



## THE DEATH PENALTY AS TORTURE

On Tuesday, April 25, Professor John D. Bessler of the University of Baltimore School of Law will be at the Baltimore Bar Library to speak on his new book “**The Death Penalty as Torture: From the Dark Ages to Abolition.**”

During the Dark Ages and the Renaissance, Europe’s monarchs often resorted to torture and executions. The pain inflicted by instruments of torture from the thumbscrew and the rack to the Inquisition’s tools of torment was eclipsed only by horrific methods of execution, from breaking on the wheel and crucifixion to drawing and quartering and burning at the stake. Judges regularly imposed death sentences and other harsh corporal punishments, from the stocks and the pillory, to branding and ear cropping, to lashes at public whipping posts. In the Enlightenment, jurists and writers questioned the efficacy of torture and capital punishment. Traditionally, torture and executions have been viewed in separate legal silos, with countries renouncing acts of torture while simultaneously using capital punishment even though it bears the indicia of torture. In *The Death Penalty as Torture*, Professor Bessler argues that death sentences and executions are medieval relics. He contends that death sentences and executions should be classified under the rubric of torture and put to an end.

**Professor John D. Bessler** has taught at the University of Baltimore School of Law since 2009. His areas of expertise include capital punishment and human rights. His recent book, *The Birth of American Law: An Italian Philosopher and the American Revolution* (Carolina Academic Press, 2014), was the recipient of the 2015 Scribes Book Award, an annual award given out since 1961 for "the best work of legal scholarship published during the previous year."

**Place:** Mitchell Courthouse – 100 North Calvert Street – Main Reading Room of the Bar Library (Room 618, Mitchell Courthouse).

**Time:** 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, April 25, 2017, with a wine & cheese reception immediately following.

**Invitees:** Members of the Library Company of the Baltimore Bar and their guests, judges, employees of Baltimore City and its courts, courthouse employees, government lawyers, public interest lawyers, law librarians, law and college faculty and students.

**R.S.V.P.:** If you would like to attend telephone the Library at 410-727-0280 or reply by e-mail to [jwbennett@barlib.org](mailto:jwbennett@barlib.org).