

LEGAL INTERSECTIONS RESEARCH CENTRE (LIRC)  
SCHOOL OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG  
PRESENTS



# Law, Crisis and the Cultural Imaginary in Weimar Germany (1919-1933)

**PRESENTED BY  
DR. STEVEN HOWE**

12.30-1.30pm, 12 April 2017  
Building 67, Room 202  
University of Wollongong

The image of Weimar Germany as a ‘crisis culture’ has long-since taken root in the popular historical consciousness. Emerging from the crucible of war and revolution, and pockmarked by erratic patterns of cultural experimentation, economic turmoil and political flux, Germany’s first republic is frequently styled as a single prolonged moment of trauma and transformation that enveloped social life. The perception of crisis was widespread among contemporaries and found resonance not only in cultural media but also across the disciplines of economics, history, philosophy and medicine. In law, too, it was similarly pervasive – while socialists and liberals denounced the politically-driven practices of the courts, giving rise to what was publicly referred to as a ‘crisis of confidence in the judiciary’, legal theorists debated the ‘crisis of law’ that attended the radical transition to constitutional-social democracy.



Scholarship on such issues has to date tended to privilege disputes between legal luminaries and high-profile politicians, or to focus on discussions in the journalistic press. Yet the cultural texts of the era – literature, theatre, art, film – are also remarkable for the wealth and variety of their depictions of legal concerns. More than mere representations, these texts invite analysis as a form of popular jurisprudence that fosters new opportunities for productive negotiations of the contemporary crisis of law and justice outside the parameters of legal procedure, politics and academia. The aim here will be to survey the contours of this cultural discourse via analysis of a series of exemplary narratives that not only put the institutions of law and order in Germany on trial, but which also circulate back into the popular imagination as a point of reference for thinking about the stakes of law and crime.



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**Dr Steven Howe** is a Senior Teaching & Research Fellow at the University of Lucerne in Switzerland. He is also a Visiting Research Fellow with the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra.

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