

SALEM PRESS

Published & Distributed by Grey House Publishing

For Immediate Release

October 22, 2019

Contact: Jessica Moody, VP Marketing
(800) 562-2139 x101
jmoody@greyhouse.com

Salem Press Announces the Newest Addition to the Popular *Defining Documents* series: *Capital Punishment*

Defining Documents in American History: Capital Punishment continues the tradition of Salem Press' *Defining Documents in American History* series in analyzing controversial practices and events that have helped shape American history. As the newest addition to this collection, *Capital Punishment* offers in-depth analysis of **over thirty documents** detailing the history of the death penalty, including letters, memoirs, newspaper accounts, book excerpts, speeches, court rulings, legal texts, and legislative acts.

These documents provide a full and engaging review of some of the most controversial and monumental court cases and the evolution of punishment for crimes through various judicial systems. The material is organized under four categories:

- **Constitutional Questions** begins with a documents such as the Great Muscovite Code, Hammurabi's Law Code, and the Magna Carta, which provided the foundation for the U.S. Bill of Rights by illuminating such important concepts as "Cruel and Unusual Punishments" and proportionality, and includes an analysis and discussion of the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution. These concepts have been argued through the courts and resulted in important decision regarding the constitutionality of capital punishment, through both opinions and dissents, in cases such as *Hurtado v. California* and *Furman v. Georgia*.
- **Mental Capacity and Age** examines important debates on whether or not a person with a very low I.Q., or who is under the age of 18, can ever be sentenced to death. This section includes decisions in *Atkins v. Virginia* and *Roper v. Simmons*, as well as a curriculum on the death penalty, "The Death Penalty for Juveniles" and reports about the execution of Aileen Wuornos in Florida.
- **Race** considers the issue of racial disparity in sentencing. Lynching is an inescapable part of the U.S.'s history, a form of capital punishment enacted outside the system of courts. Important decisions handed down in *Witherspoon v. Illinois* and *McClesky v. Kemp* have tackled questions related to not only the race of the defendant but also the composition of the jury. Statements from groups like Amnesty International and the American Civil Liberties Union are also included.
- **Methods** takes a close look at the ways that executions have changed over time. While public hangings and firings squads were once the norm, efforts to make capital

punishment more humane and to avoid inflicting undue pain or harm have resulted in such innovations as the electric chair and death by lethal injection. In statements from the American Nurses' Association (ANA) and Pfizer, it becomes clear that obtaining the appropriate staffing or materials for an execution are complicated and highly controversial issues. Inmates on death row have mounted cases against capital punishment, leading to decision is the following significant cases: *Wilkerson v. Utah*, *Louisiana ex rel. Francis v. Resweber*, and *Baze v. Rees*.

Each document is supported by a critical essay, written by historians and teachers, that includes a Summary Overview, Defining Moment, Author Biography, Document Analysis, and Essential Themes.

These documents provide an extensive view of how capital punishment has evolved over the years from Hammurabi's "eye for an eye" to compelling arguments both for and against capital punishment, in terms of its humanity, its cost to society, and its role as an effective deterrent to further crime.

About the Series

Defining Documents consists of a collection of essays on important historical documents by a diverse range of writers on a broad range of subjects in world history. The series offers a broad range of historical documents on important authors and subjects in world history, with primary source documents, in-depth analysis, and comprehensive lesson plans that represent the diversity of ideas and contexts that define social, political and cultural subjects throughout world history. *The Defining Documents* series is perfect for students, those researching a particular era, or anyone interested in world history. Visit www.salempress.com for more information about additional titles in this series.

FREE ONLINE ACCESS

Libraries and schools purchasing the printed version of any Salem Press title get complimentary online access to that title on our new online database, <http://online.salempress.com>. Combining Salem's Literature, History, Health, Science and Careers titles, students and researchers can now access all of their Salem content in one comprehensive site. Any school or library with print reference content in Salem Press' database is entitled to online access to that content. This access is an inherent part of our product.

Defining Documents in American History: Capital Punishment

Pub. Date: April 2019

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-64265-036-5

Ebook ISBN: 978-1-64265-037-2 | 2 Volumes, 396 pages | \$295.00

Publisher: Salem Press