

SINGAPORE SYMPOSIUM IN LEGAL THEORY

“The Price of Criminal Law Skepticism: Ten Functions of the Criminal Law”

BY Professor Douglas N. Husak

Rutgers University

18 APRIL 2022, MONDAY

5.00PM – 7.00PM (SGT)

LEE SHERIDAN CONFERENCE ROOM, LEVEL 1, EU TONG SEN BUILDING
FACULTY OF LAW, NUS (BUKIT TIMAH CAMPUS)

(THIS ROUNDTABLE WILL BE PRESENTED IN A HYBRID FORMAT.)

ABSTRACT

A growing trend in philosophical commentary about penal justice is what I loosely call *criminal law skepticism*. The scholarship I have in mind does not simply urge caution or a more judicious use of the criminal law to address social problems. Instead, its thrust is more sweeping and radical; it presents reasons to doubt that the criminal law as presently constituted should continue to exist at all. I make no concerted effort to categorize the several varieties or motivations for this trend; their forms and underlying rationales are diverse and frequently humane. No single argument can refute them all. Instead, I respond by describing the *price* that might be incurred if these skeptics were to achieve their objective. I list ten valuable functions served by the criminal law as it currently exists, several of which are too seldom appreciated in philosophical commentary. No case for criminal law skepticism is complete unless efforts are made to explain how alternatives to the criminal law can achieve these functions or afford to dispense with them.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Douglas Husak is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at Rutgers University, where he has taught since 1977. Doug is interested in all areas of legal philosophy, but his primary research projects are in the intersection of moral philosophy and criminal law, with a special interest in drug policy. His most important publications are *Drugs and Rights* (Cambridge, 1992); *Overcriminalization* (Oxford, 2008); *Philosophy of Criminal Law: Selected Essays* (Oxford, 2010); and *Ignorance of Law* (Oxford, 2016). He has served as Editor-in-Chief of both *Law and Philosophy* and *Criminal Law and Philosophy*.

Participation is By Invitation Only.

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Registration is required in order to be admitted to the seminar.



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