SC335.01  
Theorizing Torture  
Fall 2011  
Monday 4:00–6:20 p.m.  
Carney 104A

Instructor Jared Del Rosso  
Office McGuinn 410C  
Email delrosso@bc.edu  
Mailbox McGuinn 410, MB#15  
Office Hours Monday 1:30–3:30 & M/W by appointment.

- Course Description –

This course examines the historical uses of torture in order to address its contemporary relevance, as well as the practice of it in democratic societies. In doing so, we will consider important ethical, social psychological, and sociological explanations of torture. We will then evaluate these explanations through close studies of films, documentaries, memoirs, and investigations of historical cases of torture - such as during The Algerian War and at Abu Ghraib.

- Course Requirements -

(1) Preparation, attendance, and participation - 15% of your final grade.  
(2) Homework - 30% of your final grade.  
(3) Final Project - 55% of your final grade.

(1) Preparation, attendance and participation (15% of your final grade)

Assignment Overview: All students are expected to attend class and participate in class discussions. While I may not regularly take attendance, I will note frequent absences and this will influence your participation grade. Finally, I expect all students to contribute to class discussions. Keep in mind that adequate participation in class depends on adequate preparation for class and your participation grade will be based on the relevance of your participation to course readings and lectures.

I am aware that class participation can be quite stressful for some students. If you find yourself reluctant to speak in class, please contact me as soon as possible. I am quite sympathetic to this concern and am happy to offer advice on participating and will also strategize ways of incorporating you into class discussions.

Purpose: The purposes of the "preparation, attendance, and participation" are several. I find that course lectures are more interesting and useful to students who have thoroughly prepared for class. Additionally, preparing for each class will provide you with the overall background in the study of torture necessary to successfully complete your final project. By asking you to rigorously prepare for class and actively participate in class discussions, I hope to get a sense of our collective concerns about torture, so that I can adequately address them in future class periods.
Grading: A participation grade may often seem quite “subjective,” since they are few firm criteria on which instructors appear to be evaluating students; however, I have found that students who do the following typically earn high attendance, preparation, and participation grades: Regularly arrive on time for class and rarely leave early; inform me of planned absences, late arrivals, or early departures; share their thoughts (through email or in person) on readings and topics that they missed when absent from class; speak with a relevant dean if a personal or familial emergency prevents them from missing substantial class time or delays their completion of assignments; come to class prepared with discussion points, whether in the form of notes or marked passages in assigned readings; come to class prepared to discuss class assignments on the days that they are due; regularly participate in class; email me occasionally to share thoughts on course topics and readings; and meet with me once or twice during the semester to discuss their progress in and thoughts on the course.

Please consult the grading rubric, available on our Course Blackboard site, for further information.

(2) Homework (30% of your final grade)

Assignment Overview: I will make homework assignments, for classes 2–10, available on our Blackboard Vista site. Students are responsible for completing two assignments during the semester. Completed assignments must come from different “Parts” within the course schedule (see below), and I will circulate a sign-up sheet for each section. Assignments, which should be approximately 750 words, are due at the start of the class for which they are assigned.

To earn full credit for an assignment, you must be in attendance on the day that the assignment is due, bring the assignment to class, share your response to the homework during the designated class time, and turn in the assignment at the end of class.

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to facilitate class discussion by having a few students prepared to "go beyond" the readings during each class. The assignment also allows students to practice writing sociologically about torture throughout the semester.

Grading: See the grading scale for written work for more information. Each assignment is worth 15% of your final grade.

(3) Final Project - 55% of your final grade.

Assignment Overview: All students are expected to complete a research paper of approximately 3,000-4,500 words related to course themes and readings. I will provide a list of possible topics and research questions, as well as further guidance on the assignment, on the course Blackboard site.

Project components: Your final project has four components.

(1) Students are expected to produce a 500-word paper proposal by November 14, 2011. The paper should present the major themes and readings that have interested you during the semester and propose a specific topic or research question that you’ll pursue in the final project. The proposal is worth 2.5% of your final grade and will be graded on a credit (A) / no-credit (F) basis.

(2) Students must email a first draft of the paper to the instructor and one other member of the class by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, December 1; the first draft of the proposal is worth 2.5% of your final grades
and will be graded on a credit (A) / no credit (F) basis. Papers turned in on after the deadline, are still eligible to receive peer feedback; however, it is up to my discretion whether they will receive credit, partial credit, or no credit. Papers turned on Friday or later may only receive peer feedback if there is advanced discussion between the student submitting the paper, the reviewer, and me.

(3) Students must provide a peer review on one other student's paper by 12.05.2011; I will provide a guide for reviews and will organize peer review groups later in the semester. The peer review is worth 10% of students' final grades; I will grade reviews based on their thoughtfulness, care, specificity, and, to a lesser extent, length. Please bring two copies of your review to class 12.05.2011.

(4) A final draft of the paper, emailed to me at delrosso@bc.edu, is due by **11:59 p.m. on Sunday, December 11**. The final paper is worth 40% of students' final grades; see the grading scale below for more information on grading. I will consider papers that I receive after this deadline at my discretion.

**Purpose:** The final project has two major purposes. First, the assignment is meant to allow students to apply major course theories to a topic of their choosing. As such, students are encouraged to meet with me early in the semester to discuss topics and to informally research topics throughout the semester. I also encourage you to raise issues related your paper in class. Second, the assignment is meant, by incorporating several “parts” and peer review, to help students develop the writing skills necessary to communicate their ideas to a public audience. As such, students are encouraged to submit their papers to one of BC's two relevant undergraduate publications, *Elements* and *SocialEyes*.

**Extra Credit**—In the spirit of this course, which emphasizes active learning, you may earn extra credit by attending out-of-class events related to interrogation, detention and imprisonment, torture, human rights, or national security. For each event that you attend and provide a two-page (double spaced) written response to, I will increase your lowest homework grade by one-third of a letter grade (B+ becomes A-, for instance). You may receive extra credit for up to two events that you attend and provide a write-up on, increasing an individual homework grade up to two-thirds of a letter grade (a B+ becomes an A; an A (4.0) would become weighted at 4.67). Write ups must be submitted to me (at delrosso@bc.edu) within one week of when it occurs.

**- Grading Rubric for Written Work -**

**A or A-:** Work satisfies the requirements for “Credit” and also goes beyond the minimum requirements of the assignment by thoughtfully employing relevant and significant materials; exhibiting extraordinary care and thought with relevant course readings, concepts, lectures, and discussions; and referencing course materials appropriately and “talking back” to these course resources so one’s own thoughts or criticisms are apparent in the paper.

**B+, B, B-:** Work is related to the assigned topic and references important and relevant course readings, concepts, or lectures in an appropriate way; work satisfies the length requirement of the assignment; the paper is well-organized and its central argument is clear; and entry contains few, if any, grammatical mistakes or typos.

**C+, C, C-:** Work is related to the assigned topic and uses course readings, concepts, or lectures in an appropriate way; however, the paper may reference course readings, concepts, and discussions sparingly and may ignore significant, relevant ones; the work may not satisfy the minimum length requirement of the assignment; the paper may include some grammatical mistakes and/or typos that
obscure the paper’s claims; and the paper may also suffer from organizational problems that obscure its overall argument.

**D+, D, D-**: Work is loosely related to the assigned topic; it displays carelessness with course readings, concepts, or lectures, using terms in inappropriate ways and/or ignoring significant and relevant course concepts; organizational problems, grammatical mistakes, and/or typos obscure the author’s claims; and the paper may be significantly shorter than the minimum length requirement of the assignment.

**F**: Work is turned in late without an advance discussion or not at all; work is unrelated to the assigned topic; work references course materials in the most superficial of ways or not at all; and/or work lacks an overarching argument.

**- Final Grade Scale -**

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<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
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**- Course Readings -**

ISBN-13 978-0691143330 - Torment and Democracy - Darius Rejali

All other readings are available through our Blackboard Vista site @ https://cms.bc.edu/webct/

**- Course Schedule -**

**Note**: Readings should be completed by the date that they are assigned. Please try to read assigned materials in the order in which they appear in the schedule. I reserve the right to alter the course schedule with due notice.

**Part I: Framing the Debate**

(Class 1) 09.12.2011 - Class Introduction.
(Class 2) 09.19.2011 - What is torture?


SC335.01 : 4
(Class 3) 09.26.2011 - What is Contemporary Torture and Does it Work?
   c. Rejali – *Torture and Democracy*, Chapter 21. (If you do not have time to read the whole chapter, I recommend prioritizing pages 446–458 & 469–479.)

(Class 4) 10.03.2011 – The U.S.’s turn to torture.
   a. President George W. Bush – “Remarks on the War on Terror,” All.
   b. Mark Danner – “Voices from the Black Site,” All.
   c. Optional, but highly recommended: Senate Armed Services Committee – *Inquiry into the Treatment of Detainees in U.S. Custody*, “Executive Summary,” All.

10.10.2011 - No class meeting.
   Columbus Day.

**Part II: Explaining Torture**

(Class 5) 10.17.2011 – The historical decline and persistence of torture.

(Class 6) 10.24.2011 – The social psychology of torture
   c. Fiske, Harris, and Cuddy - "Why Ordinary People Torture Enemy Prisoners," All.

(Class 7) 10.31.2011 – Supply and demand for torture
   a. Rejali – Chapter 20, 405–445

**Part III: Political and Cultural Responses to Torture**

(Class 8) 11.07.2011 – Denial and the image of torture

(Class 9) 11.14.2011 – The "Modern Memory" of Torture
   **Final project proposal due.**
   b. Rejali - *Torture and Democracy* - Chapter 13, Pp. 280–285
   c. Yglesias - "If Mark Thiessen Doesn't Want to be Compared..."
   d. Thiessen - "Yglesias and the Slow Learners"
   e. Yglesias - "No one expects the Spanish Inquisition"
   f. Thiessen - "Yglesias admits his Ignorance."

   a. Viewing of selected images from Abu Ghraib prison.
   b. Susan Sontag - "Regarding the Torture of Others."

(Class 11) 11.28.2011 – Arguing Torture
First draft emailed to peer reviewer and instructor by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, December 1.

(Class 12) 12.05.2011 – Course Conclusion

DUE DATE: Peer review due in class.

No assigned reading.

Sun., December 11 (11:59 p.m.) – Final draft of research paper due

- Academic Integrity -

In class, we will work together to comprehend important readings on the history and dynamics of torture. In the spirit of this collective effort, please feel welcome to speak with classmates about course readings and assignments. However, your work must be original and, when using, paraphrasing, or referencing the work of another, you must include a citation of the source. I will treat plagiarism in accordance with Boston College’s Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures. Please note that in this class the minimum penalty for cheating or plagiarizing will be failure of that course requirement. Cheating or plagiarizing on a homework will, at the minimum, result in a failing grade for both that requirement and will significantly and negatively impact your "preparation, attendance, and participation" grade. In all cases, I will forward incidents of plagiarism or cheating to appropriate university administrators. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with these policies and procedures, which you can find at http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy.html

- A message on our semester together -

Having taught and assisted in a range of courses at Boston College, I am aware that the semester can produce any number of stresses, surprises, emergencies, and frustrations for students. If you find yourself struggling to understand course readings, class assignments or my grading, I strongly encourage you to speak with me immediately. I am always happy to share my thoughts on your assignments, as well as strategies for improvement. Of course, it is more helpful to have such a discussion before the final week or two of classes, which is when the reality of "the final grade" tends to set-in.

If you find yourself struggling to complete assignments or attend class, I strongly encourage you to let me know about your concerns. Additionally, you may want to speak with your class dean, who can provide you with additional support, particularly in the case of a family or personal emergency. You can find your class dean's name at http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/about/contact/a-and-s-deans.html. Contact information is available at http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/about/contact/directory-adm.html.