

Thoughtcrimes: Politics, Communities and Security
1.00pm-5.15pm, 21 October 2015

Arts Building, Lecture Room 8, Department of History, University of Birmingham

Conveners:

Robert Gleave (University of Exeter), Director of the Islamic Reformulations Project

Steve Hewitt (University of Birmingham), Senior Lecturer in American and Canadian Studies

The UK government's proposed extremism legislation will affect both the public debate around the legitimacy of counter-terrorism measures, and the development of community relations in the UK. The debate has been given greater resonance by the Prevent Duty having legal status in schools and colleges, as of 1st July 2015. In the proposed Extremism legislation, the focus will be on "non-violent extremism" and "British values". Can the law justifiably target those who undermine "British values", and restrict their activities? Does this mean we are creating Orwellian thoughtcrimes, where certain types of belief commitment, rather than any illegal actions, are regulated, restricted and even criminalised? This seminar, in the Thoughtcrimes series, will address these and related questions from various disciplines and employing the insights of both researchers and practitioners.

The first seminar, entitled "Thoughtcrimes? A Researcher-Practitioner workshop on the criminalisation of extremist views" was on 14th May 2015, at the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law, London. A gathering of 25 academics, legal practitioners and researchers, a report of the event is available here:

<http://tinyurl.com/nsmxk3u>; A programme of the day is available here: <http://tinyurl.com/ofa46v4>

Lawrence McNamara, Deputy Director of the Bingham Centre and Rob Gleave wrote a piece for *UK Human Rights Blog* which is available here: <http://tinyurl.com/pl8o9y6>

The second, entitled "Thought Crimes and the Control of Subversive Views" took place on 22nd June 2015 at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter. This was a joint seminar with the of Professor John Wolff (Open University), and covered subject as diverse as blasphemy law, radicalisation, the recent "Trojan Horse" affair in Birmingham and the implications for communities of the proposed Extremism Bill. A programme of the day can be viewed here:

<http://www.islamicreformulations.net/resources/Thoughtcrimes and Control.pdf>

This seminar is the third in the series, looking at the practical implementation of legislation which targets radicalisation as a thought process, and not merely action/ The issues for free speech, personal liberty and the rule of law, as well as the practical issues in the prevention of terrorism will form the focus of the workshop.

Links:

Islamic Reformulations is a three-year Global Uncertainties Leadership Fellowship (GULF), funded by Research Councils UK. The Fellowship, awarded to Professor Robert Gleave of the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, aims to explore how Muslim thought has developed in the modern period, and how these modern developments relate to the pre-modern tradition of Islamic thought. The project focuses on the interlinked themes of belief, governance and violence.

www.islamicreformulations.net

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through the Partnership for Conflict Crime and Security

1300 Lunch

1345 Opening Remarks: Robert Gleave and Steve Hewitt

Session 1:

1400 Elizabeth Poole (Keele University): "Cameron's Muscular Liberalism in the Case of 'Operation Trojan Horse'"

1430 Charlotte Heath-Kelly (Warwick University): Safeguarding against thoughtcrime? The co-option of the NHS within UK counter-terrorism

1500 Chris Allen (University of Birmingham): "Britishness and British Values: about who we are not than who we are?"

1530 Tea/Coffee

Session 2:

1600 David (Rtd Special Branch officer), "The new Counter Extremism Act is a toffee apple: tough skin, soft inside"

1630 Rizwaan Sabir (Liverpool John Moores University): "The Counter-Terrorism & Security Act 2015 as a Weapon of War?"

1700 Closing Remarks (Rob Gleave and Steve Hewitt)

1715 Close

All are welcome to attend the workshop, but we do as that people register their interest in advance for catering purposes. To register, please contact Sophia Zeschitz, thoughtcrimes@exeter.ac.uk. Directions to the venue can be downloaded: www.islamicreformulations.net/resources/Bham%20campus.pdf

The Thoughtcrimes Seminar Series is funded by the Economic and Social research Council through the RCUK Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research programme: <http://www.paccsresearch.org.uk/> The series examines how personal belief and ideological commitment have emerged in public discourse as an object of (social) control by UK state agencies. Attempts in the UK to control personal belief and ideological commitment range from strategic policy initiatives to legal measures. Examples include the focus within the PREVENT strategy on "countering extremist narratives" by promoting certain expressions of Muslim belief, proposals to extend anti-terrorism measures to combat "non-violent extremism", denying entry to the UK of those judged ideological or morally suspect, and ultimately the criminalisation of individuals holding particular views whether or not they have been involved in politically motivated violence.

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