Student Evaluation of Leon Letwin
Evidence Materials, Spring 1981

As part of the student evaluation of course and instructor in my Spring '81 Evidence course, I asked the students to comment on the teaching materials. In particular, I asked

1) whether they would have preferred a standard case book to my materials;
2) that I used more cases in my materials;
3) more textual, explanatory notes of the kind now found in my materials; and
4) more Suggested Solutions to the Problems I present.

Below are all the student comments. Of the 91 students in the course, 68 responded to my questions about the teaching materials.

I should mention that the student evaluations are prepared in class in the presence of proctors but in the absence of the instructor. The answer forms are strictly anonymous.

Summary of comments.

1) Of the 68 respondents, only 1 stated a preference for a traditional casebook; all the others preferred, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, the format I employed.

2) There was little sentiment for more cases.

3) There was very strong sentiment for more textual, explanatory material of the type now employed.

4) There was considerable sentiment, but not as much as in (3), for more Suggested Solutions.

My conclusions.

1) The material was well received.

2) I need more textual notes and more Suggested Solutions. (I am now working in both these areas.)

3) While I am very pleased with the student views about my teaching materials--they tend to be critical and frank in such evaluations--I think the following caution is in order. These are materials of my design. By definition, everything is important, and I know why it's there. There is, therefore, little tension between my teaching aims and the material employed. Put another way, I have none of the discomfort with the material that can arise when one is using someone else's book. Being at
peace with the materials one is using ought to translate into a more effective teaching experience for the students. The fact, however, that the materials work well for me is no proof that they will work equally well for someone with a different perspective or different interests than mine. What is hard to figure out is the degree to which the apparent success of the materials is a tribute to their quality or simply the result of the fact that I'm in synch with the format.
Re: text

(1) Your text is excellent. In my opinion it would be a big mistake to go to a traditional casebook.
(2) Case v. problem mix is good.
(3) Explanatory notes are also about right.
(4) A few more answers would be desirable.
I can't understand why you don't officially publish it and make it into your own "casebook." It is heads and tails above all other casebooks I have had in this school.

Your materials are much better than a casebook.
Don't add any more cases.
More explanatory notes would be helpful.
Some more suggested solutions would be helpful.

The text materials are excellent.

Quite a Herculean production to write his own text. Obviously puts more effort into teaching than most. Would like to see more explanatory notes, but the sugg. solutions are just right (don't want to answer all Q's with the book).

The text was probably the most enjoyable that I've had yet in law school. I like the # of cases included--it leads to more participative learning. More explanatory notes and suggested solutions would be nice, mainly because they're so helpful.

The use of instructor's "book" is good. HAVE PRACTICAL PROBLEM is a much better way to learn. But to learn this way it is necessary that the student pick up all comments that are made in class. If the student is unable he is out of luck. I suggest more supplementary notes as well as suggested answers. This will at least give the student an alternative method of learning or making up what he missed in class.

I'd like more cases and more explanatory notes. But I like the format.

Thought that the format was very good. Keep the materials; more interesting than a casebook. Cases, however, were somewhat helpful.

I like this approach to materials--rather than a standard casebook. Maybe more explan. notes & sugg'd solutions.
Re. material - I really liked the problem approach. Perhaps a little more introductory notes would be good.

NO on casebook.  
NO on more cases.  
YES on more explanatory notes.  
YES on more sug. sol.

I don't think a casebook will do anything more than confuse us. I don't think we'd have time for more cases. The material seems to be well-organized--yes, I'd like more suggested solutions. Frankly, I don't know how to evaluate this course. I'm studying the course materials, but wondering if I'm missing something.

Couldn't be better.

More explanatory notes in book--otherwise it's good. Questions should be improved.

Should focus more on Fed. Code, less on Calif. in the answers where codes conflict. Bar tests Fed.

More suggested solutions, more explanatory notes, but definitely keep the materials--more emphasis earlier on Fed. rules.

Text materials are okay--in general fewer cases and more explanatory notes would be helpful. Possibly further suggested solutions also.

Would prefer a conventional text.  
" " " better cross-referencing of CEC to FRE.

As for the materials: They are great as is. I know we don't need a casebook. I think the case level is just about right. The number of explanatory notes is good. More suggested solutions are not necessary. Class discussion work is better to answer questions.

Casebook - NO--your materials were excellent.  
More Cases - Not particularly.  
More Notes - Excellent--add any notes of similar quality.  
Solution Sets - Yes--key probs. that reflect how to think about different probs.--In contrast - see, e.g., § 787() is not that helpful.
Much prefer this type of book. Cases would add little to my understanding but keep the ones you have; they're helpful. Combined with consistent class attendance the notes and suggested solutions are more than adequate; if people complain, it's only because they haven't attended class enough. (Although a little explanatory material where you have almost none & go right to questions would be good unless you expand in that type of chapter in the suggested solution.)

Casebook - No. Use your materials. BUT you must write more careful questions. Some of them are sloppy in their details or phrasing & obscure the point. Just go through them again. No more cases - fine as is. Definitely more explanatory notes, especially on hearsay. Dump Tribe. Yes, more suggested solutions. Good course for something like Evidence & you're a good man.

The material was good. The problems were very effective, well thought out--much more effective than the cases.

Additional cases and explanatory materials could add more depth to some chapters.

Re casebook: No. Is not a practical option for a subject like Evidence.
Re cases: No. Again, cases are not as useful in a subject like Evidence.
Re Explanatory Notes: Yes, more would be appreciated.
Re Suggested Solutions: Fine as they are.

The problems make the course very interesting. Better not to have a lot of suggested solutions. Don't need more explanatory notes.

I like the materials but have nothing to compare them to. I don't think more cases are needed in it--Evidence can't be taught via cases. More suggested solutions would be good.

I like the class materials; my only suggestion would be to expand the explanatory notes of the statutes. Your class lectures are a bit too thorough. I would think less time should be spent in hashing out the rationale, or lack thereof, behind a statutory rule.

I would not want your materials exchanged for a textbook. A few more cases would not be a bad idea. Additional explanatory notes would be great. Suggested solutions are always helpful.
I think the materials are the best part of the course. Maybe a few more problems would help. These could have solutions at the end and could be skipped in class discussion.

It was refreshing not to have to read a lot of cases, though I enjoyed reading the cases we did. The question & answer format is a useful learning tool. A few more answers & explanatory notes toward the beginning might help. Also, I am troubled by the apparent gap between evidence theory & practice. I would like to maybe go to ct. to see how it really works. Or maybe try out some mock trials in class.

I would like to see more explanatory notes, more suggested solutions, less open-ended questions.

The materials should not be bound in metal--I cut my finger.

More textual material in the casebook & more solutions would be helpful.

Overall, the instructor did a very good job with a subject that has the potential to be very dry. The materials, especially, were quite good. Indeed, these materials were far superior to having a casebook. A few more explanatory notes would be good, but overall the book (& the instructor) were quite commendable.

1) No need for casebook. 2) Case load is fine. As long as concepts are understood & applicable no need to see examples. 3) More explanatory notes would help problems. 4) More solutions--as materials allow.

(1) Casebook? No, the materials used are fine.  
(2) More cases? No, the right amount.  
(3) More explanatory notes? Sure--explanations are always helpful.  
(4) More suggested solutions? No strong feeling one way or the other.

I would like to see additional problems in the back of the book for use by the student to master the material, particularly for finals.

Like the problems in the text--helpful for grasp of subject--would like more problems, more commentary, cases adequate, maybe a little more suggested solutions. Please get this in hardbound sometime.

Regarding the materials: Overall I thought they were very good. The only thing I would like is more suggested solutions.
The materials are good, but more explanatory comments would be helpful.

The materials were basically very good—I would not prefer a conventional casebook—in fact, the cases which were used were less helpful than the explanations and problems. More suggested solutions would be helpful, especially for the latter part of the course when time constraints forced us to either skip discussion of some questions without suggested solutions or to discuss them only briefly.

I liked material in "casebook." Should put less cases into "Hearsay & Const'l Connection" chapter.

I liked the materials. As I noted above the problem analysis approach worked well. Consequently I wouldn't want more cases. Explanatory notes might be helpful although I think you covered most of it in class. Suggested solutions are necessary only if you don't go to class.

Casebook good. More explanatory notes for direction. Possibly more solutions--more than just a reference to a statute.

They talk about Lopez & Yeazell being biggies in the classroom, but this guy is one of the finest classroom performers in the place. I enjoyed the materials—they were efficient way of getting issues out & discussed effectively.

Casebook - no.  
More cases - no.  
More explanatory notes - yes.  
More suggested solutions - no.  

The teaching materials are already an improvement over typical casebook approach in my opinion.

Casebook? No--the materials were great, enough cases. More explanations and questions answered would be helpful.

Like problem approach. More explanations and solutions would be helpful. Perhaps a comparison w. C/L would be good where Calif. differs since Bar Examiners examine on C/L.

Your course materials are good. I like the questions. More answers would be nice. Explanatory notes are helpful.

(2) More cases?  No.  
(3) More explanatory Notes?  No.  
(4) More suggestive solutions?  Yes.
Book was better than a standard textbook--needs more explanatory notes.

I like the case materials Prof. Letwin has prepared. More cases are not necessary or desirable. Nor are more explanatory notes--sufficient information is obtained from class. However, more suggested solutions would be helpful--so we can work on our own answers at home and while studying for the exam.

(1) Casebook? I don't think it would help. (2) More cases? I don't think this would help either. (3) More explanatory notes? Yes--specifically, why not require us to get the commentary on the FRE--the Calif. explanations are sometimes not clear--another viewpoint helps--especially since the FRE is on the bar. (4) Sug. solutions? No--would discourage attendance.

More explanatory notes would be helpful. At times when problems are discussed in class I am left not knowing which analysis would probably prevail--this would be helpful.

The materials were a much more effective teaching tool than a case book. Hate cases. A problem approach is better--more sample test questions would be helpful as would more explanatory notes.

I like this format very much. More explanations would be desirable as well as more solutions.

Casebook would be worse, fewer cases desired, more explanatory notes needed, also more suggested solutions would be desirable.

Put more explanatory notes in the present text & keep it.

More explanatory notes and more suggested solutions.

No case book--more sug. soln's.

I was very satisfied with the text. I would have liked more textual explanatory material than was presented. Sample problems were very good.

No conventional textbook; the material we used O.K. but could use more explanatory notes.
Materials: I found the materials very helpful and prefer them to the casebook method. More explanatory notes & suggested solutions would help.

No casebook.
Few cases.
More explanatory notes.
More suggested solutions.

The materials are great!! More explanatory notes would help—the more the merrier. Suggested solutions → I'd like more, but then people might not come to class; also might detract from class discussion because people wouldn't bother to think up alternate/novel solutions.

Materials are generally good—we need fewer cases and more explanatory material.

Letwin's "text" was very enjoyable. I think the cases that are in there are good—perhaps a couple more Calif. cases would be good. A few areas could use more explanatory material.