

## Ernest Joseph Weinrib

The OCUFA Teaching and Academic Librarianship Awards Committee is very pleased to present a 2007 Teaching Award to Ernest Joseph Weinrib, University Professor, Cecil A. Wright Professor of Law at the University of Toronto and Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. Professor Weinrib is internationally recognized as Canada's preeminent legal theorist and, indeed, he is one of the leading legal theorists in the world. But, as his nominator wrote, his "achievements as a teacher and the impact he has had on the lives of countless students are, in my view, as important and deserving of recognition as his stature as one of the world's leading academics."

Words such as genius, humility, integrity, genuine, devoted and civility recurred in the letters from students and colleagues alike. One student wrote: "Becoming a lawyer is not just about learning the law. Being a lawyer is about being a person of good character who can identify ethical conflicts and hold oneself apart from the disputes between parties. No one teaches a course on legal character, but somehow Professor Weinrib conveys character in the way he conducts his lectures and interacts with his students, with decency, genius and wit. As a student you feel that you are in the presence of a great mind, but at the same time, a person of tremendous honour and humility - a person whom you might aspire over a lifetime to become."

A colleague wrote: "I myself have sat in on Professor Weinrib's classes on numerous occasions, so my impression of him as a teacher is personal and direct. To begin with, he is a master at engaging students in class discussions. Having no need for the system of calling on students, his teaching is such that all the students are extremely eager to participate. He teaches using the Socratic approach, but without the manipulations sometimes inherent to that tradition."

Another colleague and former student wrote: "...he genuinely sees himself as a student - as someone open to the task of learning. This is why he can teach his students to learn. It is also why he can pass on not only a mode of thought but a sense of confidence in the power of shared discourse - of conversation - to advance the human situation." This was echoed by a current student. "His lectures were funny, playful and engaging. Exchanges with students made for great theatre, as Professor Weinrib would play devil's advocate in an attempt to tease out our intuitions through his well crafted and infinitely malleable hypotheticals. He generated genuine intellectual excitement among the students."

In his essay, *The Teacher*, Professor Weinrib wrote the following:

"Contemporary legal education ties together two institutional activities. The first is the practice of law, capaciously conceived as the sum of the activities consciously governed by law, whether of lawyers giving legal advice, of citizens contemplating the legality of prospective actions, of legislators creating law within the limits of their jurisdiction, or of judges determining the rights and duties of litigants. The second is the university, the institution devoted to caring for the intellectual inheritance - the stock of ideas, images, beliefs, skills and modes of thinking - that compose the world's civilization. The law professor is expected to know and to teach the first of these institutional activities in a manner appropriate to the aspirations and functions of the second."

We honour Professor Weinrib with this award for the excellence with which he has achieved these expectations of a professor of law.

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