunn was my excellent co-author on the first three editions of *Studies in American Tort Law* (1994, 1998, and 2005) and *Teaching Torts* (1995, 1999, and 2005). Following the completion of the third editions of those books, Alan assumed emeritus status at the University of Notre Dame and did not participate in the preparation of the fourth editions. Alan’s contributions to the text are still very much a part of this book, particularly the law and economics comments.

Students may benefit from using *Mastering Torts: A Student’s Guide to the Law of Torts* (4th ed. 2009, by Vincent R. Johnson, Carolina Academic Press). The study guide explains, in narrative format, how the principal cases in SATL illustrate the main features of the American tort system.

In the production of this book, research assistance and proofreading were provided by several law students at St. Mary’s University, including Jane R. Dure, Christopher L. Gordon, Eminence Northcutt, Kayla Wells, Stratos L. Apostolou, Christopher R. Konneker, Mark S. Poling, and Jahannah C. Lemay. The tireless efforts of Allen K. Lowe II and Laura Long (daughter of Armistead M. Long, who worked on the third edition) greatly assisted the work.

I am deeply grateful to Dean Charles E. Cantu and St. Mary’s University School of Law for supporting this project. My faculty colleague, Chenglin Liu, contributed valuable ideas that have enriched this text.

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~~I hope that this book is useful to you. Please give me your~~
suggestions for future editions of *Teaching Torts*.

Vincent R. Johnson
San Antonio, Texas
July 2, 2009

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