

JUST TORTURE?

Course Syllabus

IFS 3069 (sections 1 & 2)
E-Series Course
Florida State University
Fall 2017
Tuesdays & Thurs, 2-3:15 p.m.
Diffenbaugh 204
TAs: Christopher Schwenk &
James Riggan (email addresses on p.6)

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The Liberal Studies for the 21st Century Program at Florida State University builds an educational foundation that will enable FSU graduates to thrive both intellectually and materially and to support themselves, their families, and their communities through a broad and critical engagement with the world in which they live and work. Liberal Studies thus offers a transformative experience. This course has been approved as meeting the requirements for the E-Series and thus is designed to help you become an interdisciplinary and flexible thinker; a lifelong learner; and a team builder. In addition, this course has been approved for the Liberal Studies disciplinary requirement of ethics and social responsibility and thus is designed to help you become an ethically engaged and socially responsible citizen.

Course Description:

What are the purported goals, justifications, and limits—legal, moral, and political—of torture practices, both historical and contemporary? How have the recent and on-going debates about the legitimacy of torture in America been shaped by moral and religious perspectives? In this E-series course, students will learn to think critically about a range of topics that include: history of torture; torture, pain, and “unmaking” the world; social psychological accounts of conditions making torture possible; genealogy of modern torture practices; democracy and recent proposals to legalize torture; comparative moral and religious perspectives on torture and its critique; and prospects for the abolition of torture. Course materials are interdisciplinary, drawing from history, social psychology, law (especially international human rights law), philosophy and religion, and the arts.

Course Objectives:

1. Analyze and synthesize information from within and across disciplines to: examine the complex phenomenon of torture from a variety of perspectives, formulate novel questions and ideas, and explain these questions and ideas in written and oral formats.
2. Think creatively and flexibly by envisaging new approaches to real-world scenarios or questions about torture by assessing critically how and why democratic regimes have contributed to and continue to support torture practices.
3. Learn, think, and solve problems independently and in teams, as is required to engage in the life-long consideration of, and the fostering of cooperative solutions to, complex problems surrounding the phenomenon of torture.
4. Evaluate critically how moral and religious traditions have responded to issues regarding the legitimacy or illegitimacy of torture, both historically and in the modern period.
5. Identify, comprehend, and resolve ethical problems surrounding the legitimacy of torture and their ramifications in a thorough and responsible manner.
6. Recognize and evaluate the history, social psychological dynamics, and moral, legal, and political dimensions that have shaped ethical perspectives about torture.
7. Develop and improve interdisciplinary and reasoning skills in coming to terms with a public policy challenge to civil societies the world over, and to explore the meaning, content, and implications of developing a critical and imaginative human rights sensibility essential to responsible citizenship.

Course Assignments:

1. Attendance and participation: Students will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that week and actively participate in specially designed discussions and debates. (10%)
2. In-class team-presentations and discussion leadership. There will be three discussion sections meeting concurrently in different locations. For each discussion section, students will be divided into presentation-leadership teams (generally 2-3 per team) and instructed to meet prior to the class and develop critical questions about the readings, as well as to bring in other relevant materials (often from the web). (25%)

3. Mid-term critical response essay (5-7 pages) on a specially assigned article.
(25%)

4. Final research paper (10-15 pages) on a topic pre-approved by the instructor *OR*
a critical review (10-15 pages) of a book from a list distributed by the instructor.
(40%)

All written work graded on substance of argument, engagement with course materials, cogency of argument(s), and lucidity of style; that is, everything counts in the instructor's evaluation.

Writing Competency:

To demonstrate college-level writing competency as required by the State of Florida, the student must earn a "C" (2.0) or higher in the course, and earn at least a "C" average on the required writing assignments. If the student does not earn a "C" average or better on the required writing assignments, the student will not earn an overall grade of C or better in the course, no matter how well the student performs in the remaining portion of the course.

Required Textbooks (Note: all other readings are on the University Learning Management System)

Edward Peters, *Torture*, Expanded Edition (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996),
John Conroy, *Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture* (University of California Press, 2000).

Darius Rejali, *Torture and Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2007).

Stephen F. Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect* (Reaktion Books, 2007).

Sanford Levinson (ed.), *Torture: A Collection* (Oxford University Press, 2006 edition).

Course Policies and Miscellaneous Information:

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to attend all classes. Unexcused absences will negatively affect the attendance/participation grade. For each unexcused

absence the attendance/participation grade will be reduced by 10%. Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family or other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official university activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

FSU Honor Code: The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectation, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to "...be honest and truthful and...[to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic---Honor---Policy>)

Religion Department Policy on Honors Violations: "The policy of the department of Religion is that all violations of the FSU honor code, even first offenses, will result in a grade of 0 for the assignment and will be reported to the Office of the Dean of the Faculties. Additional sanctions may be imposed by FSU as part of the procedure for resolving academic honor allegations."

American with Disabilities Act: Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC). Please bring a letter to class from the SDRC indicating you need academic accommodations. This should be done within the first week of class. Please talk to the instructor if you have questions. For more information services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the Student Disability Resource Center, 874 Traditions Way, 108 Student Services Building, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167. Phone: (850) 644-9566 (voice) (850) 644-8504 (TDD) email: sdrc@admin.fsu.edu Website: <http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

This syllabus is available in alternative format upon request.

Free Tutoring from FSU: On-campus tutoring and writing assistance is available for many courses at Florida State University. For more information, visit the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services' comprehensive list of on-campus tutoring options at <http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring> or contact tutor@fsu.edu. High-quality tutoring is available by appointment and on a walk-in basis. These services are offered by tutors trained to encourage the highest level of individual academic success while upholding personal academic integrity.

Syllabus Change Policy: Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and subject to change with advance notice.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

A Historical Perspective on Torture (focusing on Western Europe)

August 29-31: Course introduction and organization; discussion of “Convention against Torture” (CAT); Katherine Coleman lecture on torture in the classical period (video).

September 5-7: Edward Peters, *Torture*, pp. 1-102.

September 12-14: Peters, *Torture*, pp. 103-210; film scene from 1984.

Torture from the Inside (focusing on victim’s perspective)

September 19-21: Jean Amery, “Torture”; excerpt from Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*.

Psychology and Genealogy of Torture (case studies in the global context)

September 26-28: John Conroy, *Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People*, pp. 1-137; David Sussman, “What’s Wrong with Torture?”

October 3-5: Conroy, *Unspeakable Acts*, pp. 138-256; Philip Zimbardo “Ted Talk” on making torturers.

October 10-12: Darius Rejali, *Democracy and Torture*, parts I---III; mid-term papers due on October 12.

[Assignment: In a 1500 word essay, critically evaluate the assigned article on domestic abuse as torture (a topic not covered in the course) in connection with the United Nations Convention against Torture found at this link:

<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/39/a39r046.htm>

Essays are expected to relate to other course materials if and when appropriate.]

October 17-19: Rejali, *Democracy*, parts IV---V; Rejali torture lecture (video).

Bringing Torture Home (legal, moral, and artistic perspectives on U.S. torture)

October 24-26: Sanford Levinson (ed.), *Torture*, part IV (especially the articles by Derschowitz, Scarry, Posner); Paul Lauritzen, “Torture Warrants...”

October 31-November 7: Stephen Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, entire.

November 7-16 (2 weeks): Selections from special issues on torture from *Journal of Religious Ethics* and *The Muslim World*.

November 28-30: Excerpts from the Report of the Constitution Project's Task Force on Detainee Treatment, 2013, and the Senate Select Committee Report on C.I.A. Detention and Interrogation Program, released 2014.

December 5-7: Excerpt from Rebecca Gordon, *American Nuremberg*; class debate on whether and how accountability should be achieved for abusive U.S. officials.

December 13: Final Papers Due.

[Assignment: option of (1) a term paper approved by the instructor at mid-term, or (2) a full critical review of a selected volume from a pre-approved list (various disciplines, specific sub-topics, traditions, and/or geographical areas). Papers will be 4000 words long, and are expected to use course materials if and when appropriate.]

More detailed reading assignments will be distributed as appropriate.

Course Site Location: Canvas (log in with your FSUID to <https://fsu.instructure.com> or select Canvas icon when logged into <https://my.fsu.edu>)

TAs:

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