

**EVALUATIONS OF PRIOR NEH  
SEMINARS**

**2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015**



**2019**  
**NEH EVALUATIONS**



## Evaluations for Punishment, Politics, and Culture, 2019

Evaluation # 28297

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

The learning experience at Amherst College studying documents concerning punishment was a rich and engaging month that will add tenfold to my teaching and intellectual life. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity. Professor Sarat gave us a new lens to look at how we teach our students. I will benefit from this seminar when I return to the classroom in the Fall. I have a new vocabulary and language to talk about punishment. For example, in teaching Homer's the Odyssey, I can use the lens of punishment to go deeper into the text. Or, when I am doing my scholarship, I will remember our discussions and the notes that I took to go even further in my learning.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The director, Professor Austin Sarat, is a seasoned NEH director. He has years of experience working with teachers and I felt right away he was happy to host us. Aimee Keddy was invaluable in providing pedagogical tools to help us in the classroom. The texts and ideas we discussed in this seminar were challenging but we were given plenty of tools, tips, and tricks to bring it back to our classrooms. I loved the open discussion style seminar and I appreciated how Professor Sarat challenged us to think analytically and to "argue against ourselves."

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College is a warm, inviting place. The dorm was well-suited to a group seminar study environment - and a place to live. The dining hall was just across the street and the meals were nutritious. The Robert Frost Library is top-rate and the librarians treated us like students. We were given access to electronic databases and it was easy to connect to the Internet and so on.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

It would be convenient if participants could pay in advance for their meals at Valentine Hall.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

I recommend a seminar on representations of Childhood in American Literature and Film - the essential question would be "How has representation of childhood changed and altered how we view children - and how does representation(S) of childhood affect theories of pedagogy used in our classroom.

Evaluation # 28301

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

I found the materials and the scholarship to be exemplary, and I feel that it will have a profound effect on my teaching. This is especially true, since I will be teaching Psychology and American Government,

and I can integrate elements from this seminar in both of those courses.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin Sarat is clearly very enthusiastic about his subject and his knowledge of the intricacies of the topic is nothing short of staggering. He was approachable, receptive and did everything possible to make each of us feel welcomed and valued.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College is beautiful. The facilities have been amazing, the hospitality is wonderful and the housing is comfortable and well maintained. Although I did not use the library to any great extent, what I did use of it and what I saw was well stocked and very modern. The staff was a tremendous help!

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Due to the vastness of the topic, I would not mind longer sessions each day. Also due to the vastness of the readings, I would have appreciated getting the course pack sooner.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 28307

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This experience has shifted my approach in my teaching. Austin's method of using readings and scenario-based and question-based discussions allows students to question what had been presumed to be common definitions for key terms in the course. It enabled us to better explore the complexity of the issues by showing how difficult it could be to agree upon a definition. In doing so, Austin also expertly demonstrated the importance of investing time in defining the key terms of a course.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin is an incredible professor whose knowledge of the course content and experience in teaching it is unparalleled. His facilitating of group discussion and his ability to create hypothetical situations to highlight complexity are two of his greatest strengths as a teacher.

The discussions in the seminar delved into unexpected depths and challenged the participants to think more critically and deeply than I had anticipated. It led to great conversations both within and after the seminar meetings.

The group presentations need more detailed explanations of expectations and instructions; it proved frustratingly challenging for many of us.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The host institution was wonderful. The buildings that we needed to access were all very close to the dorm in which we lived. The dining hall was a very cost-effective option for meals. The housing arrangements were good, especially with the AC. The only reservation is the cleanliness of the floors in the common spaces (it was unclear whether or not we were responsible for sweeping and vacuuming the floors).

The library staff were wonderful and incredibly helpful.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Reconsider how the group projects are structured. Otherwise, this is a very well-structured course.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

David Campbell at University of Notre Dame could lead a very interesting seminar on the factors that impact the civic life of the country, especially for the younger generation, or the intersection of religion and politics.

Justin Catanoso at Wake Forest could lead a very interesting seminar on Journalism or climate change.

Evaluation # 28327

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

Extraordinary! The successful facilitation of such difficult subjects is beyond admirable. Austin was able to respectfully present opposite sides of arguments, using texts and cases to help the seminar deliberate and think "beyond ourselves." I will be taking Austin's techniques AND subject matter back to my sociology classroom to "push" my students. I will be less afraid to address the controversial topics with my students.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

From start to finish, working with Megan on details; Austin and his extreme knowledge of the subject; our quirky classmates who "made" the conversations memorable and the driving need to read ahead and consider made for an exhausting but fulfilling experience. I haven't been pushed this hard to think outside the box in 15 years. Thank you!

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

EVERYTHING was perfect. Housing was gracious. Hospitality the same. We had everything we needed.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

None whatsoever. THIS was exactly as described-exhilarating, intense, memorable.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

N/A

## Evaluation # 28328

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This seminar was amazing. What I will apply most directly to my teaching will be the style in which the seminar was run by Austin Sarat. He began each class with a scenario which was in some way related to the topic we would be discussing. This was an excellent way of getting our minds working and thinking critically. More importantly, I will take a few key ideas which he presented and implore my students to consider them. One of Austin's lessons he imparted on us was that we should always "think against ourselves" in order to consider opposing viewpoints and strengthen our own arguments. This is something I certainly will be using.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The director was absolutely fabulous. I truly enjoyed the topics and the manner in which they were presented. Austin Sarat's ability to guide and react to discussions were enviable. His knowledge of the topic allowed him to be flexible in all discussions and create new ones on the fly.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The library and its staff were terrific as was the dining hall.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

I think this seminar was great the way it was.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

## Evaluation # 28346

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

Overall, this has been a rich, challenging and wonderful experience for me. I am grateful to be here and I acknowledge that this is a privilege that not many people are afforded as a part of their work lives. It should be. We all need opportunities to think about important issues, both in theory and in practical terms, no matter what our professions. Teachers are lucky to have this opportunity. This is not lost on me.

This experience has taught me valuable lessons about the importance of critical thinking, digging into difficult texts, "visiting" other perspectives and thinking deeply about what I think I know and believe. I look forward to bringing these ideas into my teaching practice in new ways and to also deepening my understanding of the content.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**



Director: Professor Sarat brings his insight, depth of knowledge, humanity and humor to the table while simultaneously creating a space for the seminar participants to explore our own ideas, grapple with our understanding, and pose questions in ways that push our thinking and support our inquiry. He is an exceptional thinker and teacher.

Colleagues: I have enjoyed connecting with and learning from the people around the seminar table. I especially like the divergent beliefs and ideologies that are represented. I wish there was more racial/ethnic diversity. I understand that there is a shortage of teachers of color in our country for multiple reasons. I believe the voices of teachers of color are essential in the process of constructing knowledge and hope that more is done on the part of NEH to recruit and encourage more diverse voices. I do not doubt that you are trying. I wonder how you might try differently.

Topics: Punishment, justice, mercy, cruelty, rights and responsibility...there is so much to read, consider, synthesize and discern. I love the focus of this seminar. It is forever timely. And today, it feels urgent.

I feel immersed in the punishment aspect, am excited by the politics part but don't quite see the "culture" connection in our work so far.

Discussions: Professor Sarat is masterful at facilitating discussion. The readings are so well curated. It is day 2 of week 4 and I feel like I am just getting my stride. The connections between the texts and the layers of ideas and perspectives are becoming more and more clear to me. I have so enjoyed the discussions and I have wished that we could spend more time on each reading. There is always so much more to say about each reading, but our conversations feel necessarily rushed. I would like more time to hear from colleagues about how they approached and interpreted the texts. I also realize that we could do whole seminar on many of the individual texts, topics and ideas that we talk about. I am sad this is ending soon. I need to find a way to continue my thinking beyond these four weeks in a systematic and disciplined way. Yet, I know this will be difficult. The work load is both challenging and manageable. I know my thinking would be more developed and clear if we also had writing assignments to go with the readings. But we don't have time for that so don't add it!!!

Organization: Megan Estes has been wonderfully organized and helpful regarding the logistical aspects of this experience. Everyone connected to this experience has been responsive, available and accommodating. What have we done to deserve this? (Teachers are not always used to being treated/respected this way.) I have also appreciated the time that we have to read on our own, connect with others at our discretion, and explore the area-alone and with new friends. I am working hard, learning, creating and having fun at the same time. These are the ingredients I need for a perfect summer.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

I am living off campus nearby because I have my dog. I do spend a lot of time at Drew House, Valentine Hall and the library. I think everything has been wonderful. Can it be too wonderful? I am having an embarrassment of riches tingle. Luckily the hoards of school-aged, camp-attending children in the dining hall have offered a counter-balance.

Shout out to the library staff and the dining hall staff and custodial staff.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

I believe more thought should be put into the "lesson plan requirement". Not on the part of our teachers here, on the part of NEH. When Deborah was here from NEH to observe the course, I got the impression that there is a concern about making the experience more accessible to more people. While I understand that impulse, I also want to stress that the seminar is powerful and impactful because it is a small seminar that is face-to-face. No doubt we will each go back to our school communities and share what we have experienced and learned as best we can. Perhaps NEH can think about how it can support teachers to do this in ways that are not burdensome, once the school year gets underway.

All that being said, right now I am overwhelmingly grateful to be here and feeling sad that we are ending soon.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Danielle Allen-  
Participatory Politics in the Digital Age  
(Democratic Knowledge Project at Harvard University)

Evaluation # 28356

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This has been a very positive experience for me, on both a personal and professional level. The experience enabled me to empathize more with the needs and struggles of my students--especially the challenges of reading unfamiliar and complex texts. It required me to stretch my mind and to continue in my quest to become a better listener and colleague. As an educator, I was introduced to new and refined pedagogical techniques, as well as to a number of texts and resources that will support the teaching and exploration of related themes we often find in literature, including revenge, punishment, justice, and democracy.

Finally, returning to the experience of becoming a student again, the seminars were helpful in reminding me of how we teachers can make students feel, regardless of our intent. While I don't think there was an ill-intent or malice, individual participants could be made to feel more valued for their contributions. Some participants appeared to be given a great deal of time to elaborate, while others not so. Some participants appeared to always say something that Dr. Sarat found profound or "fabulous," while his response to others was typically less enthusiastic. One participant in particular called out incessantly, paraphrasing Dr. Sarat's comments before we could digest them, muttering as others spoke, calling out responses, and pontificating for what seemed excessive lengths of time. Others weren't given such free range. In any classroom, this perceived inconsistency can breed hostility, make students divest from participation, and promote feelings of doubt. Again, the issue is not intent, as it is extremely unlikely that Dr. Sarat would aspire to make some feel more valued than others. But it was nonetheless important to be aware of what we communicate by our interactions, and what students may perceive. In the end though, Dr. Sarat is a master scholar and as committed an educator as there is.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Most evident about Dr. Sarat is his exceptionally broad and deep knowledge and command of jurisprudence for sure, but also of the Humanities as well. This guided his work with us, no doubt, but it also served to reinforce the importance of content knowledge as educators ourselves. Seminar participants were respectful of opposing viewpoints. As true with any residential environment, cliques are bound to form but these never appeared to interfere with our work or the larger environment. Participants were welcomed to be as active with colleagues as they wished, or to keep more to themselves.

To sure, working with adults (educators who were eager and invested enough in the content to apply for this opportunity) is a whole different animal than teaching students in our schools. Nonetheless, there are some pedagogical things that can apply to any learning environment, such the power Dr. Sarat beginning seminars by posing a "problem" which will require us to ponder our values and apply content from our readings.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst was very welcoming in all respects. Participants who researched staying off-campus to save a few bucks, felt the quality and convenience of residing in Drew House made the choice very worthwhile. Participants appear to feel Drew was very well (and stealthily!) maintained, and provided easy access to the dining hall, gym, library, seminar room, and local shops and restaurants.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

The syllabus was so ambitious and lengthy that it was continually revised, with a number of pieces eliminated. Many key pieces never got the time and attention they apparently deserved. It might be best to pare down the readings to the essential, or give selected participants the syllabus in advance. We received a list of books to read in advance, but little time was spent discussing them.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 28370

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

I cannot say enough about how rewarding an experience this seminar has been. It has greatly expanded my own critical thinking, provided me new lenses with which to create lessons for my students, and allowed me an opportunity to re-think my pedagogy to consider what I am taking for granted and what needs additional clarification. All of these, of course, strengthen my ability to craft and share lessons with my students. Finally, as a significant feature in my courses is how authoritarian states gain and maintain power, my exposure to this rich exploration of how and why societies' punish, will greatly enrich my instruction (and hopefully my students' understanding).

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The Director of the program is beyond compare. The breadth of his knowledge and ability to share it with the participants is incredible. He is genuinely interested in our views and ensuring that the program, in all its component parts, provided us all with a great experience. His willingness to share his time out of class to answer any and all questions we had was also wonderful.

Amie, who ran the break-out sessions, was a wonderful facilitator for our group. She too was knowledgeable and helpful and did all she could to help us organize the materials in a way that we could utilize in our schools. Moreover, I greatly appreciated the variety of materials provided. It was so enriching to come at the subject through fiction, non-fiction, film and other modes.

I loved the manner in which Austin ran the class. The use of hypotheticals and a Socratic approach to flesh out the meaning of the different terms, concepts, and materials expanded all of our thinking. I am also grateful that he made sure that everyone participated and that all ideas were explored. As a result, I was fully engaged during every moment of class and I was able to approach the reading with genuine interest and excitement. As was noted in our class, it is a spider web where all of our discussions connected and our understanding spiraled outward.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College is a perfect place for a seminar. It is beautiful and the facilities, especially the library, are fantastic. Our meeting room in the library was the perfect place. Megan, as our liaison for the program, coordinated all of our needs with kindness and efficiency. It allowed us to fully focus on the course without any other concerns.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

As I think through the program, there is not a single thing I would change. I feel incredibly fortunate to have participated in this program.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 28371

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

The seminar was excellent.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin was excellent. His ability to engage participants was excellent

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Facilities were excellent. Clean

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Field trips

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

No idea

Evaluation # 28380

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This seminar moved my thinking in ways I hadn't imagined. The pedagogy and the inquiry, in addition to the content, are all things that will improve my own practice.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

This was a thoroughly researched and planned program. The discussions were fantastic, the readings challenging but illuminating, and the overall organization made for a good flow.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

This was a well-oiled machine! We always knew we had support and all of the supporting cast repeated their offers of help and asked for feedback on how they could improve.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

I honestly can't think of anything. I felt so pampered, being able to engage in scholarship and discussion with so much support and wit intellectual and thoughtful people.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

I think something along the lines of civic engagement in America would be popular, but I don't have any recommendations for who could direct that.

Evaluation # 28388

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

Very much like the life-changing seminar I was a part of in the summer of 2003 (Arabic Novel in Translation), this seminar has challenged, enlightened, and informed me of numerous issues important to my role as a citizen and my role as a teacher. While I teach English, which may seem far removed from the content of this seminar, the important ethical, legal and moral questions Professor Sarat has posed throughout our discussions are valuable to me. The fundamental questions regarding punishment, justice, mercy, retribution, etc., are thematic issues that emerge again and again in the literature I teach as well as discussions I have with students. I cannot specifically point to information I plan to use directly in a curricular unit, but what I CAN be certain of is I will be able to facilitate discussions of these themes with students with far greater confidence. Intellectually speaking, I feel as though I have been challenged in my thinking and, in fact, have had an intensive taste of what it means to ask important moral and ethical questions. I have also gained even more appreciation for fundamental tools of our justice system which also includes being able to ask better questions of it.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Professor Austin Sarat is not only an exemplary teacher and scholar, but also an admirable, compassionate human being. He gives himself completely to his students and I believe I have been a honored witness of what great teachers do. If I could duplicate HALF of what I learned pedagogically in this seminar, I would be 100% of a better teacher. The reading was intense, but, for me, not because of length but because of the content. Film and literature, of course, are familiar types of texts for me. Reading Supreme Court decisions and dissents is not my typical fare, but I feel as though another door has been opened with this exposure (what that door will lead to, I haven't figured out). The interdisciplinary nature of this seminar attracted me to it in the first place, and the content did not disappoint. Because Amherst College and Austin have conducted the seminar a few times prior to this, organization and logistics seemed as good as they could ever be. Finally, as some previous experiences have shown me, my colleagues this NEH Seminar attracted could not have been a kinder, respectful, and passionately curious group. Thoughtful people with different ways of thinking, with different teaching experiences, from different types of schools--every teacher should expose themselves to such diversity each summer.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Any reason I had, as a commuter, to rely on Amherst College for direction was met with immediate response. Megan Estes, in particular, was superb as our AC "contact." I did not reside at Amherst, but obtaining a parking pass was no trouble (thanks to Megan) and having a key fob to allow me in the common area of the residence hall were all I needed. Since this Seminar falls under AC's aegis of Summer Programs, there were professional lawn SIGNS, as I approached Amherst campus, directing me to where I needed to go the first day. I have NEVER seen that at any other institution at which I had a NEH Seminar or Institute. That points to the seminar's visibility and its value to Amherst. Between the commute, the reading, and the seminar time, I could not avail myself of the Library services. My work-issued computer could not hook up with the Amherst server, so I had problems there, but that is not on Amherst. It's the way my school sets up our laptops.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

I would like to say, make it FIVE weeks, but I imagine NEH has commitments to keeping these seminars at 2-4 weeks in order to attract applicants. My only request, and this is personal, would be to hold the seminar earlier in the day.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Contemporary Literature from the Middle East (or some variation); The Essay Tradition in American/Western Literature. I have noticed a reduction in the number of seminars with a literature focus. Poetry/Arts and History (or some variation, consider Tracy K. Smith--former Poet Laureate--now at Princeton). At the moment, I cannot think of others.

Evaluation # 28389

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

I was searching for a philosophical underpinning for my civic unit on the opioid crisis in Southern Ohio since it is glaringly obvious that there is an interplay between punishment politics and crime. Prof Sarat

provided so many structural supports to anchor our study. As a result, my students and I will ask different questions and look for academic support that should extend well beyond the opioid crisis to general discussions about the purposes of government and the role punishment plays paying special attention to the inclusion and application of the 8th Amendment to the Constitution.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

There were 2 aspects of the program that were especially unique and appealing. Firstly the structure of the readings that daily connected literature or film to scholarly articles to Supreme Court cases was outstanding! Trained in history and government adding the extra layers of literature and film was fantastic because it really explained a part of the story on the culture and perspectives of society that explains the rest of the story in a far more humanizing way than I really exposed to in college and that would help connect students. Since I co-teach AP government with an AP Language teacher this may be a new and natural avenue to connect our content.

Secondly, his entire approach to teaching is a refreshing reversal of what our high school institutions seem to really prize right -- knowing the right answer. So much of my experience as a teacher has sacrificed the beauty of the open-ended question and a hunger for true learning into a competition for achieving test results. Of course 'high stakes' tests, computer graded only evaluate at the knowledge level where answers are right or wrong. Rarely do we have the opportunity to ask more of ourselves as teachers than to get our students to regurgitate the 'right answer.' Professor Sarat reminds us that perhaps that is a kind of indoctrination that is so harmful to protecting our democracy (ir)regardless of what we tell ourselves. Sadly I must admit that I am part of this system and have become so caught up in testing that I rarely even bothered to question it. Although the students and I have come to this opioid problem together only looking for answers, maybe this has saved me. So coincidentally the opioid crisis led me to the Professor, and he has modelled and prodded and finally simply explained that to tell students the answers to questions is indoctrination, but to help students learn how to questions and learn and creatively explore -- that is learning. So now I need to try and alter my intentions again. Thank you!

And also the pedagogical approaches reflected through Aimee's seminar's were so refreshing! Loved seeing the younger teachers show off their new tricks!

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Megan was the perfect hostess that anticipated our every need and the entire campus and community were glorious! Originally I expected something of an intellectual spa, but I have come to think of it more as a personalized chautauqua. Thank YOU!

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Ummmm...no. After 27 years I so appreciate growing and learning as a professional and as a person. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity both in time and resources to help me become wiser and by providing me with such a wonderful and wise and dedicated sage. I pray that he feels that using his precious time working with us (me) has not been pointless. He is a treasure.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with**

**contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 28404

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

The seminar was fabulous! It will make a lasting impact on my teaching and will benefit my students tremendously!

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Dr. Austin Sarat was deeply inspiring! He was well organized, thoughtful, researched and led meaningful conversation around difficult issues.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Housing arrangements were neat, clean and affordable. Dining Hall food was a minute walk and was both delicious and cheap (they gave a discount!).

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

The study was quite rigorous! I read more during this time than during grad school!

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Reformation History

Evaluation # 28418

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

The experience I had in this seminar was fabulous overall. The content and the way that Austin structured the seminar discussions really helped to push my thinking and challenge my own beliefs. Through the problems that Austin posed to us to think about, the proposed legislation we looked at for the State of Bliss, and the texts we read, I found myself constantly trying to define what I believe and needing to grapple with the areas where a set of beliefs I thought I had arrived at might not fit a new scenario posed to us. Austin really stressed reading against a text and against ourselves, and this really struck me in expanding my own thoughts. The seminar challenged me and made me think about ways to challenge my students around similar questions of laws and punishment in my courses. I have a lot of new ideas and questions that I plan to integrate into my curriculum as a result of this seminar, and already I find myself bringing questions that this seminar raised for me into my conversations with others, be they friends, colleagues, or students.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin was wonderful at facilitating seminar discussions and providing space for all voices to be heard. He also made a point of meeting with each of us individually at the beginning of the seminar and



getting to know us and what we are interested in taking away from this seminar. Overall, I felt heard and that my opinion and voice mattered because of the space that he created for us.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The facilities here were excellent. The housing was just what we needed and it was great to have a common space where we could gather. We had access to everything we could need at Amherst College - from the library to the dining hall to the gym. Megan did a fabulous job setting everything up for us when we got here and making sure any problems we had were taken care of right away.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 28423

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This was a memorable experience professionally, academically, and personally. As a new teacher, Austin really modeled for me what good teaching is. He listened to all of us so attentively, and he'd use all that we'd say to direct the seminar. His usage of formative assessment to drive the day's seminar and the seminar in length was instructional for me. As a new teacher, I realized that closure at the end of lesson doesn't add up to learning. In fact, true learning happens when the conversations, thoughts, and ideas linger. I found that my NEH colleagues and I continued the conversations we started in the seminar during lunch, dinner, happy hour! I think I might be more comfortable with not having closure at the end of a lesson more now than when I started this seminar. The seminar also piqued my interest in this subject of the justice system as the texts we read were so perfectly curated. Now at the end of the seminar, I understand the intentionality behind the syllabus' construction. Personally, Austin really pushed my thinking, but at the same time boosted my confidence so much as both a learner and teacher that it blows all the PDs I have attended in the last three years of my teaching career out of the water! Austin taught me not only a humanity subject that interests me academically, but he also has shown me what good teaching looks like (even better than some of the pedagogical profs. I had in grad school!).

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin is a thoughtful, caring, and brilliant professor. I couldn't have asked for a better program director and seminar facilitator. He knows his content and clearly loves teaching, which is refreshing and will remind teachers why they chose to answer their own calling. Even those who are not interested in the legal system but want a more wholesome humanities background will benefit from the topics we covered in the seminar. For instance, the usage of language in our society was a topic we frequented in the seminar every day. ONE activity that Austin often used in the seminar was the technique of storytelling and giving us hypotheticals to grapple with. I think these mental exercises helped us dive deeper into the content and it allowed for us to also examine our own perspectives and the language we used to describe, defend, or expand them. Overall, the program, Austin as the program head, the topics,

and the activities we did in the seminar were 10/10.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

I felt safe, comfortable, and warmly welcomed at all times. The campus is beautiful and I had access to everything to its full capacity. Austin asked us every day if there were logical issues that he could help take care. One of my colleagues was having trouble getting a book (because it was being ordered from another library associated with the Amherst library), and as soon he told Austin, lo and behold the next day my colleague had his book. The seminar hosts took excellent care of our needs!

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

N/A

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Punishment, politics, and culture 2.0! - Austin Sarat! NEH would be so lucky to have Austin continue teaching NEH programs to teachers. Any seminar he proposes, I will be sure to apply again and encourage other teachers to apply as well.

Evaluation # 28452

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This was a phenomenal experience. This seminar heavily impacted my pedagogy and content understanding, and I will return to my classroom in September refreshed and reinvigorated. I will pose more "big questions" to my students, require them to think more deeply and critically, and let them grapple for longer periods of time with essential questions.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Dr. Sarat is the finest educator I have ever met. He shows more individualized attention and love to his students than any other teacher I have ever encountered. He is thoughtful, kind, and CONSTANTLY thinking about the course material. His passion is contagious, and throughout the four weeks of the seminar, my colleagues and I frequently discussed our coursework during our "off hours." The activities and discussions we had in class were riveting and thought-provoking, and I intend to bring many of them into my classroom in September.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College is a fine institution. The college is beautiful, our hosts were extremely conscientious and paid great attention to detail. The library had all of the resources I needed, and the facilities were beautifully maintained.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

New furniture in the Drew House Common Room. (Drew House is the dorm where we stayed.) The couches seem ready for an upgrade.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Austin Sarat should be permitted to conduct ANY seminar he so chooses. It is a tremendous gift for any student or teacher to have the privilege of spending four weeks with professor Sarat.



**2018**  
**NEH EVALUATIONS**



## Evaluations for Punishment, Politics, and Culture, 2018

### Evaluation # 26229

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

Great resources. Knowledgeable professor.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The colleagues chosen to attend were diverse, knowledgeable, and open to discussions.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College was fantastic setting. The dorms, library, and staff were first rate.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Group projects presented the second and fourth week to give ample time between.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

### Evaluation # 26250

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

I have enjoyed the seminar "Punishment, Politics, and Culture." Austin Sarat has done a great job leading discussions and asking questions that challenge my way of thinking. The reading has also been challenging in that it has complicated my understanding of punishment and why and when we should punish others. Overall, I have enjoyed being a student again, and I have also enjoyed the intellectual challenges that this seminar has created. In regards to my teaching, I would like to try to integrate Sarat's discussion format (presenting a hypothetical situations related to the topic of the day to students to respond to at the beginning of class) into my own classes as a way to get students more engaged in their learning by asking them questions that pertain not only to history but to their own lives.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin Sarat has done a wonderful job developing and executing this seminar. He has been friendly and helpful, and with the help of Megan Estes very organized. I have also enjoyed how Sarat has organized the course around topics related to punishment. By thinking about what is punishment, why we punish, what punishment says about those who punish, and by mixing up the types of readings, Sarat has kept the topic interesting, and we have yet to find a shortage of things to discuss. My colleagues have also been a pleasure to get to know and have all appeared invested in the seminar and have much to contribute. I also enjoyed getting to work with my colleagues to develop group presentations and enjoyed getting to learn from the other groups. My colleagues have also done a great job or organizing

events for people to take advantage of what Western Massachusetts has to offer.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Although I have not been living at the host institution, I have gotten the impression that Amherst College has provided my colleagues with all that they need. I, myself, have felt welcome to use the library and have found the on-line resources helpful.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

I would prefer changing the time of the seminar so that it was earlier in the day to allow more time for other activities in the afternoon.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 26264

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

Professor Sarat's "intellectual summer camp" on Punishment, Politics and Culture will invigorate my teaching practice in the long term by connecting me to a wide range of teacher perspectives on topics central to classroom teaching.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Group projects were effective and engaging, and the professor-led discussions were provocative and challenging.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The facilities are incredible.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Create more opportunities for teachers to share perspectives on topics related both to teaching and the topic of the seminar.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 26287

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

The seminar was an incredible chance to become a student again. Aside from the amazing content that helps me think critically about my own teaching practice, just the experience of being a learner in a group setting has greatly improved my ability to reflect on the experience my students have in my own



class. This has built so much empathy for my students that I hope will continue to impact the way I approach teaching.

This seminar was valuable precisely because it can be relevant to personal growth and reflection, which in turn makes us better teachers and better people. I am so grateful for the NEH to support programs like this one that honor the value of learning as a process, not a product, and seeing the value inherent in giving teachers the space to be students outside of formal, practical professional development.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin is incredible and puts so much effort and care into facilitating thoughtful, respectful, and reflective dialogue among participants. The syllabus is carefully curated and allows a variety of perspectives to be unpacked and explored, and reflects a mix of genres that fostered a holistic approach to the seminar topic.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst was a wonderful host and provided more amenities than we could have hoped for. Drew House was wonderful and staff, especially Megan, were unbelievably accommodating and supportive.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 26291

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

My experience has been incredibly positive and enriching. It has made me think about many issues I had already thought about, but in new ways. I look forward to taking many of the questions raised by the seminar to my classroom in my accompanying unit.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Everything was perfect. The director was attentive and caring and intelligent, everything was impressively put together and structured. I cannot be more glowing. The reading was substantial but there was also substantial time to complete it and still be social.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The dorm was wonderful, everything was close and convenient, parking was convenient. I have no complaints.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

None

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 26296

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

Great insightful seminar.

I liked how the sources provided a wide range of views and mediums (films, court cases, novels etc) on the topics and issues.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Great to work with a diverse group of highly intelligent colleagues.

Professor Sarat was delightful and engaging.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Housing and resources and facilities were amazing.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

More group projects and presentations perhaps once per week and less reading material

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 26303

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This seminar has been a positive and interesting experience, and I have learned a lot about my own thinking as well as the various opinions about punishment theory. I don't know how directly this information will transfer into my classroom, but this is not a flaw-- it is actually really important for teachers to have the opportunity to learn and think and explore new, complex information without trying to insert it directly into lesson plans. Instead, the frameworks, ideas and questions from this seminar will help me to reconceptualize how and why I teach certain pieces of my curriculum and how I deal with complex, controversial topics in my classroom.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin Sarat is an entertaining, insightful, and very knowledgeable seminar leader. He does a great job of introducing interesting concepts and perspectives, and also prompts us to question and defend our own opinions. He has also put together a very thoughtful, carefully planned reading list, which is

crafted to build our understanding over time and allow us to put different perspectives in conversation with one another.

My colleagues in the program have been, overall, great. One thing I think NEH needs to work on, based on this experience, is bringing in greater racial diversity. 15 out of the 16 participants in my seminar are white, and it is important to make sure these opportunities are actively made available to all teachers. It is also important that diverse perspectives are included in our conversations.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

This was all great-- the housing was comfortable (as far as dorm beds can be comfortable), Drew House is beautiful and has everything we need, and I appreciate that we were the only group in the house.

The only complaint I have is that the room in which we met for our seminar did not comfortably accommodate our entire group-- not everyone fits around the table, so there are always one or two people set off from the table. This is a problem for a seminar in which we all need to be able to see and respond to each other, as well as have table space for reading and writing materials. Pretty room, and cozy, but not functional if we can't all sit in a circle, with no one boxed out, and see each other.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

This seminar is more theory-based than reality-based. For me this could be frustrating at times-- ultimately it's still worthwhile, and it's certainly interesting and fun to kick these ideas around, but at times I was frustrated that the conversation took place in a philosophical, academic space that wasn't always tied, via facts, to real life impacts that happen to real people.

Overall, I really enjoyed the professor, the seminar, the structure, the readings, and the people. Thank you for an interesting and enjoyable month.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 26305

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

Simply being back in student-mode is such a re-invigorating and exciting experience. It reminds me how important good questions and good discussions are to learning. It inspired me to get better at leading discussions and I am going to take what I saw Austin doing in our discussions (withholding his own ideas, listening to all sides, further questioning, giving credit to ideas he disagreed with) back into my classroom's discussions. The way we discussed difficult topics through universal concepts of justice, cruelty, mercy, pain, etc. by combining our personal ideas with experts' ideas is a method of study that I would also like to bring back to my classroom because it allows students to feel like their ideas matter. I will also use the knowledge I gained from this seminar to inform my own understanding of the death penalty when I read about it in the news and discuss it with colleagues.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Director was excellent at engaging participants in meaningful questioning without inserting his own opinions which would stifle the conversation. He was also very friendly, helpful, hilarious, and his interest and passion for the subject was contagious. His one fault is that he occasionally does not answer students' questions satisfactorily and seems to dismiss them at times if they don't fit with his direction for the discussion. Colleagues were also all intelligent, curious, and co-operative. Discussions were incredibly engaging and there was full participation by everyone. Group work was the only real activity: they were as well executed as they could be, although I personally was not satisfied with the way my groups chose to carry through the task.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Excellent. Megan Estes was super responsive and helpful.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

A little too much reading. Give less assigned reading so we have more time to delve into the sub-topics we are personally interested in that the readings bring up. Also, for some of the theory readings, a bit of background/definitions of the key terms would have been helpful for people inexperienced in the subject.

Could school-related punishment be delved into a bit further?

More out-of-class bonding organized by the seminar would have been helpful to foster group dynamic earlier on. Bowling?

In terms of the group: there should really have been more of a racial diversity in the group and there didn't seem to be much of a range of political views. Both of these things, although I don't know how feasible they'd be, would have enriched the seminar.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 26329

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This was an incredible intellectual experience - rejuvenating; stimulating; relevant. Austin was an excellent instructor who managed the seminar well and I appreciated the mix of perspectives and ideas the group brought to each session. These topics will make their way back into my classroom and will continue to inform my personal life (ethical commitments, intellectual interests) for a long time to come.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin set a great tone for the seminar from the beginning. I appreciated how he made a point of privileging collegiality and equity, both by cold calling each person at the start of each session and by stressing how intellect isn't everything (saying, for example, that there are more important things in life than seeming smart - which was welcome encouragement in such a capable cohort). I laughed harder and thought harder than I have in a long, long time.

Each reading built on the ideas of every other. I particularly appreciated the literary sources (Job, Billy Budd, and Beloved) and films as they complemented and expanded upon the legal and philosophical import of court cases and judicial precedent. I wasn't totally sure what I thought about capital punishment when I came into the course, and now I feel even less sure than I did and have questions I hadn't even thought to consider before; that's perhaps the greatest compliment I could give to an intellectual experience. The readings came from many different perspectives and Austin helped us put them in conversation with one another. I will always remember his dictum: "empathy before critique" and plan to use this with my own students back in the classroom.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst is an incredible campus and Drew House proved exemplary accommodation (so thankful for the air conditioning units!!!). Megan Estes made all of the logistics for the program seamless. So smooth from start to finish. I think moving seminar sessions to the library (rather than Clark) would better serve the group so that no one was crowded out of the table.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Easier access to quarters for the laundry machine.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

This would be an even more amazing seminar could we actually visit a prison and learn from/with incarcerated persons. I don't know how realistic that would be and imagine a host of concomitant ethical issues, but what could be more powerful than actually applying what we learn to a real world context? Other than that, I hope this particular seminar will continue every year in the future so that Austin can continue to inspire (and entertain) many generations of NEH folks.

**Evaluation # 26339**

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This has been an extraordinary learning experience. I have learned so much about how to select readings and facilitate discussions in ways that foster creativity. Being able to read about law and punishment in diverse genres and perspectives has been instrumental in my thinking about how to operate as a Humanities instructor. The quality of the conversations and camaraderie was superb.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin Sarat is a phenomenal director, who gives as much care to his students as he does to the content of his teaching. Wonderful sense of humor that does not detract from the seriousness of the topics at hand. He models true critical thinking - driven by conviction as much as by empathy and question-asking. Totally fabulous in every way. My fellow teachers were wonderful all and I enjoyed hearing about the diversity in our professional experiences.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Everything was completely top-notch. We lived and worked in palaces. Megan Estes was a fantastic hostess before and during our stay at Amherst. She went above and beyond to make sure we lived well and meaningfully here.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

While I enjoyed the group projects, I would have enjoyed an individual writing assignment in addition to/in place of the projects. There were so many connections to be made among the texts and I would have loved to have written about the connections I was making and would have liked an opportunity to see my peers' thinking in writing as well.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Sarah Willie-LeBreton (Swarthmore College). 610-328-8319.

Evaluation # 26359

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This month was enjoyable. I learned a lot of good lines of questioning for my students, and the study was interdisciplinary. It was interesting thinking about puzzling questions to stretch students and using a series of these questions to challenge student thinking from different directions. Also, we discussed a range of texts (from legal cases to fictional stories) that will help me consider how to better supplement interdisciplinary texts for my class.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

For me, the subject of abortion seemed outside the realm of the topic of the seminar. Like many academic settings, people largely held similar views, which made it difficult to discuss such a controversial topic.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College is a Pleasantville. Everything was great to the point of being eery :)

Megan Estes is totally fabulous.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

I felt that the class was not altogether open-minded to different points of view. I often saw that people would judge and discredit other people personally based on their thoughts in class. I think it's so important at an academic table to understand that conversation is part of an imaginative exercise. That is, you can entertain ideas safely without adopting them as your final opinion on the matter. There was sometimes a sense of the "right answer" before thoroughly discussing different possibilities. The question of justice is central. What is lost with only mercy and not justice? This is a very old question, and not simple. Sarcasm and presuming that everyone thinks the same way ("Yay abortion!" said one person) tends to closet people who do NOT think that way.

In particular, I felt the discussion of abortion was not fair at the end of a seminar on punishment. I don't think that that topic can be discussed given how personally felt it is for people, particularly people who

have had an abortion. What if I disagree with the reading that Sethe killing her child because she doesn't want her child to have a life of slavery is analogous to a woman's right not to be enslaved by the state for 9 months as a pregnant mother? What if I think that, in the end, a reader must acknowledge the killing of Beloved as a terrible tragedy? Can I say in a room with someone who has said, "Yay abortion!" that abortion is a tragedy? What if in that room is someone who has had an abortion?

How bizarre that after weeks of hearing about human dignity and arguments that even one life is infinitely precious and even the phrase "respect for life" - how bizarre to realize that in that room someone can claim -without acknowledging any difficulty - that Roe vs. Wade is so clearly the right thing. How bizarre to hear the conversation about publicizing the death penalty with footage of the event - many were for it (I was not). Would people feel differently about publicizing an abortion?

The discussions often precluded different opinions by virtue of the tone that overlaid it. This tone and its censoring action was unrecognizable to the people using it. Even in one evening discussion when a member pointed it out - that he felt mocked when he spoke - another member with largely liberal opinions had no idea and even needed examples to illustrate this phenomenon. I found this so, so sad.

My experience of academia is that overwhelmingly it is an institution that tries to reproduce its beliefs. This is understandable - what else is education after all? However, it's a problem to me that nearly all academics have the same leaning in politics and that nearly all people who feel that they can speak freely in class have those same politics.

It was also hard in a social way to continually monitor my opinions so that I was not too much of an outsider in the group.

-Mary Sweeney

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 26413

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

My experience was very positive. A key component of my contentment with this program is that it was learning for its own sake: I completed the readings carefully and on-time because I wanted to contribute to the learning of the group. In my many years of schooling, this is the only class where I have ever completed ALL of the readings. Austin created such fertile ground for conversation that I felt deeply motivated to come prepared to listen, speak, and learn for every session.

The seminar will impact my teaching because it has changed the way I think about running a class. I appreciate how Austin took control of the discussion (at first I was skeptical of this strategy, until I realized that it worked) and called on everyone to answer an open-ended question. This style prevented people from both dominating the discussion and retreating from it. Nobody was competing for his/her voice to be heard because we all trusted that, eventually, we'd have our chance.

My scholarship is in theology and philosophy. The content of this course and the questions it posed has opened a new branch of philosophical theology for me, and has enabled me to develop the skills to utilize legal thinking and texts in my work.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin Sarat: extremely skilled at facilitating an open conversation. Considering the topics we were investigating, it would have been very easy for our discussions to devolve into either an ideological echo chamber or harmful debates. Neither of those things happened. Austin was careful to treat everyone equally. The result of this equal treatment, I believe, tampered down the natural tendency of people to 'show off' or become defensive. I appreciated how Austin limited references to specialized knowledge/texts outside the scope of the course. Austin strikes a great balance of being positive and supportive of what we say in class while at the same time pushing people to actually answer the question at hand and give charitable readings of the texts.

I thought the readings were well-chosen and the sequence was effective. My only critique of the readings is that it was a little disappointing to read longer texts (Beloved, Eichmann) and then discuss them for such a short amount of time.

I enjoyed learning from my peers in the group projects and am happy that I have a hard copy of the materials from those projects.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Megan Estes: her care, advance planning, and attention to detail was so appreciated. It's obvious that the logistical success of the program is due to her professionalism and skill.

I cannot speak too much about facilities because I did not live on campus, but I never had any problems with library access, parking, online resources, etc. I appreciated having full library access.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Since the program has ended, I realize that the residential community formed on campus is a big part of the NEH experience. A part of me regrets not living on-campus and joining that community. Living on campus was not possible for me because of my family situation--I don't resent this and ultimately believe it was the best decision. My peers were still extremely inclusive. It would have, though, been helpful to know ahead of time that the residential experience is not an accidental attribute of the program. Had I known this, I would have been more deliberate about participating in community events earlier on. It might be nice to add an FAQs sheet for participants coming with their families.

It was enjoyable and generous for Austin to have 1-on-1 meetings with each of us. I wonder if these could be better framed to make the discussion a little more challenging or fruitful. For example, Austin could have people answer a few questions in writing leading up to the meeting.

I would have been nice to go around the room at the last session and have everyone offer a few words of closing--what he/she learned, will miss, appreciated about the group, etc.



It was great when Austin took us out to pizza the first week. I think it'd be even better if there were some kind of "mandated" social activity every week to promote kinship among the entire group (I'm thinking here mostly about people who didn't live in Drew having a chance to socialize). While we're all adults and were able to organize our own outings, there is something different and important about an outing that the 'people in charge' organize.

I think it would make discussions even better and more open if Austin clamped down on the tendency of many of us to talk about the "we." For example: "We hated the Morris reading." No, "we" didn't hate the Morris reading, some people did and they have erroneously chosen to speak for the group. Again, while we are adults and should be able to self-monitor these things, I think it would be a good ground-rule to restrict people from making statements like this. It was actually the only time when I felt a little offended by my peers (I don't want to exaggerate--this was a small thing and I really loved our seminar!). Presupposing what others think creates a toxic environment that encourages a subtly dominant groupthink that inevitably excludes some people. I did feel that by the end of the seminar, there were some people whose comments were often poo-pooed by other group members. To be fair, I believe that Austin is acutely aware of these group dynamics and does his best to monitor them in a spirit of positivity.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

I would love to see more philosophy seminars. While there are very few secondary teachers who teach philosophy courses, it's such a valuable framework of thinking and is totally inclusive of people from all disciplines.

Evaluation # 26445

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This was a fantastic experience. It was an incredibly interesting, informative, and intellectually challenging seminar. Additionally, it was wonderful to be amongst colleagues that are passionate, brilliant, kind educators and citizens. I leave the seminar feeling refreshed and invigorated in my profession. I would recommend this seminar to any teacher, no matter what content or age group they teach. Not only did this seminar make me a better teacher, but it challenged me to clarify and affirm some of my deepest held beliefs about punishment, hate, love, compassion and how to move forward when people make mistakes.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The program coordinate, Megan Estes, was incredibly helpful and organized. She made the stay seamless. Austin Sarat organized a brilliant seminar. Each week built beautifully off of the content and questions from the week prior. All of the readings were challenging and thought provoking. Austin facilitated profound and thought provoking dialogue between the group members each day, truly making sure that each voice was heard equitably.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The institution is fantastic. The housing arrangements were clean, well organized, and comfortable. The library facilities were incredible and the staff very willing to answer any questions or help us find anything we might need.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

**2017**  
**NEH Evaluations**

## Evaluations for Punishment, Politics, and Culture, 2017

Evaluation # 24745

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

Fascinating topic expertly introduced and paced by Dr. Sarat except that the group of teachers was not diverse enough. The diversity question is even more pronounced due to the disproportionate impact the subject of this seminar has on black, hispanic communities across the United States. For this reason only, more black & hispanic makes ought to be present.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

All of this was excellent, though the town of Amherst is quite dull.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The Charles Drew House was excellent except for the small, single beds. The location, relative to the cafeteria and classroom, could not have been better.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Greater inclusion of African American males and Hispanics

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Race as Social Construct yet REAL & IMPACTFUL

Evaluation # 24748

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This course has given me several more perspectives to think about regarding punishment - particularly around ideas of why we punish and what kinds of punishments are just. I believe that this course has given me the philosophical foundation to rethink punishments and consequences in the classroom and in a school setting.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The director was very engaging in the seminar and Megan Estes, who arranged all of the housing, paperwork, and logistics, was amazing! She was so organized, so responsive, and did an extraordinary job of making sure that we were settled in and enjoying our time in the seminar. Austin was very funny, incredibly knowledgeable, and really helped us lead deeply probing conversations in and out of class.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The facilities of the host institution were very good - we were provided equipment in the kitchen for cooking, a TV, air conditioning, and very clean rooms. The library was wonderful, even though I did not use it much.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

It would have been great if we knew beforehand the size/things available for the "kitchenette" in the housing - I would have brought fewer things had I known that all of the cookware was available.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 24765

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This seminar was excellent in all respects. The course was highly organized, the readings were focused, thoughtful, and illuminating. The other participants selected were engaged and enthusiastic. This course will be very useful for me in my classes in helping students formulate ways in which they imagine the role of punishment, politics and culture--and methods and modes of social justice.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The director, Austin Sarat, is a phenomenal instructor. He is very clever, thoughtful, focused, funny, draws everyone in with his smart and clever hypothetical situations that allow us to gain insight from the general to the specific argument. Topics were excellent and the entire course was highly organized and had a really strong outlined purpose and plan that, being said, also allowed for participants to freely share their insights, experiences, and understandings. Discussions were focused and Prof Sarat did an excellent job facilitating these discussions, allowing everyone a chance to share ideas and encouraging those on the quieter/more contemplative side to be drawn in as well. Group projects were interesting and the products were really informative and creative.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College was an excellent host institution. Facilities were great, access to dining hall, gym, meeting room(s), library were easy and within close proximity of each other. I did not stay on campus but participants who did seemed to find the spaces appropriate and comfortable. The library at Amherst College is great with really helpful staff and good computer facilities.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Reading lists were excellent--it would have been good to have another week for this highly packed and intellectually challenging course. More time with the other participants and with Prof Sarat would have also been useful to tackle even more of the material.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 24783

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

My four weeks at Amherst will be a treasured memory in my career as an educator. The privilege of engaging in intellectual discourse that is (at least on the surface) completely unrelated to the nuts and bolts of teaching will, I believe, make me a better educator. As Austin predicted at the opening barbecue, I have learned (or relearned, as the case may be) the experience of being a student just as much as I have learned about punishment. Austin is a master facilitator, one that inspires not only desire to learn but deep curiosity about the questions and issues that we grapple with in class. I leave Amherst in hope that I will be a more compassionate and thoughtful educator as a result of Austin's example and the association of my fellow seminar participants.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The seminar content is fascinating, challenging, rigorous, and very well-executed. Austin has selected readings from a variety of fields that not only build upon one another but are in constant conversation with each other. The combination of fictional, sociological, legal, theoretical, and artistic meditations on punishment force the participants to examine the portrayal and reality of punishment from many different perches. While the reading load can be intense at times, it really is worth it to keep up. Seminar itself is 2.5 hours of mental calisthenics. The readings and Austin's teaching style stretch, grow, and challenge all participants.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst has been incredibly welcoming! Austin and Megan have made all logistics seamless, and the library and dining hall staff have been very accommodating. I cannot believe how easily and quickly I adapted to life at beautiful Amherst!

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

The beds in Drew House are a bit, how you say, uncomfortable. Perhaps encourage participants to bring/buy their own pillows and perhaps a mattress topper. Otherwise, they might be waking up with sore necks and backs! :)

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 24788

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This was an excellent course. The command of the material by Austin is impressive and made the course so enriching. Seeing his level of preparation for each class reminds me of the power of a prepared teacher.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The course readings are rich and demanding. There never seemed to be a "wasted reading."

My colleagues were always prepared and thoughtful. It seemed like everyone was committed to doing their best for each other and for Austin.

The course is all taught through discussion and often Socratically. There is room for everyone's ideas and Austin takes pains to support ideas through the text.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College couldn't be more inviting. It is a lovely campus and everyone was helpful and eager to assist you with any problems. Also, the library has a very advanced collection.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

The text could stand to be recopied. Many of them have a few sentences cut off the bottom. It is minor, but it would be a good college student project to get a clean copy for the packet of readings.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 24789

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This has been an excellent seminar that has enriched my knowledge of issues relating to punishment in the United States and has opened my eyes to various areas of related scholarship. I have always considered the idea of going into education policy in the future and this seminar has added to my desire to pursue that field later in my career. As a social studies teacher, this has been an invaluable lens to look through when considering US History. My time here has also made me consider ways to incorporate controversial debates and actual supreme court cases into my middle school curriculum, something I had never considered before but will have a huge impact on the critical thinking skills of my students and their understanding of citizenship.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The seminar incorporates a wide range of challenging texts and films that cross topics and perspectives. The director is an expert at getting the participants to engage in meaningful discussion about controversial topics and has a talent for fostering an encouraging and fun yet challenging and intellectual environment. The group projects have been particularly interesting, as it has allowed us to branch off into specific areas of interest and has allowed a range of topics to be introduced that might not have been explored otherwise.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

I am not staying on campus, but have used the common room of the dorm on a regular basis for group meetings and film screenings. I have also visited the gym and gone to the dining hall and have found the staff to be welcoming and the facilities to be high quality.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Even though this seminar is four weeks, it feels like it is ending too quickly. It would be great to add one extra week.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

N/A

Evaluation # 24791

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

My overall assessment of the NEH program "Punishment, Politics, and Culture" is that it was deeply enriching in terms of studies. From day one, we were led through a variation of American jurisprudence topics in order to assimilate the nature of law, its reasoning, and institution. The program was very intriguing as we were granted the ability to bond with the cases, philosophers, judges, and the real-life victims in one way or another. The program provided us every reason to look forward to the next day's learning as it continued to cure our curiosity of how things worked. It was nothing short of awe, and to refer to the program as "simply the best" is an understatement. The program has definitely enriched my teaching skills as I am better equipped to elaborate on punishment, politics, and culture in our society. As a participant of the program, it will also help me to further my studies in leadership as I plan to further conduct research on the relevancy of punishment in schools.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin is an excellent professor of law. I absolutely loved the way he delivered the cases in retrospect of today's law. He systematically implemented a way to hand-deliver every case or essay in a fashionable, orderly manner, allowing a bit of ease in material, which was very rigorous. His pedagogy, not content, played a huge part in the program---no one was ever "wrong" because he respected everyone's perspective, even after he would dispense the underlying facts.

The discussions were very insightful, engaging, and enlightening, and I loved the fact that students were able to coordinate and execute projects based on what we had learned (from Austin) within the time in the program. Being confident of what Austin had instilled in us was the overarching and most defining moment as he so proudly and wondrously watched and applauded in the end. He even participated in groups! Austin is one exceptional person and professor.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Megan was very helpful from the welcoming letter to every day check ups. I was thankful that she placed herself only a phone call away--even when she had a moment of sickness, she never skipped a beat.



The Drew House was all that I hoped it to be. The commons area was very comfortable, the kitchen provided all the amenities, and the housekeepers always did a wonderful cleaning job. Austin would regularly refer to hypothetical cases as being in a "state of bliss," and to add to that, I do believe that Amherst is actually the "state of bliss."

I marvel at how every person, and I do mean every, is delighted to assist you, whether it be the Valentine Dining Hall associates or a regular person on campus. Pedestrians are able to cross the street safely because drivers stop without hesitation in order to see them do so. Blue lights are assembled throughout the campus to allow you to reach the police, who actually make rounds throughout the day. Everything is within a reasonable distance if you are traveling by car. However, I can't believe how in luck we (2017 participants) were to be housed at a dorm that was essentially across the street from the study house, the cafeteria, and the library. Even some of the local restaurants and stores were within a two mile radius. That is what I call being very fortunate. I can never forget Amherst and its people. Job well done, NEH.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

No, not one improvement is needed.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

N/A

Evaluation # 24796

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This experience was completely fabulous! It was refreshing and challenging to dive into complex texts and conversations with our group. The facilitation style will be informing my work with my students next year.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The director is a highly skilled facilitator. Every class was engaging, thought provoking, challenging and fun. Quite a feat! My colleagues are thoughtful, interesting and came prepared to classes. The topics selected fed well into one another and each class deepened the conversation. The sequencing of the course was well planned and executed. I enjoyed the group projects.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The host institution was great! The housing is comfortable and close to the classroom. The library, dining hall and gym are convenient and welcoming. It is close to town and there is a lot to do.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Thank you!

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 24798

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This seminar has been a real shot in the arm for me. It has been a pleasure to take on the role of student in a room full of thoughtful and intentional teachers. The past four weeks have been a clinic on how to work through difficult topics in the classroom with generosity and a growth mindset. I hope to incorporate a number of the readings, discussion topics and group projects into my history classes. But more broadly, I can imagine incorporating Austin's pedagogical approach to enrich discussion in my high school classes.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin Sarat is a fantastic program director. Clearly he is a master of the seminar's content. But his ability to facilitate deep and dynamic seminar discussions has proven to be just as important to the success of each class. Austin's assistant, Megan Estes, handled any and all logistical questions in a snap. And finally, the assembled group of participants has really brought the seminar alive for me. This diverse group of teachers has enriched an already rich curriculum with their different experiences, perspectives and opinions.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

It is apparent that Amherst College works extremely hard to make its campus user friendly for students and visitors. This fact, coupled with the added care that our NEH program provided, made Amherst quickly feel like home. Our orientation was extensive and points of contact accommodating, so after the first few days I felt like I could take advantage of all the school had to offer. Austin and Megan work extremely hard to ensure participants have a great experience!

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

None.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 24800

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

There are so many things I will take away from this summer -- I have had a wonderful experience with NEH. Austin united our group from the beginning by saying that his main hope for us is that we will exude "generosity" during our time together. This made me think about how I would like to build classroom community when I go back to work in the fall. Austin began almost every class with a philosophical question, and this made me realize how I need to figure out a way to have more classroom discussions because they are powerful tools for engagement. The theme of the course continues to make me think critically about when I apply thin or thick forms of justice in my classroom and school. The readings and discussions make me think about how powerful a teacher's love for his

students can be, and how sometimes it might be the only path towards changing a student's behavior and outcomes. From a more scholarly perspective, reading Supreme Court cases for the first time helped me see how arguments are formed in our legal system. I also saw how one might begin to pick apart these argument by examining their logical fallacies or sweeping assumptions. One of my main jobs is to teach students how to make persuasive arguments, so it is essential that I get more practice at this myself.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Our program director, Austin Sarat, is a charismatic and wise teacher who makes everyone part of the class discussion. His teaching style -- part participatory theater, part Socratic -- made for serious but lively debates. We tackled dark subjects (punishment, torture, the death penalty), which I had not deeply questioned until this summer. Our weekly group projects every also gave us the opportunity to incorporate our own interests into the seminar, and it facilitated our discussion of these topics during our free time. The program was very well organized thanks to Austin and Megan. The expectations were laid out clearly from the beginning and everything ran on time. This was a good model for how an effective class runs.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College made me feel welcomed to the town and institution. We received a tour of the campus and a thorough introduction to the library. It has been a treat to study in this library, and I was able to check out books and print assignments there. Although I opted to find my own housing arrangement, I was happy to know there was also a very suitable housing option for me on the campus had I chosen that.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

It seems that Dr. Sarat has led this seminar for several years and thus has fine-tuned the syllabus and learning experience for his students. The only suggestion I can possibly think of is to give us slightly higher quality copies for a couple of the readings (Herbert Morris and McCleskey v. Kemp).

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 24810

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

Punishment, Politics, and Culture has been a great intellectual and academic experience. The curriculum is extremely well planned and Austin Sarat leads the class with a lot of enthusiasm, care, and foresight. The course has helped me think both about my practices as an educator and about potential applications to curriculum and school culture building.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The seminar participants were a particularly motivated and interesting group of people. I feel lucky to be have been part of this group, the diversity of opinions, experiences, identities, and contexts that people were coming from was essential to making the class work.

Austin is a skilled seminar discussion leader. He values everybody's opinion, instills a sense of fun, and leads the group towards profound points and themes while being flexible enough to go with an organic discussion model.

My major suggestion is to incorporate more sources that come directly from people's experiences with punishment and the criminal legal system. Essays on the experiences of crime victims and prison writing would both would make some of our abstract and theoretical discussions much more grounded and respectful of the actual experiences of people.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst is a great place to spend time in the summer. The food, library, facilities, and general setting have all been great.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

See above

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 24822

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

What a fabulous experience! It's been a pleasure to stretch myself intellectually under the guidance of a master educator and in the company of a diverse group of thoughtful, reflective teachers. I love that the content of this seminar was a bit out of my comfort zone, which forced me to use parts of my brain that I haven't used in a while. This seminar served as a welcome reminder of what it's like to sit in the student's seat, which will help me to better serve my students when I return to school. I've also been inspired to take greater risks in my own teaching, chiefly by designing an inquiry-based course for next school year and by daring to tackle bigger questions (e.g., what is justice? what is mercy?) with my students as we study literature--and even as we discuss classroom policies. On a personal note, I've discovered that I love reading about the law, and I am happy to have a slew of new titles to add to my ever-growing reading list.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin Sarat is a master educator. He's whip-smart, extremely knowledgeable, encouraging, approachable, generous of time and spirit, engaging, and interested in others. It's been a delight to wrestle with these challenging ideas and texts under his guidance. I've also enjoyed working closely with this assembled group of educators and have found their contributions to the seminar to be as enriching as the content of the seminar itself. The course is elegantly designed (a model I intend to emulate) as each week's inquiry sets up what follows, and each week's content echoes (recursively)

what came before. The seminar discussions are lively, challenging, enlightening, and fun. There's variety built into the text selections (a range of genres and styles) and just the right amount of student-directed group work. It's been an honor and a privilege to participate in this program.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

This is by far the most hospitable, well-appointed professional development opportunity I have ever participated in (and I have participated in several). Every detail was anticipated and met. Both Austin and Megan have been very communicative, friendly, and generous--from the application process, to helping us get settled in the dorm, to repeatedly checking in with us, to creating opportunities for social interaction, to introducing us to campus facilities--seriously above-and-beyond caliber. Also, every Amherst personnel I have interacted with has been professional and friendly.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

The only thing I'd change is to make this seminar one week longer. Punishment, Politics & Culture is a beautifully designed inquiry-based course, and each week's focus (questions and readings) leads to the next. There is nothing that can be removed without compromising the integrity of the course's structure or essential focus. If the seminar were a week longer, that would allow for a bit more reflection in terms of synthesizing everything and discussing how we'll use this newfound awareness and understanding moving forward. Five weeks is a long time, but I think it would make the seminar that much richer.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

none

Evaluation # 24826

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

The Punishment, Politics and Culture seminar was unquestionably transforming for me as an educator as well as an individual. It widened the scope of my teaching lens to see the critical effects of judicial issues and their impact--not only in society but in the classroom. That is what I will impart to my students and fellow staff members.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin is clearly a master craftsman at instruction for this program and its topic. His brilliance and competence was evident in every class session. He left "no stone unturned" when it came to meeting the pedagogical needs of the participants. The topics, activities and discussions were thought-provoking, enriching and relevant.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Being here at Drew Hall and on Amherst campus "bombarded" me with a sense of much-needed clarity, comfort and mental settlement. The rooms and bathroom facilities were spotless--I could eat off the floor. In short, I had everything I needed to feel prepared to meet my four-week journey into this

seminar.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

My only suggestion is to include a few pages for "Notes" in the Seminar workbook.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Suggested Topics could be: Diversity. Multicultural Practices for the Classroom Teacher.

Evaluation # 24842

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

An awesome experience! Has definitely challenged a lot of my held beliefs about punishment and incarceration in the United States. I have plenty of philosophical questions about justice/punishment, and a great variety of readings I can incorporate into my classroom. In addition, the conversations around punishment have given me plenty of food for thought around the ways in which my own school construes consequences and our attempts at shifting to a restorative based model of discipline.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The class was wonderful; Austin did an incredible job creating a classroom environment which was both friendly and intellectually rigorous. He made sure the participants all had an active voice and role in shaping the discussion. He also organized a few group outings -- including a competitive game of mini golf -- which helped balance our seminar time with some much-needed fun and bonding.

The topics and breadth of reading covered in the seminar was carefully chosen and curated, thanks to Austin's expertise and thoughtfulness.

And of course, Megan Estes was a phenomenal help in so many ways!

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The facilities at Amherst were comfortable and suitable -- with the exception of the beds in Drew House. The mattresses and pillows were pretty uncomfortable. I recommend informing future participants of this, perhaps encouraging them to bring their own pillows or even a mattress topper. Otherwise, everything else was great.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

None!

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 24890

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

The seminar was an amazing experience. Austin challenged us every day with thought provoking questions and readings. He said a stunning example of how to create both a warm and welcoming environment where everyone felt valued, and the highest scholarly standards.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin opened each class with a hypothetical scenario that took the theory of our reading and grounded it in the concrete. This forced us to really examine our own ideas.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst, both the town and the college, is beautiful. A great place to spend the summer. The air conditioning in the dorm was much appreciated. And Megan Estes, Who assisted with all the logistics, was absolutely phenomenal.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Better mattresses in the dorms?

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

I would love to see Austin lead a seminar on justice.

Evaluation # 25036

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

Excellent. It was an excellent learning opportunity. I grew as a learner and thinker through the enjoyable and challenging seminar. The professor was able to build a safe learning community in a matter of hours that allowed all participants to take intellectual risks and push our thinking.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Megan Estes was a great organizer and advocate for our needs. Everything we needed to access information and access materials and resources to learn.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Very welcoming, I could access all facilities necessary without red tape.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

It was wonderful. I only wish I could participate again.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

**EVALUATIONS**  
**2016**



# Evaluations for Punishment, Politics, and Culture, 2016

Evaluation # 22968

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This seminar has been enormously rewarding for me. My teacher is amazing, and my colleagues are bright, welcoming, and diverse. I see both direct and indirect applications in my teaching. Some of the readings and activities I will use or mimic, and the general seminar atmosphere is inspiring as I look ahead to the fall. As always, it is a powerful and profound experience to be a student again -- and it helps me remember the perspective my students have on a daily basis.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Our director -- Austin Sarat -- is amazing. Erudite, funny, accessible, and creative. He balances rigor with scope and freedom. We look closely at many interesting and related topics, but we also have done some individually-directed research projects. The reading list he has set up is a great indication of this. Supreme Court cases, novels, short stories, philosophy, films, and social science. If I could add to it, some more detailed information about the American prison system would help ground much of the philosophical discussions we've had in concrete fact. I am very pleased with the program and its direction.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

I am living off campus, but Amherst College has been great. There are wonderful places to study, the gym is very accessible, and the whole place is beautiful! I went to undergrad nearby, so it has been fun coming back to the area as an adult. The college is ideally located within easy walking distance of many attractions.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

No. I am thrilled with my experience.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 22985

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

Great discussions and ideas! I will take Austin's teaching methods and some articles into my class.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Great colleagues! No guest speakers no field trips which I have had prior.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Excellent!

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Some guest speakers and a field trip or two would be nice.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Politics in schools;

Evaluation # 23020

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This seminar has been completely transformative. Austin's deep knowledge, generosity of spirit, and his fair-minded pushing of each of the individuals in our group, together these elements have made for both an exemplary model of inquiry, and a dynamic group experience where the whole has been greater than the sum of the parts, which are significant in and of themselves. The material is rigorous, very rigorous, but the group has risen to the demand and we are all better for it. The curriculum is VERY well organized and the group has dug deep in this difficult and important subject.

This seminar has provided me with much needed teaching inspiration, especially with the idea of tackling directly some tough stuff, which I plan to do with my students. Some of the content of the course I plan to utilize directly, but also the methodology of inquiry that Austin practices, the necessity for learners to go out on a difficult limb, think for themselves and support their choices, this methodology has inspired me to utilize this approach with a variety of material. I teach adult learners of all levels, and this experience has been a revelation, great content and a teaching model of excellence combined!

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin is exemplary. He has absolute command of the topic, and yet he is able to encourage all voices as the material is tackled. His restraint as he guides us through, so that we make discoveries ourselves is remarkable. This is what teaching should be! The cross-disciplinary nature of the material was particularly inspiring, as it not only makes sense for a deeper understanding of the topic, but it allows for each participant to have at least some material be within their particular area of knowledge and comfort, a kind of home-base within the overall field of the content.

The group selected for this experience is the best group I've ever been with in any Prof. Dev. experience, including a couple of other NEH programs. A great diversity of people and minds, with different ideas and voices all exploring together. The group itself has added a LOT to my experience, and I credit the local site for the great job selecting each of them, and for the overall group dynamic.

All activities have been valuable, and have accumulated to a value greater than each part.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Dorm housing is very, very nice, though air conditioning in bedrooms might make it better :). Cafeteria is across the street. Many school and business amenities within walking distance. Library is excellent, though it was closed at night, which was unfortunate. Wifi was easy to use in the dorms, with printing.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

AC? Keep the library open later?

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 23026

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

I am so delighted to have had this opportunity. Everything about these past five weeks has been rewarding and challenging. I love learning and having the opportunity to push myself in a subject area outside my usual study has helped to intellectually excite me. It has been important to switch gears out of "teaching mode" and have the opportunity to engage with challenging texts, colleagues and a great facilitator. This time has reminded me of the pleasure of scholarship and my desire to continue my own education. I will leave refreshed and ready to bring my own excitement for learning to my classroom. While frankly, the coursework is of little direct relevance to what I teach my students, I realize that is not altogether important. What is important is that I spent time grappling with tough questions. I felt uncomfortable and unsure, just like my students must feel at times. I can relate to their struggles and better help them through the wonderful path of learning.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

I have been so delighted to benefit from the warmth and intellect of Austin Surat. He has pursued meaningful discussion and content and facilitated the class with care. I am very grateful that he was able to bring out voices that don't always speak up, while curtailing some participants who would happily monopolize conversation. This shows that even as adults we can learn about how to get along with others and work as a group more effectively.

For the most part I found the cohort to be collaborative and thoughtful. Like any group of people there was some disagreement, but I do appreciate the director helping to direct certain people's over-engagement.

The topics and work were both fulfilling and challenging. I enjoyed our schedule. It was nice to have plenty of time to ourselves to reflect, however it may have been nice to have an outing pertinent to the material, separate from the class discussion.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College has a lovely little campus with everything needed. The dormitory was as advertised. It is well maintained, but the lack of AC and uncomfortable mattresses were not ideal. This being said, that seems out of the control of the program and is certainly not reason enough to speak ill of the program as a whole. The library was lovely. The dining hall was surprisingly good, especially considering that it was a fraction of the cost I expected. Megan Estes did a great job coordinating the

details of the program, and was very accommodating.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

It would be great to have more trips related to the subject.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

I would be really interested in a seminar focusing on migrants, immigrants and refugees. Learning more about the experience of those crossing borders and entering the education system in new areas would be a benefit to all teachers.

Evaluation # 23029

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

I loved it. Very fruitful conversations and my fellow participants came from a variety of backgrounds.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The director is amazing-very caring and also good at leading discussions.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The area is beautiful and Amherst College is a great place.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Maybe some organized trips? To Salem for a witch trial tour? To a prison?

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 23030

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This seminar will have a great impact on my teaching. First, it modeled the way laws can be interpreted and helped build a foundation for judicial thinking. Second, it helped build capacity for an humanities approach to a curriculum. Most notably, the seminar format and discussions were fantastic. The single best seminar experience I've ever had, hands down. I will model my own classroom seminars after my experiences here.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin was fabulous - positive, uplifting, supportive, funny, engaging. He is a master teacher and I learned much from spending 5 weeks with him. Megan was fabulous and helped facilitate an organized seminar behind the scenes.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College was very accommodating. Housing was clean and good. Dining hall was also good. All Amherst facilities were shared with the seminar participants and Amherst College was fantastic.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

None. This was a perfect seminar, and I am fortunate to have participated.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Etymological seminar study of the word "fabulous," and its uses in educational settings.

Evaluation # 23039

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

Fabulous! The material was fascinating and enlightening. I think I can use not just some of the material but also some of the approach: the pedagogy, not just the content. We all felt intellectually challenged and stretched. We were asked to think in rigorous, logical ways. I loved the use of hypothetical cases to lead in to a close look at the texts.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The director was caring and helpful and funny, but he also kept us all on our toes and fully engaged. My colleagues were friendly, intelligent, and passionate about the topic. I particularly admired how the director structured the readings so that they built on each other and seemed to be having a discussion with each other. We kept adding layers of understanding and nuance.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

I was very pleased. The dining hall had excellent meals; we felt welcomed and taken care of; the facilities were all easily accessible; it was easy to check things out of the library and use the computers there.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

No. All my expectations for the course were exceeded!

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 23041

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This seminar was excellent. Austin is a fabulous teacher and he chose a great mix of teachers/ students. The readings were provocative and the discussions were deeply engaging. After the seminar, I will

think back on how Austin conducted the class as a model for my own teaching. I will strive for the same evenhandedness he consistently displayed.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The classes were lively and interesting. Austin did an excellent job crafting hypotheticals to get us thinking and then pivoting from those hypotheticals to the materials we read and watched. The syllabus, too, was very well-crafted. It was a logical progression through varied sources.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The host institution was incredibly hospitable. Megan, Austin's assistant, did a great job making everything easy and understandable for us. Megan and Austin also frequently checked in with us, which was very considerate.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

None. They're doing a great job here.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

I think David Cumiskey at Bates College could do an excellent seminar. The seminar with Austin reminded me of my work with David in college in the best way.

Evaluation # 23053

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

I thoroughly enjoyed this seminar. I am leaving with a solid conceptual basis of understanding of punishment that I can use to consider the many questions I've developed over the last few weeks. As issues of punishment continue to be relevant in both my career and in society at large, I am confident that I can consider them reasonably and intelligently after having participated in this seminar.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin Sarat is an outstanding human being. He is full of knowledge and wisdom, while remaining extremely approachable. He brings humor and fun to a difficult and emotional topic. He's simply a pleasure to be around.

The format of our seminar was very well-designed. The hypotheticals we explored were thought-provoking and entertaining. The readings were very enjoyable.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College was very hospitable. Any requests we made were granted. The library staff was very helpful. Megan Estes was very responsive and dedicated to making our time at Amherst enjoyable.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

My only suggestion would be perhaps changing the timing of the readings. There were weeks of manageable reading, following by a week of so much it was difficult to get through. Other than that, it was perfect!

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 23057

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

The experience was rich, meaningful, and intellectually rewarding. The seminar has given me a newfound appreciation for detailed textual analysis.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The director, Austin Sarat, is extremely qualified to teach this seminar. He is witty, enthusiastic, engaged, and a renowned scholar in this field. The topics were interesting, varied, and complex. Class consisted of discussions each day, revolving around the Socratic method, that demanded one's full attention. I would not change anything.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The housing arrangements, library, and computer facilities were all top-notch.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

None. Please make sure this seminar is renewed, it's one of the best.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 23066

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

The seminar was wonderful. It provided an array of opportunities to explore a fascinating topic that is not usually studied on its own. The seminar broke down punishment as a driving factor in many different disciplines including history, literature, and law. But most importantly, from a personal perspective as well as the lens through which I will focus my students' treatment of the subject, the seminar led us through an examination of our own perceptions of power, control, retribution, and mercy. These are the themes which will appear often in conversations with my students as I incorporate the seminar content into my classroom.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

I have participated in several NEH summer programs for teachers, and "Punishment, Politics, and Culture" stands at the head of the list. The seminar was stellar in many ways, all of which lead back to Austin. His unbridled enthusiasm for scholarly exploration and analysis, as well as his ability to encourage self-examination, lie at the core of each session. His patience and guidance through the seminar experience were masterful and truly a joy to share with my colleagues. Discussions were both lively and relevant and led to a full and rich treatment of punishment and its implications. All participants were engaged and seminar topics often continued outside of the classroom. This was a wonderful group of colleagues and they also added immensely to the complete seminar experience. There were some social great opportunities, official and otherwise, to share different ideas and plans for how we intend to share the seminar's content with our students. Overall the seminar was a wonderful "whole" experience.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst was a wonderful setting for this seminar. Megan did a wonderful job of handling all logistics seamlessly. The rooms and accommodations at Drew House were great - and the common room was a perfect space for relaxing or reading and getting to know the other seminar participants. The library was quite easy to navigate and copying privileges were very much appreciated. I had no problems with computer access and internet streaming of videos was fine.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

None

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 23087

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

I've done an institute before, but nothing compares to this seminar! Really spectacular! While there is obvious advantages to the institute style--the seminar style is really dialogical and discursive! Austin is an amazing professor.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin is amazing and Megan was an excellent admin. The social activities that were organized in addition to the seminar was also a lot of fun!

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Dorms were really hot (no AC), but central to downtown Amherst and right next door to our seminar location. Dorms beds weren't really comfortable, but otherwise great housing. Free printing was a big plus!

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**



A/C! But that's really it.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

-French Revolution

-Haitian Revolution

-Gandhi and the Struggle for Independence

-Russian Revolution (Kevin Murphy at UMass Boston or Paul LeBlanc at La Roche College)

Evaluation # 23088

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This seminar was challenging and engaging. Each topic allowed for a diverse array of opinions and truly challenged participants' understandings. The reading was varied and applicable to the course though in some cases lengthy. If I were to suggest changes to the course I would suggest a wider array of texts, for example more literature, poetry, or propaganda to switch up the genres a bit. The professor was fantastic and extremely capable of leading the seminar without commandeering it. Overall, my impression was that his students are lucky to have him and his discussion leading skills are enviable. I definitely hope to employ what I've learned from his teaching style in Socratic seminars in my own class.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The professor and his colleague Megan were both wonderful. They went above and beyond to see that we maximized our experience and because of their efforts, the logistical workings and content were both excellent.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The housing was very sufficient with large common spaces. The only hiccup with the housing was that the heat waves made the upstairs rooms a bit uncomfortable to sleep or study in on the very hot days.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

I would suggest recommending that participants bring cars because Amherst is small.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 23127

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

I have genuinely enjoyed my experience at this seminar. The readings, which were time-consuming and dense, were appropriately addressed in our class discussions. And speaking of class discussions, those pushed me to reevaluate or ponder about concepts and situations in ways I had never considered before. I intend to adopt several of Austin's best practices into my own teaching, which include the Socratic

Seminar method and the moral dilemma hypotheticals, but also articles, some of which I will summarize or take excerpts from, that my students can tackle and digest.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin was fabulous! He does a really good job of validating each person's opinion, and I really appreciate the time he took outside of class to bond with us. Megan was super accommodating and always had a smile on her face. My colleagues were kind, intelligent, and amicable. Each individual inspires me to not only become a better educator but a well-rounded and scholarly human being. I hope to continue to keep in touch with them after NEH. I am glad that we had a lot of flexibility in our schedule because the readings took a long time to complete.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst has become kind of a second home for me- the dining hall and our classroom are just 30 seconds walking distance away, the gym facility was a short walking distance away, the library (I LOVE the five-college system because it allows you to have that much more access to books) stored contemporary books, and the lounge area was a lovely area to do your reading or to chat with your colleagues. The bed mattresses and lack of AC in my room were less than ideal, even with the fan on, but having a kitchen at Drew House was a huge asset because many of us cooked or baked.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 23425

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

I had a phenomenal experience. I feel completely renewed and revitalized as a result of the incredibly well-organized and orchestrated readings and discussions of this seminar. On a personal level, it was so important for me to have some time and space to explore the philosophical questions of punishment and tease out how they are enacted in the world. On a professional level, I reinvigorated by the very experience of being intellectually stretched, but I also feel that having thought deeply about this topic will help me as I navigate my own philosophy of teaching. I am incredibly grateful for this experience and will seek to come back to it in my mind as a touchstone in the future.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

I think that every aspect of this experience was nearly perfect in my estimation. The director could not possibly have been more engaging, inspiring, brilliant and yet down-to-earth. My colleagues in the course did their readings, brought thoughtful insights to the fore in our discussions and I feel that we all pushed ourselves to be better scholars and classmates. Everyone was very respectful even when we disagreed and the director did a fantastic job of fostering collegiality in the community. The program

assistant who did much of the logistical arrangements was also wonderful and incredibly helpful at every turn.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The library (and librarians) were wonderful and in general I loved being at Amherst. I did not stay in the dorms, but the surrounding area is beautiful and a wonderful place to enjoy and explore for five weeks.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

None! It was an incredible experience. It was deeply valuable to me and I think will be equally valuable to my teaching practice. My only suggestion is to keep facilitating this amazing opportunity!

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

**EVALUATIONS**  
**2015**

# Evaluations for Punishment, Politics, and Culture, 2015

Evaluation # 21016

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

The experience at the seminar was wonderful. The discussions were challenging, the readings fostered thought and discussion, and Austin did a great job keeping the seminar enjoyable and fun. I will use some of the discussion prompts directly in my teaching of Theory of Knowledge and history.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin Sarat is an excellent seminar leader and organized the seminar so that discussions developed over time. He took an active role in organizing social events and participated in them. The seminar group was diverse and brought their various experiences to the seminar discussions. Overall, it was a wonderful experience.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

I did not stay in housing as I live in the area but everything was handled well in terms of running the seminar. We had training and access to computers and the library system. Everything that we needed was available.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

The seminar was wonderful so I do not have any suggestions for improvement.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 21019

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

"Punishment, Politics, and Culture" has been an incredible experience. The seminar has had a profound effect on my conception of American society and the depth of discourse surrounding punishment and mercy. The seminar will have an immediate effect on my teaching of American history in that I now feel empowered to introduce Constitutional jurisprudence into historical moments. Similarly, participating in a seminar of this caliber has inspired me to refocus my classes around debate, argument, and problem solving.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The director of my program, Austin Sarat, will be a tremendous source of inspiration for me and for my praxis and pedagogy. His ability to demand an intellectual and emotional investment into coursework while infusing a joyous spirit is astounding. As a young educator working in 2015, I can't imagine a

more relevant topic of inquiry or a better set of texts, films, activities and discussions.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst college was great! Library staff was incredibly helpful and the gym and dining hall were great to have. A slightly less expensive on-campus accommodation would have been appreciated though.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

My only suggestion is that there be more of an impetus to complete individual writing/projects in response to coursework.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

I am surprised and slightly saddened that NEH does not offer any seminars related to LGBTQ history and culture.

Evaluation # 21020

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This seminar changed the way I view punishment in the U.S. My beliefs and ideas were consistently challenged with insightful questions, and overall organization of seminar readings and videos. This seminar has enforced critical thinking on my behalf, and an open minded approach to teaching.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin is an amazing director because he is down to earth and passionate about his field. The passion he brought to class every day made the content more interesting and engaging. Also, his assistant Megan was wonderful handling logistics, and made our five week experience that much more comfortable and enriching.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College is a beautiful campus, and was easily accessible for the entire 5-week period. All staff, specifically in the library, made my experience enjoyable.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

None

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 21021

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

The overall experience I've had at this seminar is extremely good. It has been a complete joy working with Austin and the other participants during this seminar. I teach philosophy and ethics courses at the pre-college level and I will be using much of the material and the ideas I've learned during class discussions and group projects in my own classes. I also do research and write on the topics we covered in the seminar and everything in the reading booklet has indelibly inspired me to continue pursuing this topic further. Thank you, Austin!

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin is a very kind, honest, friendly, and very rigorous scholar. He's a modern day Socrates only more affable, probably. He always made himself available. I pursued further research outside of the reading assignments that required Austin to get me some of the materials. Never once did he respond with annoyance due to his own time constraints. And he always made himself available. Every topic was organized in a fashion that showed how each was connected in a sort of complex web of essential ideas related to punishment, politics, and culture. His organization and the way he delivers the ideas through questioning has inspired me to rethink my own class organization and pedagogy style.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

We were given a guided tour of all the specifics that we needed to know to adequately do research. I've utilized the library facilities nearly every day (I think I downloaded over 100 articles that were available through Amherst College's online journal database). Megan has done an outstanding job at being available. I even wrote her concerning a tooth ache problem that might've progressed to something worse, and she recommended a dentist!

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

This is difficult because the class is excellent in every respect. I don't consider my recommendation as something that is needed because the seminar needs improvement. This is merely a suggestion, which I'm sure Austin has already considered and has sufficient reason for excluding it. I would suggest there be room in the reading schedule to explicitly learn about the current status of restorative justice as an alternative to punitive punishment. Although this topic came up during discussion, I think participants could benefit from direct readings and the dialectic that restorative justice has started in criminal law, especially because it's also considered as an alternative to punitive models of discipline in schools. Also, because Austin has combined film and literature with the readings (which I loved), I would recommend the film, "The Place Beyond the Pines" as a relevant film to watch while learning about restorative justice. The film came out a few years ago. It tracks the negative effects of criminal wrongdoing by analyzing how a son is affected by the "sins" of his father. The son faces the ultimate choice of either continuing the cycle of wrongdoing that his father started, or embracing non-punitive responses to the perpetrator such as forgiveness, mercy, and clemency.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

I would be very interested in a seminar that specifically focuses on juvenile justice: it's current problems and possible solutions in America.

Evaluation # 21023

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

This has been the best summer I've ever experienced in my ten years as a teacher--refreshing, challenging, and fun. Certainly, it has allowed me to look at the texts I teach through a new lens, and I have plans to integrate some of the questions and methods of the course into my English classroom. But the most striking benefits of this seminar were not, ultimately, immediately practical. In this course, both in and out of class, we tested, questioned, considered, and celebrated. And this experience has reminded me that learning in community is akin to a form of worship, if worship is the shared appreciation of a gift. Because it is a gift to look closely at a small corner of the universe. It is a gift to be challenged by people who respect you. And it is a gift to discover, in the shared struggle to understand, genuine affection for and goodness within your peers. This is the gift of the seminar that I want to share with my students.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

This seminar was perfectly conceived and executed by the director, Austin Sarat. The curriculum is designed so we might focus our questions around a range of cultural, historical, legal, and literary texts. Every reading assignment was both singularly important and a meaningful addition to the larger conversation and line of thought evoked by the syllabus. Austin demonstrated equal seriousness and forethought in his use of group assignments, which were carefully designed to foster creativity and--really!--encourage new friendships. Finally, the discussions within the class each day were simultaneously insightful, frustrating, and funny--a testament to Austin's masterful facilitation. In brief, Austin's careful attention to all aspects of the course--intellectual and social--created an ideal learning environment.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College is beautiful and resource-rich. The entire campus was open to us, so that we had access to a gym, a library, multiple museums, a dining hall, and, my personal favorite, a wildlife sanctuary. Austin's program assistant, Megan Estes, made us feel welcome from the moment we stepped on campus. She was attentive to any question we had and checked in regularly to ensure that our stay in Drew House was comfortable (it most definitely was!!). Amherst is lovely, and Megan helped make this lovely campus into a home for us for five weeks.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

I would love to see any formal or informal writing assignment(s) added. While the discussions were invaluable, I think the learning that occurs through writing is distinctive and could have resulted in my deeper appreciation of some of the questions of the course. I also waited eagerly for the moments when Austin would share his own thoughts during discussions, and I think the course might benefit from the development of a bit more traditional lecture. He is such a brilliant legal scholar, such a knowledgeable and thoughtful human being, that I wanted to hear more from him!

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 21044



**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

The most powerful aspect of the seminar was Austin Sarat's ability to make you think and examine your own views on the issues and topics being covered in this seminar. It is my belief that this type of presentation should be instead of the standardized mess education is infested with.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Everything was extremely well thought out. On day built upon the day before. Austin's knowledge on the topic was only exceeded by his ability to teach. Each week we were required to work in different groups and present material related to the topics that were presented. I was impressed with the degree that participants worked together outside of allotted seminar times.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Air conditioning would have been beneficial however, it did not bother me. The facilities were exceptional the staff at Amherst truly made us feel like we were a part of the Amherst tradition.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

none.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

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Evaluation # 21055

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

The seminar was intellectually stimulating and thought provoking. The content and socratic seminar style of each class allowed me to reflect and question my own beliefs and the way I arrive at these beliefs. I was most impressed by the wide range of readings from philosophy to case law to literature to film. I hope I can bring this same style of text curation into my own classroom.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

I liked that each class started with a hypothetical. It made for a really accessible entry point into some really challenging texts. I'm excited to begin crafting these as starting points for my own classroom.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

All of our needs were met and our accommodation were wonderful. Meg Estes did an amazing job making sure we were settled and taken care of! I am hotblooded so no air-conditioning in the rooms was a little brutal but certainly didn't taint the experience in any way.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

The group projects were not my favorite not because I don't like working in groups though. The groups were a little large and that made it hard for decisions/ideas to get finalized efficiently. I almost think

groups of 3 would be better -- this would mean not everyone could present every week though. But maybe that would mean everyone could have at least one week off from presenting?

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Dr. Paul Thomas @ Furman University. paul.thomas@furman.edu

Evaluation # 21056

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

My experience in this seminar has been incredible. Each meeting was thought provoking and challenging. I have learned that a system of justice that includes punishment requires a shared set of values among all who participate in it. This will greatly impact the way I look at the behavior management system in my classroom and at my school. It was also humbling to be a student again - required to examine complex text then use it to support my position. The format of the seminar was set up so that all participants had the opportunity to share there thoughts.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin has a unique ability to make students feel at ease and comfortable speaking even when the topics are sensitive or challenging. The order of the topics flowed seamlessly and our discussions were so valuable. Three group presentations/projects was a perfect amount. We had a lot of freedom with our topic selection, which really allowed us to tailor our focus to topics that would benefit our instruction back in our classrooms.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

I am so impressed with the hospitality at Amherst! Megan has the logistics running like a well-oiled machine. Everything was ready for us when we arrived. If we needed anything at all - she assisted in helping us. For example, my computer charger broke and she connected me with someone on campus who loaned me a charger for the duration of my stay. The campus is beautiful and well maintained. Every part of it from the library to the fields.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

I really can't think of any...

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 21061

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

Austin's seminar was excellent in every way. He is a skilled, engaging teacher, who makes contagious his unflinching enthusiasm and passion for his subject of study. Austin's way of motivating his students is one I would love to emulate in my own classroom.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Every person involved in the NEH seminar showed professionalism and kindness to us. No detail was left unattended to, and the college, its staff, and its resources were a true pleasure to experience. Austin exposed us to numerous philosophical and moral scenarios, which I plan to share with my students. The readings and films Austin selected for the seminar brilliantly informed class discussion. Class time flew by as we were consistently engaged in discussion and analysis of texts. The class to homework time was perfectly balanced and provided a level of challenge commensurate with graduate school seminars.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

All facilities were wonderful. The library, computer lab, and the staff were outstanding.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

None, truly.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 21086

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

Austin's class expanded my definition of punishment, and forced me to confront my assumptions around how, why, and to what effect we punish. Early in the seminar, he called it intellectual summer camp, and that's exactly what it was--but a summer camp that made us work hard. Not only will I model his methods of instruction in my classroom, but I will also continue reading and discussing these issues. Plus, I will be much more willing to jump into the next Supreme Court decision, now that I know my way around a court case.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

My colleagues were thoughtful and open-minded, and, even more importantly, fun. The organization of the topics was superb, with Austin's daily hypotheticals really setting the stage for an in-depth exploration of our readings. Each reading flowed nicely together, and it was truly gratifying to read cases at the end of the seminar and to understand the frequent references to earlier cases, many of which we'd read in class. The discussions were focused and broad at the same time, and the participant-led group projects were well-thought out really shed light on aspects of the that fell outside the core material.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Megan was amazing; she anticipated our needs, and reacted quickly when something unexpected came up. The library and computer facilities were great, although we didn't use them a ton.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

I think this is an amazing seminar, and one that I will be talking about--and thinking about--for years to come. I have no suggestions for improvements.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 21112

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

I found the material and the format of the seminar to be very open, engaging and provocative. Austin has built an amazing curriculum, full of articles, pros and court cases that complement one another. The seminar struck an ideal balance of being anchored to essential themes and questions, while at the same time remaining open for diverging ideas or inquiries. This is primarily thanks to Austin's strong skill as a facilitator in the Socratic method. I plan on using many of the readings we discussed this summer in my Senior civics class. But I also plan on applying Austin's facilitation strategies to my classrooms. It is easy to stray away from a student-led classroom with the mandates and oversight at any school, but this seminar helped remind me of the importance of listening to the minds in the classroom and using them to inform my practice.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

I especially loved Austin's technique for engaging the seminar at the beginning of each class. Regardless of the material we had been required to read, Austin always began the seminar with a provocative hypothetical situation related somehow to a topic discussed in class earlier in the week. These open discussions could take us into the first half hour of class, and helped us frame the difficult material we had tackled in the reading. It is always great to begin with a student's own position - that was always the only way I could access a text that was foreign to me. As Austin often remarks: "imagination is your friend, knowledge is the enemy."

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

My experience at Drew House was pleasant over-all. Megan Estes was so helpful in coordinating every aspect of our accommodations, and she was always open to suggestions or to address any issue in the house.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

My only criticism would be that the, considering the Summer heat in Western Mass, staying in a third-story dorm room with no air conditioning could get rather uncomfortable.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

I would be interested in a brief institute that explores the role of public art in political movements throughout the U.S. I am from Los Angeles, which has been the site of some dynamic, politically-charged street art. I know New York has an even older and richer history. This might lend itself to a brief seminar that includes guided tours of public art, studio spaces, youth engagement organizations, etc.

Evaluation # 21169

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

I could not have asked for anything more from this experience. Austin is a top expert in the field, and he stretched us to evaluate our thoughts more thoroughly than we could have imagined. It has been some time since I have been asked to think critically and answer quickly the way I require my students to do. I think this experience has made me a better teacher in encouraging me to be my best by asking my students the tough questions in future class discussions, but I also think it has made me a better person because I was forced to confront some of my deepest-held beliefs from a logical standpoint and look at the world in a fresh way.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Austin is, of course, extremely knowledgeable, but his passion for teaching is apparent in every seminar session. He takes an important and serious topic and makes it accessible and respectfully entertaining.

The readings and class discussions were challenging, but our colleagues made equally valuable contributions to the quality of the program. Austin and his team did an incredible job picking intelligent, passionate, and fun people who kept discussions and life at Drew House engaging and rewarding, and I feel lucky to have been included in the group.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Staying at Drew House enabled us to form a community in five weeks. Amherst College facilities are beautiful and in good condition, and Megan did a great job ensuring that we have everything that we need.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

None

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 21217

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

My overall experience was extremely positive. I truly loved the course. I will definitely use this information in my classroom when we study law and the constitution. I am grateful to have been given

this opportunity.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The professor is amazing. He is able to engage in the class in rich discussions connecting the readings and films and make us challenge and question our own personal beliefs. Austin is engaging, energizing, personable, and he has a passion for teaching that made the class an experience I will never forget.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst is amazing. The staff at the library were so helpful. They found a missing DVD for me, they ordered a book for another participant. Megan Estes is fantastic. If there were ever any problems she addressed them immediately. Everything was clean and we were treated as students of the campus, not just visiting teachers.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 21694

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

While I don't know that I will have the opportunity to teach a class covering these themes, participating in this seminar will definitely have an effect on my teaching practice. First and foremost, I will definitely think more clearly about how/why I use "punishment" with my students. More specifically when doling out punishment, I will do so through the lenses of rehabilitation & retribution. As an educator I feel I should lean more towards rehabilitation and this seminar has forced me to consider the difference. This seminar will also help me to become more effective at questioning and facilitating "difficult" discussions in a way that allows all students to have a voice. Lastly, this seminar has reminded me of the importance of stress free, grade free learning experiences. The seminar focused more on thinking, analyzing & articulating one's point of view, more so than on coming up with the right answer or scoring high on a test/assessment.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The director, Austin Sarat, is a phenomenal educator. His passion for his profession and the topics discussed was evident from the first day to the last. He truly loves what he does & I hope that my joy for teaching is just as evident to my students. Although he's done this seminar several times and has likely encountered many other dynamic groups, Austin made us feel as though we were truly the best & his favorites... in a very genuine/authentic way. As for the actual content of the seminar, everything was great. The readings were clearly aligned with the topics and while some people naturally spoke up more than others, Austin made sure that all had an opportunity to speak.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Everything at Amherst College was great!

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

Nope

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

I think something on racism or race relations would be worthwhile. During this seminar ideas surrounding racial & socioeconomic level disparities related to the death penalty and our justice system as a whole came up. Race & racism can be difficult to talk about and even more difficult to teach without imparting one's own bias, so seminar or institute on this topic could be useful.

Evaluation # 21814

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

I loved this seminar. Every day without exception, I felt challenged, supported, and intellectually alive. From the dual perspectives of student and teacher, I found it a joy to learn from Austin Sarat. Much of what we learned in class was utterly new to us, but Austin structured each class so as to introduce heady concepts in completely manageable - and fascinating, gripping - ways. He had the gift of understanding what each student was trying to say, no matter how muddled or nascent our thoughts might have been, and he treated his students with more respect, and conducted class with more humility, than I believe I've ever seen a teacher do. Our syllabus drew unexpected and illuminating connections among texts, progressively expanding our facility with legal concepts while deepening our own ethical stances on punishment. My fellow participants were all smart as a whip, but in very different ways, and I relished the sheer variety of their contributions to our conversations over the five weeks of class. I came away with many ideas for integrating real-world questions and texts (legal, ethical) into my English literature curriculum. More importantly, I came away having remembered what it is like to be on fire in your learning, and how a masterful teacher can make that happen not just for one student, but for a whole class.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

Megan Estes did a stellar job coordinating our program. She was cheerfully helpful in any and every capacity. Austin Sarat was also accessible and earnestly interested in ensuring that we were well cared for, from well before we arrived at the seminar.

As I mentioned above, I have only the best things to say about the quality of Austin's teaching and the caliber of my fellow seminar participants.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

Amherst College is just a lovely place. Because I came to the seminar with my family, I was not able to stay in the Drew House dorm, but I was able to rent a college-owned house from a professor through the Five College Rental Housing Bulletin page. (I suggest including this website as a resource for future

students, as I had to find it myself.) Every interaction I had with College staff, from the Rental Housing office to the Valentine Dining Hall workers, was pleasant and helpful.

I was impressed by Frost Library staff's knowledge and helpfulness in their presentation about the library's resources, and I found the computer lab accessible and convenient.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**

I would have greatly appreciated knowing in advance on what days Austin planned to organize group social events outside of class. I was one of 3 participants whose small children came along for the summer, and I could have participated in the group outings if I'd been given several days to organize childcare. As it was, I was unable to attend almost all the events, and I regretted that I was in that way limited in my connection to my fellow participants and Austin himself.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

Evaluation # 21940

**Summarize your overall assessment of the experience and the effect you anticipate it will have on your teaching and scholarship.**

The seminar pushed me to think deeply about the ways in which as a society we punish those who have transgressed. I learned a tremendous amount from my peers and will definitely take Austin's Socratic-style teaching method back to my classroom.

**Evaluate specific aspects of the program, such as the director, visiting faculty (if any), colleagues, topics, organization, discussions, and activities.**

The class would start each day with a hypothetical, which later transitioned to a discussion of our course texts/films. Austin is clearly an expert in his subject, but at the same time forced us to think through our ideas rather than "giving us all the answers." He clearly tried to make sure every person in our class was at ease and involved in each discussion. His syllabus is well-organized and consisted of everything from popular movies to Supreme Court cases. For three class days (spread throughout different weeks) we ran our seminar in three different groups, which gave us a chance to determine the course of the conversation and inject topics that were not explicitly covered in the syllabus/course. It was wonderful to be in an environment where everyone was so committed to learning and sharing ideas.

Megan, who ran the program, quickly responded to any issues or requests and made sure the people living in the dorm were comfortable.

**Evaluate the host institution particularly with respect to hospitality, housing arrangements, the suitability of library facilities, and computer facilities.**

The dorm rooms were huge and the dorm was comfortable overall, since the main room was air conditioned and fans were provided in each dorm room. The dorm was directly across from the classroom and close to the library, as well as a very nice bike/running path through the wildlife sanctuary. Printing was unlimited.

**Do you have any suggestions for improvements?**



I would have liked more opportunities to write and share that writing with others (and Austin) for feedback.

**(Optional) Suggest topics for future seminars or institutes, or names of potential directors (with contact information, if possible).**

