



The Rope, The Chair, and the Needle: Capital Punishment in Texas, 1923-1990

James W. Marquart, Sheldon Ekland-Olson, Jonathan R. Sorensen

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In late summer 1923, legal hangings in Texas came to an end, and the electric chair replaced the gallows. Of 520 convicted capital offenders sentenced to die between 1923 and 1972, 361 were actually executed, thus maintaining Texas' traditional reputation as a staunch supporter of capital punishment.

This book is the single most comprehensive examination to date of capital punishment in any one state, drawing on data for legal executions from 1819 to 1990. The authors show persuasively how slavery and the racially biased practice of lynching in Texas led to the institutionalization and public approval of executions skewed according to race, class, and gender, and they also track long-term changes in public opinion up to the present.

The stories of the condemned are masterfully interwoven with fact and interpretation to provide compelling reading for scholars of law, criminal justice, race relations, history, and sociology, as well as partisans on both sides of the debate.

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