**PSCI 3100.002**

**The American Death Penalty**

Spring 2014; Wooten 116; T/Th, 9:30 – 10:50

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| **Instructor:** |  | |
| Dr. Wendy Watson | Office: | 129 Wooten Hall |
| e-Mail: wwatson@unt.edu | Office Hours: | T/Th 1:30 – 3:00;  W 10 – 12 and 1:30 – 4:30;  and by appointment |

**Course Description:**

This seminar-style course will explore the American system of capital punishment from a critical legal perspective. In other words, we will examine the legal procedures and questions presented by our system of capital punishment, but we will do so with an emphasis on the constitutionality, practicality, and morality of these legal procedures and questions. Students who complete this course should have an understanding of the American death penalty, but the goal of the course is to encourage critical thinking and writing skills. As a result, you should be aware that considerable reading (ave. 60 pages per week), class participation, and writing are required.

**Course Materials:**

Randall Coyne and Lyn Entzeroth. 2012. *Capital Punishment and the Judicial Process, 4th Ed.* (Carolina Academic Press).

**Assignments and Grading:**

Your grade in this course will be based on:

Minute Papers 10%

Reading Reaction Papers (2 @ 10%) 20%

Research Paper 30%

Exams (2 @ 20%) 40%

Total 100%

There is no curve in this class. It is thus possible that everyone in the class will receive an A. It is also possible that no one will receive an A. Grades will be based upon the following scale:

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: anything below 60

Incompletes will only be given to students who provide documentation of a serious illness or family emergency that prevents them from completing course requirements in a timely fashion.

**Minute Papers:**

We will begin each class with a “minute paper” – a quick response to a discussion question that I will pose. I will pass out index cards on which you will write your responses. Responses will be graded for completion, though I reserve the right to withhold credit if an answer is perfunctory or demonstrates that the student has come to class ill-prepared. If you are not present, you will receive a zero for that day’s minute paper. There will be a total of 26 minute papers. I will drop your six lowest scores, and your highest 20 scores will account for 10% of your grade. In other words, you get six “free passes.”

**Reading Reaction Papers:**

On the first day of class, you will each sign up for 2 weekly topics. Before that week begins (specifically, by 8 AM Monday, the day before we start covering a topic), you will submit a 4-5 page paper reacting to the readings. Your reaction paper should provide a critical analysis of the week’s readings (synthesize the readings for that week, identifying overarching questions or concepts; identify flaws in the reasoning of various readings; pose additional questions raised by but not addressed in the readings). Again, these short papers are due before we begin covering a topic. I will incorporate your reactions and questions into our class discussion.

**Research Paper:**

In addition to the short reading papers, you will each be required to write a 10-12 page research paper on a topic of your choosing. You are required to meet some interim deadlines along the way:

**Component Date Due Percent Grade**

Research Question February 4 5%

Annotated Bibliography March 4 15%

Draft (Optional) April 1

Final Paper April 22 80%

On February 4, you need to submit a one paragraph overview of the paper you plan to write, including a single-sentence research question that you plan to answer. That week (the week of February 4), you will need to schedule a 15-minute meeting with me (I will have sign-up sheets available the week before). We will discuss and work on refining your research question. On March 4, you will submit an annotated bibliography (a list of sources you will be using in your research paper accompanied by a 2 – 3 sentence description of each source). If you want me to read and provide feedback on a draft of your paper, you need to submit the draft by April 1; if you do so, I will return your draft by April 15 and the final paper is due on April 22.

**Exams:**

There will be two exams in this class: a midterm on Thursday, March 6, and a final exam on Thursday, May 8 (at 8 AM). The exams are non-cumulative and equally weighted. They will include a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. These exams will be administered online in the computer testing center in 330 Sage Hall.

***ADA Statement***: The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) as amended, pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty of their need for accommodation and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels. Information regarding specific diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining academic accommodations can be found at [www.unt.edu/oda](http://www.unt.edu/oda). Also, you may visit the Office of Disability Accommodation in the University Union (room 321) or call (940) 565-4323.

***Cheating and Plagiarism***: Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam.  Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, which may impose a further penalty.  According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to: a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to: a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

***Acceptable Student Behavior:*** Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.  The Code of Student Conduct can be found at [www.unt.edu/csrr](http://www.unt.edu/csrr)

**Course Schedule**

**Date Reading Notes/Due Dates/Activities**

1/14 n/a Welcome to Class, Sign-Ups, and “Death by Fire”

1/21 Chap. 1 The Great Debate

1/28 Chap. 2 The Eighth Amendment

2/4 Chap. 3 Constitutional Challenges

Research Questions Due

2/11 Chap. 4 Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

2/18 Chap. 5 A,B,&C Limits on the Death Penalty, Part 1

2/25 Chap. 5 D,E,&F Limits on the Death Penalty, Part 2

3/4 n/a Review on Tuesday; Annotated Bibliographies Due

Midterm on Thursday (330 Sage Hall)

3/18 Chap. 6 Selecting the Capital Jury

3/25 Chap. 7 Aggravating Circumstances

4/1 Chap. 8 Mitigating Circumstances

Optional Drafts Due

4/8 Chap. 9 Sentencing Phase

4/15 Chap. 11 Assistance of Counsel

Optional Drafts Returned

4/22 Chap. 12 State Recourse

Research Papers Due

4/29 Chap. 13 Federal Habeas Relief

5/8 n/a Final Exam: 8 – 10 AM, 330 Sage Hall