

PPAI 2200: The Political Economy of Punishment
Lecture Outline: Why Do We Punish?

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- I. Why Punish? Punishment needs justification – even (especially?) to offender.
 - A. Think in concrete terms about particular crimes: assault; theft; treason; incest; perjury; vagrancy; drug possession/trafficking/use. Also, think about particular kinds of punishment: solitary confinement; juveniles; death; Abu Ghraib/Guantanamo; informal or self-imposed; ‘outing.’
 - B. Retribution: offender has ‘earned’ & public morality requires punishment.
 1. Moral Signaling (sending a message about what our values are)
 2. Shaming – Humiliation – Stigma (facilitating informal sanctions)
 - C. Deterrence: creating incentives to discourage future offending by others.
 1. Credibility problems: the ‘Samaritan’s Dilemma’
 2. Enforcement crowding: makes multiple equilibria possible.
 - D. Incapacitation: confining the criminal inhibits his further offending.)
 1. Heterogeneity: premium on identifying repeat offenders.
 2. ‘Three-Strikes’ laws use prison cells inefficiently.
 - D. How can ‘Collective Punishment’ be justified?
- II. To What Are Victims Entitled?
 - A. Do victims have a ‘right’ to retaliate or to seek revenge?
 - B. Does the victim somehow represent all of us? Does the offender?
- III. Some Analytic Examples
 - A. Punishment as a ‘public good’: The Repeated Prisoner’s Dilemma.
 - B. Social Effects and Individual Rationality
 1. The ‘reputation game’ (acting tough to deter aggression.)
 2. ‘Tipping point’ dynamics and ‘social multipliers’