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Academic Law Review Writing

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Abstract

Simple words tend to produce concrete, understandable images.

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Simple words tend to produce concrete, understandable images. For this very reason, some modern academics avoid the plain and prefer the obscure. They want to stand above the crowd and gain peer recognition. Some hope to create new "schools" of thought to be named, of course, after themselves. This little essay is designed to help would-be academics invent unusual word combinations that are guaranteed to impress at least first year law students.

When considered in isolation, some words are innocent enough; but, if you combine them with less virtuous expressions, you can remove them from any rational range of comprehension. Consider, for example, the simple word "fundamental." Everyone, except perhaps a deconstructionist, understands what that word means. If you add "situational" and "discordance," you can create the monstrous but impressive expression: "fundamental situational discordance." Other words are monsters whether you combine them with other terms or let them stand alone, e.g. "reified", "homologation" and "deconstructive."

You, too, can appear learned when you write for the law reviews. You can attain an awesome level of vagueness by using the chart below. Try this simple three step exercise: (1) take any word from column # 1; (2) combine it with any word from column # 2; and (3) add a third word selected at random from column # 3.

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<i>columns: # 1</i>	<i># 2</i>	<i># 3</i>
symbolic	postural	discordance
fundamental	deconstructive	miscognition
equitable	economic	taxonomy
critical	orthodox	legitimation
articulated	neutral	epistemology
systematic	abstract	homologation
reified	situational	legality
modular	theoretical	universalization
formalized	assimilated	empowerment
transcendent	juridical	historicization

If you prefer to create your own three-column chart, please feel free to do so. With practice you should be able to move with ease among the law school intelligentsia. Indeed, you can become the very model of a modern intellectual.¹

1. Apologies are due to W.S. Gilbert and to Major General Stanley; however, as Samuel Johnson said in 1769, "Nonsense can be defended but by nonsense." JAMES BOSWELL, *THE LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON LL.D.* 78 (George B. Hill & L.F. Powell eds., 1934).

