

MMCCS Public Lecture:

“Black Sites, Redacted Bodies: The Torture and Death of Gul Rahman in the CIA Salt Pit”

Date: Wednesday 19 October

Time: 6:00pm-8:00pm

Venue: Macquarie University, Y3A.212

Speaker: Associate Professor Joseph Pugliese

About the Topic:

In this paper, I examine the torture and death of Gul Rahman in the CIA secret prison/black site known as the Salt Pit, located in northern Kabul, Afghanistan. Virtually excised from the public record, his name and death are mentioned in a footnote of the Classified Response to the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Professional Responsibility Classified Report (2009). This report, prepared by Counsel for Jay S. Bybee, is a detailed and lengthy repost to the accusation made by the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) that Judge Bybee’s memo (August 1, 2002) to Alberto R. Gonzales, Counsel to the President, authorised some forms of torture that contravened the U.S. Torture Statute, which defines torture and declares it to be a federal crime.

In the course of my paper, I proceed to discuss the details of Gul Rahman’s torture and death in the CIA Salt Pit (in the context of the Bybee memo and his Counsel’s response to the OPR’s condemnatory report) in order to flesh out the relations of legal and governmental power that were instrumental in establishing U.S. regimes of torture and death in the CIA secret prisons. In delineating the forces that were operative in the torture and death of Rahman, I proceed to identify two intersecting modalities of violence – instrumental and gratuitous. In the concluding section of my paper, I stage a critique of the practice of redaction, as that legal practice that edits and censors a document of any secret or sensitive information. Redaction, I argue, must be seen as producing, analogically, its own discursive black sites of silence, loss and death.

About the Speaker:

Associate Professor Joseph Pugliese is Discipline Leader of Cultural Studies, in the Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies, Macquarie University. He has published widely on race, ethnicity and whiteness, refugees and asylum seekers, bodies and technologies, and cultural studies of law. Recent publications include *Biometrics: Bodies, Technologies, Biopolitics* (Routledge), which was short listed for the Surveillance Studies Book Prize (2010), and an edited collection *Transmediterranean: Diasporas, Histories, Geopolitical Spaces* (Peter Lang). Earlier this year, he was invited to present his current research on U.S. torture as the keynote address at the U.S. Association of Law, Culture and the Humanities annual conference, University of Nevada.

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