Although academics have never lacked for critics, publications on the profession tend to be either popularized polemics, which are engaging but misleading, or scholarly analyses, which are intellectually responsible but of little interest to anyone but specialists. In Pursuit of Knowledge offers an alternative: a unique portrait of academic life that should appeal to both experts and a general audience. Drawing on a wide range of disciplines, including higher education, history, law, sociology, economics, and literature, the book focuses on the ways in which the pursuit of status has undermined the pursuit of knowledge. Deborah Rhode argues that both individual scholars and institutions in higher education are caught in an arms race of reputation. The result has been to skew priorities in scholarship, erode commitments to teaching, compromise efforts of public intellectuals, and impede effectiveness in administration. The book offers several solutions to counter these pervasive problems in our research institutions. Rhode makes a case for increasing accountability and realigning reward systems. She argues that what is needed is a greater sense of responsibility among universities and their faculties to narrow the gap between academic ideals and practices. In Pursuit of Knowledge is meticulously researched and elegantly written. It is also exceptionally entertaining in its use of quotations culled from over a hundred academic novels, including works by Kingsley Amis, Saul Bellow, David Lodge, and C.P. Snow. (For example, from P.G. Wodehouses The Girl in Blue, The Agee woman told us for three quarters of an hour how she came to write her beastly book, when a simple apology was all that was required.) The result is a highly readable but also deeply reflective analysis of the academic profession.

My Personal Review:
Deborah L. Rhode, Professor of Law and Director of the Center on Ethics at Stanford University, provides a reasoned inquiry into the academic life
and its discontents. By rejecting hyperbole and trying to base her contentions as much as possible on facts rather than anecdotal evidence, she avoids the partisan slant which so frequently mars popular writing on higher education. She focuses primarily on two pervasive but rather mundane problems: the jostling of scholars and institutions for status and the increasing commercialization of institutions of higher education.

Rhode devotes chapters to all of the major dimensions of academic life: scholarship, teaching, administration, and the role of the public intellectual. She makes many points worth pondering along the way. For example, she notes that scholars tend to write primarily for other scholars because popular writing does not increase their status in their respective fields, which is ultimately what leads to tenure and wider recognition within the academy. This narrowing of academic scholarship contributes to a growing gap between academics, many of whom have deep knowledge but only in very specialized fields, and "public intellectuals," some of whom opine with great authority on a wide range of subjects about which they all-too-frequently know all-too-little.

"In Pursuit of Knowledge" is written by a scholar for scholars. There is a faintly Aristotelian quality to Rhode's study; she presupposes her readers have sufficient experience of the academic existence to make informed judgments about her reflections and recommendations. This book will likely thus appeal primarily to professors and administrators, who will no doubt also appreciate her many illustrative references to comic novels about the academic life.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
In Pursuit of Knowledge: Scholars, Status, and Academic Culture by Deborah Rhode - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!