



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF LAW

LEGAL THEORY WORKSHOP SERIES
presents

Anne Norton
University of Pennsylvania

The Lesser Evil:
Liberal Theory and the Incitement to Torture

12:30 – 2:00
Friday, February 6, 2015
Solarium (room FA2) – Falconer Hall
84 Queen's Park

This paper addresses the “lesser evil” argument put forward by Michael Ignatieff and seized by post 9-11 American administrations. The argument is a simple one: that one may do evil in order to prevent a greater evil. I argue that this anticipatory exculpation is not the melancholy acceptance of a duty but the invention of a license. It becomes an incitement. I will argue that the logic of preemption upon which lesser evil justifications depend is rooted in Locke’s Second Treatise and constitutes a continuing threat for liberal regimes.

Anne Norton is Professor of Political Science and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of seven books on political theory and political culture including *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire* and most recently *On the Muslim Question: Politics, Philosophy and the Western Street* (Princeton: 2013). Her present work is directed to radical democracy and the problem of property.

A light lunch will be served.

For more information about this workshop, please contact Nadia Gulezko at n.gulezko@utoronto.ca.