

PARRICIDE: LEGAL, THEORETICAL, & EMPIRICAL ISSUES

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Hi, I'm Dr. Kathleen Heide, and I want to welcome you to Parricide, and some of you probably don't even know what that word means. It means the killing of a parent, and I have a lot of experience evaluating individuals who've killed parents. And truly, this is a fascinating course. Judging by other students who have taken it, I think you'll like it and really get a lot out of it.

A little bit of background about me-- I've been a professor at USF since the 1980s. My area of expertise is particularly in the area of juvenile homicide and kids who kill parents. I've written for books that are related to those areas and have about 100 other publications. The course is really of interest I think to many people because when, particularly when an adolescent kills a parent, even an adult, people are fascinated. They want to know why. Because, in truth, we're all children, and we all had parents, and it's such a taboo to kill a parent. It always gets headline news because people want to know.

So we'll look at very much why individuals kill parents, and there are several motivational pathways that I have found in my evaluations and in looking at evaluations of others not only in the United States, but across the country. Then we'll look at treatment of individuals who kill, and that can vary according to the motivation. We'll look at follow up. What happens to individuals who kill parents? Some success with stories, some failures, and then we'll look at, which I think is very, very, important, risk factors. Who is at risk potentially of killing a parent, and how can we prevent something that probably just about everybody would agree is a tragic event and that we don't want to see happen?

And then one of the most fascinating parts of the class is I'm going to put you in the role of decision-maker of four of my cases, and I'm going to say to you, all right, you have got to parole three of these four individuals. Who is going to be your first choice? Who's your second choice? Who's your third choice, and who do you not want out on the streets? And to answer that question, you have to apply the material. You can't go someplace and find it. It's going to come from here. Students love that, because, once again, it's putting you in the role of the expert.

So in my work, my evaluations are often used to decide whether a juvenile should be transferred to adult court, whether someone should be sentenced to death, whether someone should be treated in a secure facility or confined in adult prison. So to be able to have that impact on judges, juries, prosecutors, and defense attorneys is very rewarding to me, and this course will give you the background so you can understand how decisions based on science are made and how science can contribute to the good of society.