

Prof. Baumgartner
POLI 203, Race, Innocence, and the End of the Death Penalty
Fall 2014

Possible Paper topics for your second paper, due in lecture November 19, 2014

Note: You must submit your proposed paper topic to your TA in recitation during the week of November 3, and the paper is due in lecture on November 19. For the choice of topics, it's fine just to hand in a copy of this sheet with your name on it and one of the topics circled.

- A. Take one of these four cases: a) Greg Taylor; b) LaMonte Armstrong; c) Darryl Hunt; or d) Beverly Monroe. Lots of information is available on-line about all three cases. Compare the errors in your chosen case with what went wrong in the Bo Jones case based on the book you read in class. Base your analysis on published news reports, academic / non-journalistic publications, and readings from class. Also review the causes of error listed in the National Registry of Exonerations (<https://www.law.umich.edu/special/exoneration/Pages/about.aspx>) to place the case you focus on into context. How common are these kinds of errors?
- B. In class, we have highlighted the Racial Justice Act as a major piece of legislation directed toward bias in the justice system in North Carolina. Explain what the RJA is and why it was revolutionary. What are three key elements that make it so? Read the Supreme Court decisions and dissents in the McCleskey (1987) case and compare the logic in McCleskey to the goals of the RJA. Review carefully the arguments of those opposed to the RJA, including the question of whether the intent to discriminate is or must be a factor. Why do Professors O'Brien and Grosso (in an article assigned in class) say that NC "went where the McCleskey Court was not willing" to go?
- C. Develop a set of key-words associated with key elements of the death penalty debate (e.g., lethal injection problems, innocence, exonerations, deterrence, federalism, cost...) and track attention in two or more major newspapers available through the library's e-resources web site. Compare attention across the different papers. Be careful to limit your searched to death-penalty related stories, and do not try to study any trends if you have fewer than 25 hits per year, on average. So, work through your key-words to identify important elements of the debate, then track the number of such stories over time, covering at least 30 years. Analyze why you think attention shifted, and whether the media change was peculiar to one newspaper, or general across several. What can you learn by studying media coverage over long periods of time?

Paper technical requirements: Your name, date, section, title for your essay, the essay itself in 12 point font, 1 inch margins, 5 to 6 pages double spaced. Every paper must include at least some academic sources as well as journalistic sources. Academic sources means books published by university presses, articles you find in JSTOR, or official statistical and other reports issued by government agencies. Journalistic sources means magazines, newspaper stories, opinion pieces, non-governmental web sites, blogs, etc. In text citations and a works cited page (using either MLA, APA, Chicago, or APSR formatting style) should be included.