Eighth-Amendment Cases
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Ford v. Wainwright, 477 U.S. 399 (1986): “The Eighth Amendment prohibits the State from inflicting the penalty of death upon a prisoner who is insane.” (Justice Marshall)

Penry v. Lynaugh, 492 U.S. 302 (1989): “In sum, mental retardation is a factor that may well lessen a defendant’s culpability for a capital offense. But we cannot conclude today that the Eighth Amendment precludes the execution of any mentally retarded person of Penry’s ability convicted of a capital offense simply by virtue of his or her mental retardation alone. So long as sentencers can consider and give effect to mitigating evidence of mental retardation in imposing sentence, an individualized determination whether ‘death is the appropriate punishment’ can be made in each particular case. While a national consensus against execution of the mentally retarded may someday emerge reflecting the ‘evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society,’ there is insufficient evidence of such a consensus today.” (Justice O’Connor)

Stanford v. Kentucky, 492 U.S. 361 (1989): “We discern neither a historical nor a modern societal consensus forbidding the imposition of capital punishment on any person who murders at 16 or 17 years of age. Accordingly, we conclude that such punishment does not offend the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment.” (Justice Scalia)

Atkins v. Virginia, 536 U.S. 304 (2002): “Our independent evaluation of the issue reveals no reason to disagree with the judgment of ‘the legislatures that have recently addressed the matter’ and concluded that death is not a suitable punishment for a mentally retarded criminal. We are not persuaded that the execution of mentally retarded criminals will measurably advance the deterrent or the retributive purpose of the death penalty. Construing and applying the Eighth Amendment in the light of our ‘evolving standards of decency,’ we therefore conclude that such punishment is excessive and that the Constitution ‘places a substantive restriction on the State’s power to take the life’ of a mentally retarded offender.” (Justice Stevens)
Roper v. Simmons, 543 U.S. 551 (2005): “This case requires us to address, for the second time in a decade and a half, whether it is permissible under the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution of the United States to execute a juvenile offender who was older than 15 but younger than 18 when he committed a capital crime. In Stanford v. Kentucky, 492 U.S. 361 (1989), a divided Court rejected the proposition that the Constitution bars capital punishment for juvenile offenders in this age group. We reconsider the question.” “The Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments forbid imposition of the death penalty on offenders who were under the age of 18 when their crimes were committed.” (Justice Kennedy)