

Towards a General Theory of Violence Challenges and Issues

Professor Manuel Eisner

Institute of Criminology Public Seminar Series

Thursday 12th November 2009, 5.30pm
Seminar Room B3, Institute of Criminology,
Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge, CB3 9DA

This seminar will explore whether a general theory of violence is possible and what it might look like. Its starting point will be that a general theory of violence needs to equally consider all manifestations of violence, in all societies, and at all times. Departing from this assumption this seminar argues that three theoretical approaches may be combined to understand violence as goal-directed instrumental behaviour: a theory of the judgment and decision-making processes operating in the situations that give rise to violence; a theory of the evolutionary processes that have resulted in universal cognitive and emotional mechanisms associated with violence; and a theory of the way in which social institutions structure violence by selectively enhancing its effectiveness for some purposes (i.e. legitimate use of force) and controlling other types of violence (i.e. crime). To illustrate the potential use of such a perspective the seminar then examines some general mechanisms that may explain many different types of violence.

Manuel Eisner is Professor of Comparative & Developmental Criminology, and Deputy Director of the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge. He is also a Private Docent in Sociology at the University of Zurich. He has published 15 authored or edited books, and over 100 journal articles and book chapters in English, German, and French. Professor Eisner is a member of several editorial and advisory boards of academic journals and book series, and was awarded the Fellowship of the Society of Experimental Criminology in 2006.

This seminar is part of the IoC Public Seminar Series, and is open to all interested in attending.
If you wish to be added to the seminar mailing list, please contact: Joanne Garner, on:

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