

TABLE 14.1

Significant Prisoner Rights Cases

CASE	ISSUE	DESCRIPTION	WHAT THE COURT SAID
<i>Estelle v. Gamble</i> (1974)	Medical care	Gamble was injured on his prison job and received substandard responses from the prison over the injury and in some cases was not permitted to see the doctor.	"We therefore conclude that deliberate indifference to serious medical needs of prisoners constitutes the 'unnecessary and wanton infliction of pain,' <i>Gregg v. Georgia</i> , <i>supra</i> , at 173 (joint opinion), proscribed by the Eighth Amendment. This is true whether the indifference is manifested by prison doctors in their response to the prisoner's needs . . . or by prison guards in intentionally denying or delaying access to medical . . . care . . . or intentionally interfering with the treatment once prescribed." <i>Estelle v. Gamble</i> (75-929)
<i>Pell v. Procunier</i> (1974)	Freedom of speech	Four inmates and three journalists were denied face-to-face interviews and filed suit.	"A prison inmate retains those First Amendment rights that are not inconsistent with his status as prisoner or with the legitimate penological objectives of the corrections system, and here the restrictions on inmates' free speech rights must be balanced against the State's legitimate interest in confining prisoners . . . to deter crime, to protect society by quarantining criminal offenders for a period during which rehabilitative procedures can be applied, and to maintain the internal security of penal institutions. . . . Alternative means of communication remain open to the inmates; they can correspond by mail with persons (including media representatives), <i>Procunier v. Martinez</i> , 416 U.S. 396; they have rights of visitation with family, clergy, attorneys, and friends of prior acquaintance; and they have unrestricted opportunity to communicate with the press or public through their prison visitors." <i>Pell v. Procunier</i> (73-918)
<i>Rhodes v. Chapman</i> (1981)	Double celling inmates	Inmates alleged that housing two inmates in a 63-square-foot space was cruel and unusual.	"To the extent such conditions are restrictive and even harsh, they are part of the penalty that criminals pay for their offenses against society. . . . [T]he Constitution does not mandate comfortable prisons, and prisons of SOCF's type, which house persons convicted of serious crimes, cannot be free of discomfort. Thus, these considerations properly are weighed by the legislature and prison administration rather than a court." <i>Rhodes v. Chapman</i> (80-332)
<i>Hudson v. McMillian</i> (1992)	Excessive force	Hudson was beaten up by a correctional officer. The lower court said the injuries were not that serious and, as a result, that Hudson's rights were not violated.	"In the excessive force context, society's expectations are different. When prison officials maliciously and sadistically use force to cause harm, contemporary standards of decency always are violated. . . . This is true whether or not significant injury is evident. Otherwise, the Eighth Amendment would permit any physical punishment, no matter how diabolic or inhuman, inflicting less than some arbitrary quantity of injury. . . . That is not to say that every malevolent touch by a prison guard gives rise to a federal cause of action." <i>Hudson v. McMillian</i> (90-6531)
<i>Farmer v. Brennan</i> (1994)	Legal duty to protect inmates	Farmer, a transsexual, was housed with a traditional population and raped.	"The question under the Eighth Amendment is whether prison officials, acting with deliberate indifference, exposed a prisoner to a sufficiently substantial 'risk of serious damage to his future health'. . . . Being violently assaulted in prison is simply 'not part of the penalty that criminal offenders pay for their offenses against society.'" <i>Farmer v. Brennan</i> (92-7047)

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