

Digging Deeper XI: The Road to Abu Ghraib

For sixteen months, United for Peace of Pierce County has been conducting "Digging Deeper," a Monday night book discussion group, often in the form of a study circle around a group of books, copies of which participants read, pass around, and discuss. Topics have included peak oil, climate change, and the corporation, as well as abiding themes of war, peace, and social change. Continuing in this tradition, on October 24, 2005, *Digging Deeper XI* will begin a three-week study circle examining a number of works relating to the Abu Ghraib scandal: **How are we to understand the willingness of the United States government to embrace the use of torture?**

- **Mark Danner, *Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror* (New York: New York Review Books, 2004).** *Publisher's Weekly*: "This stout and valuable instant book presents a documentary history of the Abu Ghraib prisoner-torture scandal. The paper trail includes policy statements concerning prisoner treatment signed by Attorney General Ashcroft and President Bush, reports on prisoner mistreatment generated within the United States armed forces themselves and material (including photographs) from outside agencies. The sheer mass of data requires some background knowledge about the military and the situation, if only to free the reader from dependence on the author's commentary, although *New Yorker* staff writer Danner (*The Massacre at El Mozote*) was in Iraq during 2003, and his opinions, when they come to the fore, are backed up with observations. . . . [A] book of permanent value for the study of the Iraq war and of how apparently reasonable policies can be swept away by intense pressure, political or military, to produce a particular result."
- **Karen J. Greenberg & Joshua L. Dratel, *The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib* (Cambridge, New York, Malbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, & São Paulo: Cambridge University Press, 2005).** Dana Priest, *Washington Post*: "With this superb collection of documents, we can begin to see the contours of our new post 9-11 world: from the reinterpretation of laws and treaties that once seemed immutable, to the pressure on soldiers and CIA officers in the field to set aside old rules in the hunt for useable intelligence. The papers speak for themselves and readers can decide whether the trade-offs are worth it or not." — John D. Hudson (Rear Adm. Ret.) Dean and President, Franklin Pierce Law Center: "This book is a must read for anyone who cares about the role the United States plays on the world scene. It describes the steps in an ominous path leading from the high road down to the low road in the words of those who took that journey. Throughout our history, the United States has taken justifiable pride in our adherence to the Rule of Law and our strong advocacy for human rights. Read *The Torture Papers* and see for yourself if that is still true. If we do not have the courage and wisdom to confront this shameful episode, then we are bound to repeat it." — Ted Rall, *San Diego Union-Tribune*: "*The Torture Papers* then, is no historical artifact. It's why we do what we're (still) doing. It's a monument to denial, arrogance and hypocrisy. It's why they hate us."
- **Seymour M. Hersh, *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004).** *Publisher's Weekly*: "Based on previously published articles and supplemented by fresh revelations, this book by Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Hersh, who writes for the *New Yorker* and has authored several books (*The Dark Side of Camelot*, etc.), charges the Bush administration with being propelled by ideology and hamstrung by incompetence in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other areas. One former intelligence official observes that the Bush administration staffers behaved 'as if they were on a mission from God,' while another laments, 'The guys at the top are as ignorant as they could be.' . . . According to Hersh, the dire conditions that 'enemy combatants' suffered at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, presaged detainee abuses at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison. Hersh reveals the depravities purportedly occurring at Guantánamo and argues that Donald Rumsfeld wasn't the only one responsible for what happened at Abu Ghraib: 'the President and Vice President had been in it, and with him, all the way.' . . . Hersh reserves his sharpest words for President Bush, suggesting the 'terrifying possibility' that 'words have no meaning for this President beyond the immediate moment, and so he believes that his mere utterance of the phrases makes them real.' Hersh's critics may dismiss these explosive, less than objective conclusions. For others, however, this sobering book is the closest anyone without a security clearance will get to operatives in the inner sanctums of America's intelligence, military, political and diplomatic worlds."

MEETING SCHEDULE — Mondays from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on October 24 and November 7 & 14 at the Mandolin Café, 3923 S. 12th St., Tacoma, WA. NOTE: There will be no meeting on Oct. 31.

Some books are available for borrowing or purchase; there is no charge for participation. Contact Mark Jensen at jensenmk@plu.edu or 253-756-7519, or Ted Nation at tedn5@yahoo.com or 253-983-8997.