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Faculty Spotlight: Lori Ringhand

News @ Georgia Law November 2011 Faculty Profile

Name: Lori A. Ringhand

Title: Professor of Law

Courses taught: Constitutional Law, Election Law, State and Local Government

Hometown: Augusta, Wis.

Law school/graduation year: University of Wisconsin/1997

Other degree(s)/institution(s)/year(s): B.A./University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire/1992, B.C.L./University of Oxford/2001



1. What is the most rewarding aspect of being a professor?

- I love that moment when you realize something you have just said has resonated with your students and made them think hard about something they hadn't thought hard about before. You can see it on their faces when it happens, and it is one of the true joys of being a teacher.

2. What type of influence do you hope to have on your students?

- I always tell my students that I don't care what they think, but I do care that they think. Critical thinking is a skill. Like other skills, it has to be learned and practiced. People today are inundated with information, which makes the ability to critically appraise the things you are hearing even more important. I hope I can help my students develop and value that ability.

3. What do you enjoy most about your area of specialty — constitutional law?

- You can't understand constitutional law without understanding American history. Constitutional cases show us the growing pains of a young republic, the hope and horror of the Civil War, the challenges of Reconstruction, the vileness of segregation, the misery of the Great Depression, the fears spurred by two world wars, the courage of the civil rights era and, more recently, the consequences of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Constitutional law has been both shaped by and responsive to all of these things, which is what makes it so fascinating.

4. Are you currently conducting any research? If so, what is its focus?

- I'm writing a book about the U.S. Supreme Court confirmation process. Much of what we think about the confirmation process isn't grounded in the reality of what actually happens at the hearings. This book is going to change that. My co-author and I read hearing transcripts spanning more than 70 years. They are fascinating, and they show how the hearings, over time, help shape constitutional development in all kinds of good ways. It has been an exciting project.

5. What is your favorite thing about living in Athens?

- I live in the Boulevard neighborhood and enjoy the strong sense of community in that area. Kids play outside, people walk their dogs, neighbors talk to each other from their front porches — it is a really vibrant place to live.

6. What do you enjoy doing in your free time? What are your hobbies?

- I'm not sure I should admit this, but I am an avid knitter. Making something useful with my own hands is very rewarding. It is also very different than the things I do at work.

7. What do you consider your greatest accomplishment in life?

- I grew up in a small town in rural Wisconsin and ended up with a degree from one of the most prestigious universities in the world. I'm proud of that. More importantly, I hope my example can encourage our students — who come from all kinds of backgrounds — to reach beyond their immediate experiences and think broadly about what the world can offer them.

8. What book/resource do you find yourself referencing the most?

- Like Justice Black, I keep a little copy of the Constitution in my desk drawer. I am pulling it out constantly. I know this makes me a total geek, but I just admitted I spend my spare time knitting, so I figure I don't have anything to lose.

9. What advice would you give to current law students?

- Make a list of why you came to law school. When things get hard — and they will — use it to remind yourself why it is worth it. Later on, use it to remember why you wanted a law degree in the first place, and try to stay faithful to that when making choices about your career.

10. If you could share an afternoon with anyone, who would it be?

- My husband, Dan, and my dog, Fred.