Susan McMahon

Biographical Sketch

Professor Susan McMahon is a national leader in the field of legal writing and lawyering skills. Her scholarship centers on lawyering and legal education, with a particular focus on how lawyers can drive change within legal systems. She is also an expert on the intersection of mental disability and the criminal system, and she has written on topics such as competence restoration, involuntary medication, and stigma against individuals with mental illness.

Her scholarly work has found a home in journals such as the Minnesota Law Review, Georgetown Law Journal, American Criminal Law Review, and University of Pennsylvania Journal of Law and Public Affairs. Her most recent scholarship includes the article, “What We Teach When We Teach Legal Analysis,” 107 Minn. L. Rev. 2511 (2023), which won the Legal Writing Institute’s 2024 Teresa Godwin Phelps Award for Scholarship in Legal Communication. She is also the co-author of “Legal Writing in Context” (Carolina Academic Press, 2nd ed. 2024) (with Sonya G. Bonneau).

Prof. McMahon teaches at the University of California, Irvine School of Law. She previously taught at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University and the Georgetown University Law Center.

Before entering academia, Prof. McMahon was a litigator at Debevoise & Plimpton, where she represented clients in securities litigation, intellectual property disputes, and federal criminal cases. She also represented, pro bono, several Guantanamo Bay detainees in their habeas corpus petitions before federal courts.

From 2008 to 2009, she clerked for the Honorable Richard J. Leon of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

Prof. McMahon received a J.D. from the Georgetown University Law Center, and a B.A. from the College of the Holy Cross. Before attending law school, she was an award-winning reporter for The Sun in Lowell, Mass.