WRITING STANDARDS

GENERAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

1. As a legal research journal, the type of writing readers expect to find within our pages is legal in nature—both in topic and form.

2. One of our standards for writing is, therefore, the extensive use of legal writing. This means an examination of legal issues surrounding practical or theoretical situations and how they relate to the law.

3. Even if your article discusses topics of justice or legal history, you are expected to submit a well-written legal work.

4. Logic is another pillar of a good article. When one is writing, it is important to make sure that all claims are founded in logic.

5. Likewise, writers must strictly adhere to factuality. When writing, you must back up your arguments using facts. You may interpret those facts to fit your arguments so long as those interpretations are logical.

6. When you are citing historical facts, figures, and events, make sure you are precise in your reference.

JOURNAL CONTRIBUTIONS:

Page Length:
Minimum of 10 single-spaced pages. (5,000 words).

Submission Requirement:

1. Submit as Plain Text (.txt) file, emailed to jurismentem@american.edu.

2. Do not submit a Word or Google document.

Formatting Requirements:
Must include: Title, Byline, and Endnotes.

Content Guidelines:

1. Articles may cover a wide range of academic subjects within the realm of legal studies, such as: jurisprudence, academic legal commentary, justice and criminology, and legal history.
2. Articles must address a specific academic research inquirty and offer a thesis.
3. Articles must delve beyond mere current events.
4. Articles are expected to maintain an academic and unbiased approach, supported by existing peer-reviewed literature.

Writing Requirements:

1. Headers are required for Journal Contributions. It is recommended that these include an introduction, conclusions, and more than two body paragraphs.
2. The introduction may be as long as necessary to prepare the reader for the subsequent sections properly. This section must include a thesis statement.
3. The conclusion should be no longer than two paragraphs, be an effective summary of information from the article, and prompt the reader to go further into your research subject.
4. Refrain from using the first person, and use appropriate and consistent use of legal terms.
5. The bulk of your analysis must be supported by peer-reviewed literature or case law. Do not cite databases such as Oyez or Westlaw. Follow BlueBook Citation rules.

DIGITAL CONTRIBUTIONS:

Page Length:
Between 2 and 10 single-spaced pages.

Submission Requirement:
The current process will be established by the Digital Director. If unsure, follow the following process:

1. Submit as Plain Text (.txt) file, emailed to jurismentem@american.edu.
2. Do not submit a Word or Google document.

Formatting Requirements:
Must include: Title, Byline, and Endnotes.

Writing Requirements:

1. Headers are not required for Digital Contributions. If you do include them, it is recommended that these are an introduction, a conclusion, and roughly two body paragraphs.
2. Refrain from using the first person, and use appropriate and consistent use of legal terms.
3. The bulk of your analysis must be supported by peer-reviewed literature or case law. Do not cite databases such as Oyez or Westlaw. Follow BlueBook Citation rules.

TITLE CONVENTIONS:

1. Effective titles for academic work can grab your reader's interest by revealing your paper's topic, approach, and argument. Here are some examples of effective titles:
   a. The Paper-Thin Constitutions: Paths to Authoritarianism in the United States and Venezuela
   b. "We Hold the Government to Its Word": How McGirt v. Oklahoma Revives Aboriginal Title
   c. The Subject Strikes Back: Intellectual Property Law, Visual Pleasure, and Resistance in the Arts
2. Titles must be clear and self-explanatory. Effective titles tend to be relatively long and contain multiple phrases. Developing the title of your work will shape the way your reader looks at it. Each of the examples includes two consistent aspects:
   a. The Hook: Like most writing, academic titles start with a creative catch. This eye-catcher tends to be a readable phrase that advertises the paper's specific subject. Another hook may be a direct quotation from a text that was either generally important to the work or was.
   b. Key Terms: Academic writings tend to start with an index of important words that relate to your subject. Using some of these keywords in your title will draw the attention of those who are interested in those terms and make your article more searchable.
3. Effective titles are not generic. They also are not going to state an obvious fact that the reader would assume. Additionally, titles like "Journal Article" or "Legal Research" are clearly too general and unhelpful. Likewise, titles that are entirely abstract and out of scope are inappropriate: "Legal Issues."
4. Avoid clichés at all costs as well: "A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words." This title is virtually meaningless and does not attract the reader.
5. Avoid clickbait. While it's important to create a title that captures your reader's attention, avoid using clickbait tactics that misrepresent your content or make false promises.

6. Consider tone. Your title should reflect the tone of your writing. For example, a humorous title may be appropriate for a lighthearted blog post, but not for a serious academic paper.

7. Edit and revise. Like any other aspect of your writing, your title should be well-crafted and polished. Take the time to edit and revise your title until it's the best possible representation of your content.

LEGAL WRITING HELP:

1. If you are struggling with developing your article—such as issues with word selection, establishing a logical outline, or finding sources to back up your thesis—it is always recommended to ask for help.

2. Juris Mentem editors are more than happy to assist you as much as you need throughout your writing process.

3. Editors are available for on-campus or online office hours at your request. Please reach out to your editor to schedule a meeting.

Generally Applicable Writing Tips:

1. Use simple and clear language—use short sentences for better readability.

2. Avoid legal jargon. Legal terms can be confusing and hard to understand, if used, provide clear definitions to make the terms understandable.

3. Use an active voice. It is more direct and engaging, and helps to eliminate ambiguity and confusion.

4. Be concise.

5. Use bullet points and headings: Use bullet points and headings to break up text and make it easier to read.

6. Avoid using complex language, unnecessary acronyms, or overly technical terms that may confuse your reader. Simplify your writing as much as possible.

7. Use examples to help clarify your points and make your writing more understandable.

8. Proofread and edit. Check for spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, and unclear language.