

ABSTRACT

Through their representations of torture, *24* and *Battlestar Galactica* build on a wider political discourse. Although *24* began production of its first season several months before the terrorist attacks, the show has become a contested space where opinions about the war on terror and related political and military adventures have played out. The producers of *Battlestar Galactica* similarly use the space of television to raise questions and problematize issues of war. Together, these two television shows reference a long history of discussion of what role torture should play not just in times of war but also in a liberal democracy. This project seeks to understand the multiple ways that ideological discourses have played themselves out through representations of torture in the these television programs. This project begins with a critique of the popular discourse of torture as it portrayed in the popular news media.

Using an ideological critique and theories of televisual realism, I argue the complex representations of torture work the both challenge and reify dominant and hegemonic ideas about what torture is what it does. This project also leverages post-structural analysis and critique gender theory as a way of understanding what exactly the ideological messages of the programs' producers are trying to articulate.