INTRODUCTION

American Law 101: An Easy Primer on the U.S. Legal System is a simple and reader-friendly primer on American law principles geared for a wide audience of both lawyers and non-lawyers worldwide.

American Law 101 covers both the spirit and “black letter law” principles underlying the American legal system. In terms of readership, American Law 101 is geared towards an extremely broad spectrum, including American and foreign lawyers, business professionals, law and business students, and administrators, as well as the simply curious. American Law 101 reaches its broad audience in part by using plain English in simple, reader-friendly, and understandable language. At the same time, while American Law 101 provides some of the core principles underlying the American legal system in a straightforward way, its scope and mandate may not allow for each possible exception to be fully covered.

American Law 101’s substance and style include the following:

• An easy-to-read and succinct primer on some of the core law concepts covered in many American law schools
• A comprehensive, quick, and easy-to-understand American law primer geared for a very broad audience—lawyers, non-lawyers, students, and administrators, domestically and internationally, in the legal profession and marketplace—as an introduction, summary, or review of important American law principles
• Concepts and terms explained simply using plain English with minimal use of jargon, legalese, American colloquialisms, cultural and sports references, slang, and other related references
• Short executive summary sections accompanying each chapter as useful wrap-ups
• Simple diagrams and explanations conveying concepts clearly and concisely

As with all written works, American Law 101 has been helped by other publications related to and preceding it. The Unofficial Guide to Legal Studies in the U.S. for Foreign Lawyers (ABA 2012) is a very well-produced ABA publication focusing on the American law school experience, separate from covering core American law concepts.
Law 101: Everything You Need to Know About American Law (OUP 2010) is another useful book that covers American law concepts and topics at a minute, detailed, and technical level, which could be appropriate for a semester-long course. American Law and Legal Systems (Pearson 2011) is another full and formal academic text rather than a quick and easy primer on American law. In terms of writing like an American lawyer, Plain English for Lawyers (Carolina Academic Press 2005) is an excellent resource. Finally, How Law Students Should Think (Amazon Digital Services, Inc. 2011) is an insightful, complementary resource for those who want to understand how to succeed in the potentially competitive environment of some American law schools. Readers interested in learning more in depth and formally about American legal concepts, or the American law school experience, should certainly refer to some or all of the above publications, which are complementary but distinguishable from this book.

I am grateful for the opportunity afforded to me by the ABA to write American Law 101. Any one book attempting to encapsulate a field as intricate, influential, and dynamic as the American legal system has a daunting mandate. This book therefore should represent the beginning, not the end, of the reader’s roadmap to American law.

Moreover, any mistakes in this book are my own.

As you read this book’s pages, I hope that American Law 101 sheds at least a small light on your road towards a better understanding of the American legal system—and the legal professionals working in it—domestically and internationally.