

# LEGAL INTERSECTIONS RESEARCH CENTRE (LIRC) SCHOOL OF LAW

You are invited to a seminar hosted by the Legal Intersections Research Centre

## **Justice and Theory: Blackstone's Commentaries, Joshua Reynolds and the Emergence of Modern Law**

**Presented by Professor Desmond Manderson**

*"So Blackstone and Hoyle  
Refused Cod-Liver Oil" – Ogden Nash*

*"Why would not our Author write in rhyme? The jingle of the words would then have been a warning bell to the young student to guard against deception." – Jeremy Bentham*

**Date:** 8 May 2015  
**Time:** 12:30 – 2:30  
**Location:** LHA Research Hub (19.2072)  
**RSVP:** [Online](#)

Despite being the single most influential text in the development of modern law, Sir William Blackstone's Commentaries (1765-9) has been analysed only in very limited ways. What has been missing has been an adequate social and contextual analysis of a complex rhetorical exercise. In this paper I begin to explore and relate the work to questions of aesthetics and ideology in the eighteenth century. Reframing Blackstone neither as an excess of Gothic reaction nor as a prototype of the liberal economy, but rather as a quintessential product of Neo-classicism, helps us better understand its approach, its limits, and its abiding influence. In this regard, the work of Sir Joshua Reynolds, notably his Justice (1774) and Theory, proves an indispensable collocutor at this critical moment in our legal history.



Professor Desmond Manderson is an international leader in inter-disciplinary scholarship in law and the humanities. He is the author of several books including *From Mr Sin to Mr Big* (1993); *Songs Without Music: Aesthetic dimensions of law and justice* (2000); *Proximity, Levinas, and the Soul of Law* (2006); and *Kangaroo Courts and the Rule of Law* (2012). His work has led to essays, books, and lectures around the world in the fields of English literature, philosophy, ethics, history, cultural studies, music, human geography, and anthropology, as well as in law and legal theory. Throughout this work Manderson has articulated a vision in which law's connection to these humanist disciplines is critical to its functioning, its justice, and its social relevance. After fifteen years at McGill University in Montreal, where he was founding Director of the Institute for the Public Life of Arts and Ideas, he returned to Australia in 2012 to take up a Future Fellowship on *The Sight of Justice: Law in the Visual Arts*. Forthcoming works include *Littoral Readings: Representations of Land and Sea in law, literature, and geography* (with Honni van Rijswijk, 2015); *Law and the Visual: Transition, Transformation, Transition* (2016); and *Ut pictura iuris: images of law and justice* (2016).

