Preface

Criminal law forces us to confront the most important moral dilemmas of our times. More than most law school courses, criminal law engages our emotions as well as our intellects. This book will encourage that engagement. Many of my examples are taken from current topics of intense public debate such as euthanasia, male rape, self-defense, and even fantasy Internet crime. But the underlying normative challenge of the criminal law—justifying the coercive use of state power against individuals—transcends particular controversies. Indeed, this debate has challenged great thinkers of the past like Plato, Socrates, Aquinas, and Kant. And it will certainly challenge us and future generations. This text keeps that tension in sharp and continuous focus.

This book helps students master a broad range of criminal law doctrines. But it does not merely present a collection of "rules." It also explains and analyzes those doctrines and the problems they generate in a cohesive and comprehensive way. Where there are ambiguities—either theoretical or practical—I discuss them. Not to do so would mislead students and trivialize the criminal law. By recognizing how complex the tapestry is and how interwoven are its various threads, students can appreciate the rich nuances of its doctrine and policy. This book examines that complexity, while remaining easy to read and to understand. Its sole purpose is to help students learn.

I was attracted to the format of the *Examples & Explanations* series long before I was involved with work on this book. The format fits the typical law school classroom experience by posing challenging problems first (without answers, of course!) and then offering solutions. I also enjoy the humor evident in other volumes in this series. Learning is serious business—but no business is so serious that it cannot be approached with an occasional smile. I have tried to sprinkle humor generously throughout the book.

From all reports, students have found the earlier editions of this book very helpful, not only for mastering criminal law, but also for learning what is expected of them on law school exams. I am pleased that the earlier editions were so successful. I have maintained the same basic approach, but have thoroughly updated the ninth edition. New material has been added on important and current topics, like conspiracy charges for internet rape, more commonly prosecuted male rape, and the implications of new discoveries in neuroscience on criminal law. Examples have been drawn from newspaper headlines, such as terrorism prosecutions, testosterone overload,

sexual abuse by clergy, male rape, a San Francisco "dog mauling" case, and the New York "cannibal cop." I think that you will enjoy this book and that it will help you, as it has helped many other students to succeed in criminal law.

Finally, a plea for your help. This book can be successful in helping students only if the authors know what works—and what doesn't. I am anxious for your comments—negative and positive—either on specific topics or hypotheticals, or generally. Please contact me at my e-mail address with your criticisms and comments. I can't promise I'll respond directly, but I can promise that I'll consider every point as I move toward a tenth edition. A number of the hypotheticals, or at least their topic areas, have been added as the direct result of student comments to earlier editions.

To all who read this book, I hope that you learn from it and enjoy it.

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