



An Eye for an Eye: A Global History of Crime and Punishment

By Mitchel P. Roth

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From “an eye for an eye” to debates over capital punishment, humanity has a long and controversial relationship with doling out justice for criminal acts. Today, crime and punishment remain significant parts of our culture, but societies vary greatly on what is considered criminal and how it should be punished. In this global survey of crime and punishment throughout history, Mitchel P. Roth examines how and why we penalize certain activities, and he scrutinizes the effectiveness of such efforts in both punishing wrongdoers and bringing a sense of justice to victims.

Drawing on anthropology, archaeology, folklore, and literature, Roth chronicles the global history of crime and punishment—from early civilizations to the outlawing of sex crimes and serial homicide to the development of organized crime and the threat today of global piracy. He explores the birth of the penitentiary and the practice of incarceration as well as the modern philosophy of rehabilitation, arguing that these are perhaps the most important advances in the effort to safeguard citizens from harm. Looking closely at the retributions societies have condoned, Roth also look at execution and its many forms, showing how stoning, hemlock, the firing squad, and lethal injection are considered either barbaric or justified across different cultures. Ultimately, he illustrates that despite advances in every level of human experience, there is remarkable continuity in what is considered a crime and the sanctions administered.

Perfect for students, academics, and general readers alike, this interdisciplinary book provides a fascinating look at criminality and its consequences.

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Review

“Roth’s effort is forceful, scholarly yet easily readable, informative, sometimes even entertainingly informative, and, lastly, provocative. . . . The book is crammed with interesting facts and statistics and dozens of fascinating and sometimes gory anecdotes that have been brought together through disciplined and thorough research.”

(Los Angeles Review of Books)

“A fascinating and well-written piece of research.”

(Law, Crime, and History)

“Roth’s clear, straightforward, interdisciplinary approach in analyzing crime and punishment worldwide and his global perspective provide an engaging look into criminality and its consequences. Students, academics, and general readers can all benefit from this work. . . . Highly recommended.”

(Choice)

About the Author

Mitchel P. Roth is professor of criminal justice and criminology at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. He is the author or editor of many books, including *A History of Crime and Punishment: Readings and Documents in Criminal Justice* and *Global Organized Crime: A Reference Handbook*.

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