



*Sentencing for Murder:  
Exploring Public Knowledge and Opinion*

Prof. Barry Mitchell and Prof. Julian Roberts  
Coventry University Law School, and University of Oxford

Institute of Criminology Public Seminar Series

Thursday 10th March 2011, 5.30pm

Seminar Room B3, Institute of Criminology,  
Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge, CB3 9DA

*A drinks reception in the basement foyer will follow this seminar for attendees*

The principal justification employed by advocates of the mandatory life sentence for murder invokes public opinion. It has long been claimed that replacing the mandatory sentence with anything less than automatic life imprisonment would undermine public confidence in the criminal justice system. Although the claim has been made repeatedly, in the almost 50 years since the introduction of the life sentence for murder no research has ever explored public attitudes to sentencing for murder or the mandatory life sentence. The current research project explored the nature of public attitudes to sentencing murder drawing upon a representative survey of the general public as well as focus group sessions. In this seminar we describe the state of public knowledge of murder statistics and the life sentence, as well as attitudes towards sentencing in specific cases of murder.

**Barry Mitchell** is Professor of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice at Coventry University Law School. He has conducted research into various aspects of the homicide law, with assistance from a number of government departments, and he has published widely in journals such as the *Criminal Law Review*, the *Law Quarterly Review*, the *British Journal of Criminology*, and *Legal Studies*.

**Julian Roberts** is a professor of Criminology in the Faculty of Law, University of Oxford and Editor of the *European Journal of Criminology*. His publications include *Punishing Persistent Offenders* (2008; OUP); and *The Virtual Prison* (CUP, 2005). Most recently he co-edited *Previous Convictions at Sentencing* with A. Von Hirsch (Hart, 2010). He has just completed an edited volume for Cambridge University Press *Aggravation and Mitigation at Sentencing*.

This seminar is free, and is open to all interested in attending, with no ticket required.

If you wish to be added to the seminar mailing list, please contact: Joanne Garner, on: [jf225@cam.ac.uk](mailto:jf225@cam.ac.uk)

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