



The History of the Death Penalty in the United States: Presented and analyzed on the basis of selected U.S. Supreme Court Cases

Jacqueline Herrmann

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Seminar paper from the year 2007 in the subject American Studies - Culture and Applied Geography, grade: 1-, University of Frankfurt (Main) (Institut für England- und Amerikastudien), course: Social Issues in U.S. Supreme Court History, 9 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Die Arbeit verschafft einen Überblick über die Todesstrafe in der USA. Dabei wird versucht die gesamte Geschichte der Todesstrafe von der Kolonialzeit bis heute zu skizzieren. Anhand ausgewählter Fälle des Obersten Gerichtshofes (vor allem aus den 1960er Jahren) werden Verfassungsmässigkeit etc. bestimmter Fälle diskutiert. Insgesamt verschafft die Arbeit einen guten Überblick über das gesamte Todesstrafensystem der USA (nur auf juristischer, nicht politischer oder moralischer Ebene)

Electrocution, lethal injection, gas chamber, hanging, shooting, beheading or stoning are different ways or instruments to execute a person who is sentenced to death.

Death penalty or capital punishment means the intentional killing of a person who is guilty to have committed a certain crime. After a legal trial, the person is sentenced to death. The way by which the death is put into effect depends on the country and its laws.

Death penalty or capital punishment is a very controversial topic concerning political, judicial and moral issues.

This paper will be about the death penalty prior in the United States of America.

In part I, I will present some facts and figures as well as give a short introduction to death penalty in general. I think it will be also necessary to outline the history of the death penalty in the United States. I will give a short overview of the most important developments from colonial times until the 1950s.

The 1960s constituted a big challenge for the legality and constitutionality of the death penalty. That is why I will analyze this period in particular in Part II of this work. I will present selected Supreme Court Cases and their decisions. Thus, I will try to elaborate the judicial developments of the death penalty in the United States. Therefore, I will deal with cases regarding the constitutionality of the death penalty; furthermore with cases on death penalty laws and limitations of the death penalty.

I want to emphasize that I will concentrate primarily on the judicial aspects of this topic, I will not deal with moral or political issues, but they might be mentioned additionally. By this means, I would like to examine how the death penalty is anchored in U.S. law and to find out which cases played an important role and contributed to this development. In so doing, I will draft a picture of the death penalty system in the United States.

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