



News Roundup

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Well, this is embarrassing. “Orange-Chatham District Attorney Jim Woodall has asked the State Bureau of Investigation to . . . probe . . . UNC-Chapel Hill’s African and Afro-American Studies program, following findings of academic fraud by a university review, [according to the *News and Observer*](#). The former chair of the department was allegedly paid for teaching courses even though the classes never met, he never taught, and no one supervised the students. The classes were popular among athletes. There’s a lot more that could be said about what appears to be a truly shocking pattern of behavior, but I will leave it at this: if the allegations are true, I hope that those responsible are held fully accountable.

In other news:

1. The John Edwards case goes to the jury today. [Here’s](#) the story from the *Greensboro News and Record*.
2. The General Assembly’s back in session. It doesn’t sound like the legislature’s agenda includes much of interest to criminal lawyers, though [a bill has been introduced](#) to bar death row inmates from watching TV. I don’t have any inside knowledge about this, but I suspect the officers who work on death row don’t want that bill to pass.
3. Significant national attention is being given to the case of Carlos de Luna, executed by the state of Texas in 1989. A Columbia University law professor and a team of students have reinvestigated the case, and contend that de Luna was innocent of murder. The *Huffington Post* has the basics [here](#). A local article with a somewhat contrary view is [here](#).
4. Prison rape has also been in the news lately. [This interesting and disturbing piece](#) states that “[b]efore last year, the federal government had never bothered to estimate the actual number of rapes that occur in prisons. Its data relied on official complaints filed by prisoners, which in recent years have averaged around 800.” For obvious reasons, though, most prison rapes aren’t reported. In January, “the Justice Department came up with a new number: 216,000. That’s 216,000 victims, not instances. These victims are often assaulted multiple times over the course of the year. The Justice Department now seems to be saying that prison rape accounted for the majority of all rapes committed in the US.” In response, the Department recently ordered all prison systems to enact new measures to reduce the incidence of sexual abuse in prison, as reported [here](#).
5. The Department also recently weighed in on the controversy regarding citizens’ right to record the police, which I previously noted [here](#). In a letter to the Baltimore Police Department, the Department came down firmly on the side of the right to record. You can read more [here](#).
6. Finally, I enjoyed [this report](#) of a story recently told by legendary Seventh Circuit Judge Frank Easterbrook: “Judge Easterbrook explained that, as a young lawyer, he had sent a brief to the Third Circuit for filing. The clerk rejected the brief and mailed it back. Easterbrook called, and the clerk’s office explained that it had rejected the brief because the back cover was the wrong shade of blue — a shade specified by an unwritten local rule. Easterbrook asked if there were any other unwritten rules, and the clerk said he wasn’t sure. Easterbrook mailed a revised version of the brief, which

the clerk's office again rejected — this time for violating a different unwritten local rule. On the third try, the clerk's office finally accepted the brief. Easterbrook swore that, if he were ever the chief judge of a circuit, all of the rules would be in writing." Man, lawyers had it rough back then. No word on whether Judge Easterbrook had to walk seven miles in the snow, uphill both ways, to file the brief.