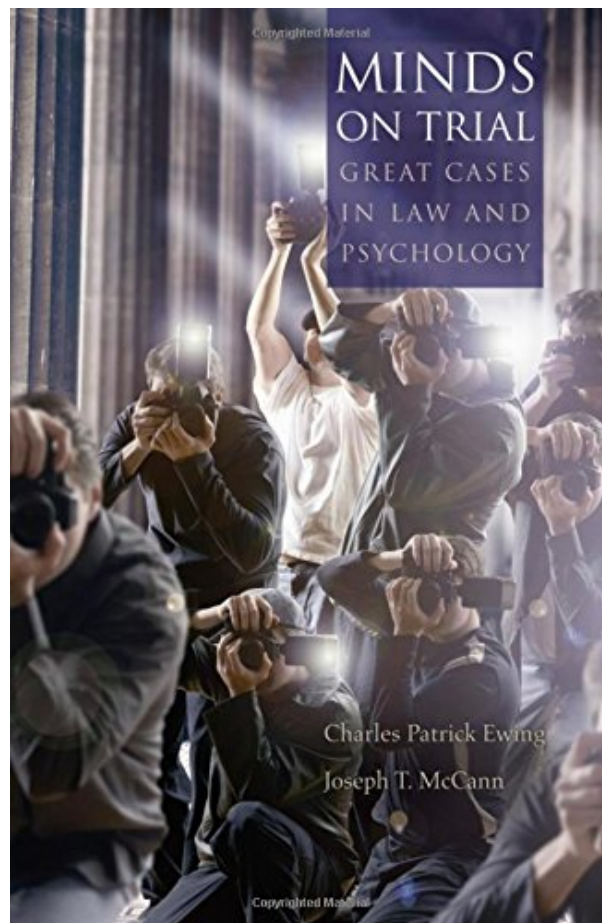
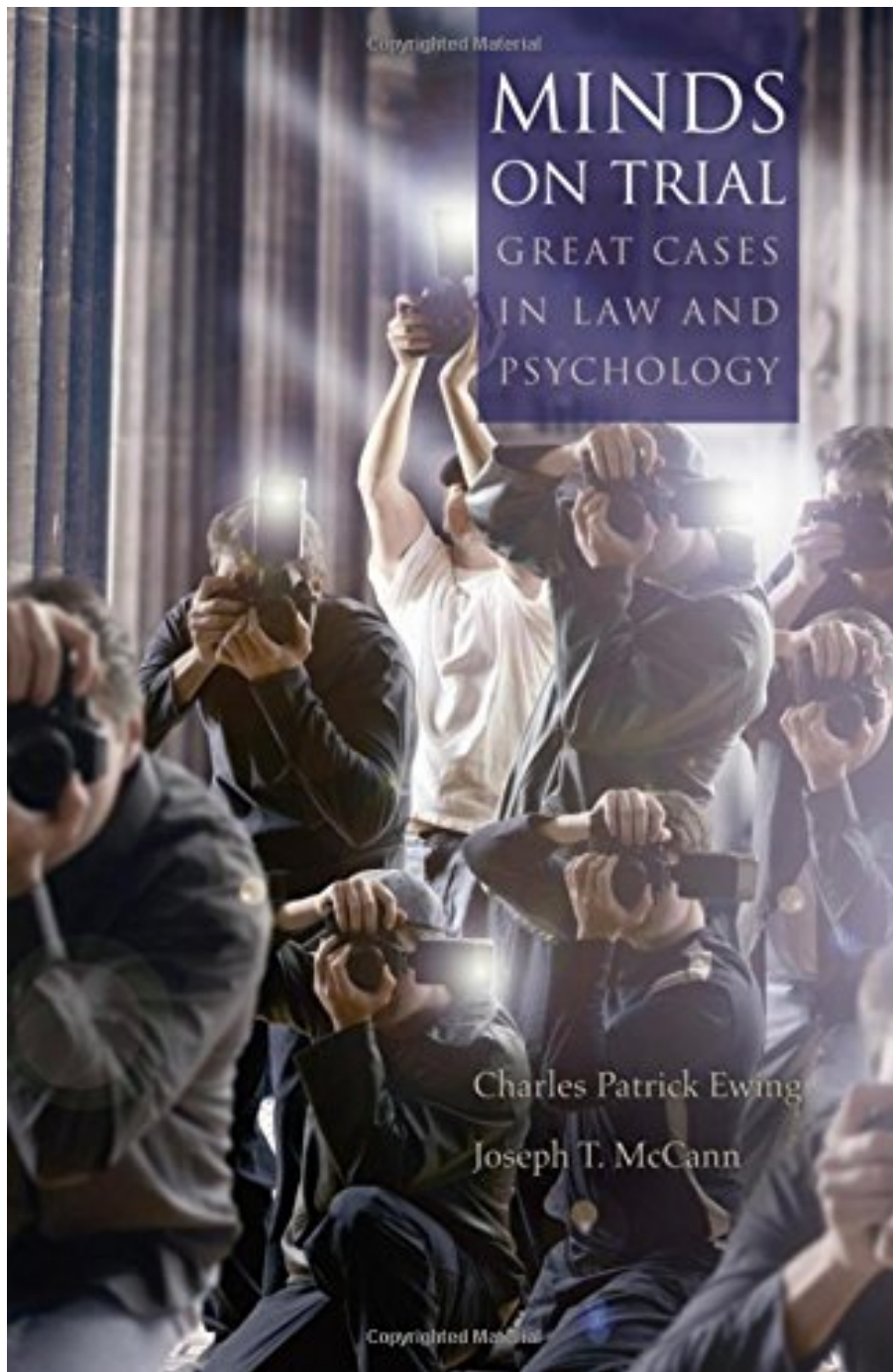


MINDS ON TRIAL: GREAT CASES IN LAW AND PSYCHOLOGY BY CHARLES PATRICK EWING, JOSEPH T. MCCANN



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Review

"...a thoughtful, well-researched and especially clearly written book that merits serious attention."--The National Psychologist

"This is a book that not only teaches, but entertains as well. The authors, well-respected forensic mental health professionals, make expert testimony come alive in a series of well known and not so well known cases, providing examples of expert testimony at its best and worst. Their analysis of the testimony proffered in these cases should serve to remind all experts of their accountability and the effects their opinions have on the lives of others."-- Alan M. Goldstein, Ph.D., ABPP, Board Certified Forensic Psychologist, John Jay College of Criminal Justice - CUNY

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In recent years, the public has become increasingly fascinated with the criminal mind. Television series centered on courtroom trials, criminal investigations, and forensic psychology are more popular than ever. More and more people are interested in the American system of justice and the individuals who experience it firsthand.

Minds on Trial: Great Cases in Law and Psychology gives you an inside view of 20 of the highest profile legal cases of the last 50 years. Drs. Ewing and McCann take you "behind the scenes" of each of these cases, some involving celebrities like Woody Allen, Mike Tyson, and Patty Hearst, and explain the impact they had on the fields of psychology and the law. Many of the cases in this book, whether involving a celebrity client or an ordinary person in an extraordinary circumstance, were determined in part by the expert testimony of a psychologist or other mental health professional. Psychology has always played a vital role in so many aspects of the American legal system, and these fascinating trials offer insight into many intriguing psychological issues. In addition to expert testimony, some of the issues discussed in this entertaining and educational book include the insanity defense, brainwashing, criminal profiling, capital punishment, child custody, juvenile delinquency, and false confessions.

In Minds on Trial, the authors skillfully convey the psychological and legal drama of each case, while providing important and fresh professional insights.

Mental health and legal professionals, as well as others with an interest in psychology and the law will have a hard time putting this scholarly, yet readable book down.

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Most helpful customer reviews

22 of 22 people found the following review helpful.

An Accessible Treasure

By Marty McCarthy

In "Minds on Trial," the authors, Charles Patrick Ewing and Joseph McCann select 20 cases from roughly the past 50 years in which there is a fascinating intersection between law and psychology. The work initially looks like a book the casual reader may have some difficulty getting through. Such is not the case as each of the 20 cases are broken down into manageable chapters and are written in such a way so as to engage even the casual reader.

The cases that are the most fascinating include, George Metesky and the work of the psychological profiler;

The Guildford Four which shows the danger of involuntary confessions; Prosenjit Poddar and Tatiana Tarasoff and the development of the requirement now known as a "Tarasoff Letter;" John Demjanjuk and vicisitude of identification testimony conducted over several year; and the USS Iowa and the failure of equivocal death analysis.

In many cases, the case comes down to a "battle of the experts" which illustrates just how important expert testimony has become in our legal system. The authors' only apparent bias appears to lie against those expert witnesses whose opinion is bought and sold by fee. In many of the cases, such biased experts take the hardest falls.

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful.

Educational and entertaining

By Karen Franklin

The authors provide a scholarly yet entertaining look behind the scenes to the expert psychological evidence in 20 renowned cases. Some of the cases involve household names - Lee Harvey Oswald, Patricia Hearst, Jeffrey Dahmer, John Hinckley Jr., Dan White, Judas Priest, Woody Allen, Mike Tyson. Others are seminal cases in which the names are less well known - the fascinating 1956 case of "mad bomber" George Metesky, credited with initiating the field of criminal profiling, the Guildford Four IRA bombing case in 1974 that led to psychological interest in false confessions (and Icelandic psychologist Gisli Gudjonsson's development of an instrument to measure interrogative suggestibility), and the case of Daryl Atkins, in which the U.S. Supreme Court abolished the death penalty for the mentally retarded.

This book is appropriate for both professionals in forensic psychology and law and also for laypeople who enjoy fact-based accounts of true crime. I assign my graduate students several chapters as examples of forensic topics. In particular, the chapter on the USS Iowa explosion, which catalogues the failure of the "equivocal death analysis" technique, is a great example of the shortcomings of forensic profiling. And the chapter on Colin Ferguson provides a vivid example of the whittling down of competency jurisprudence in the wake of the 1993 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Godinez v. Moran*.

Minds on Trial is well-written, factually accurate, and educational. Yet it still works as entertaining bedtime reading. I recommend it highly.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Stay Vigilant

By Slate-Dawg

I picked this book up for class. The narratives are good, and this is an interesting read; however, since I was having to do more research for class for these cases, I did find quite a bit of info left out of the cases. In some instances, the book will completely stick with the common myths for the cases and not tell the whole truth behind the story. Case in point is the story of "The Mad Bomber." Rather than, tell the true story of of the resolution which simply involves a secretary finding a forgotten record, the book concludes that the Mad Bomber was caught by some high-profile forsenic scientist which is simply not true. This is a decent supplemental to keep class interesting, but be weary of the book's accounts. Stay Vigilant!

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