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**Department of History, School of Humanities
Seminar Series – Semester 2, 2016**

**Steven Anderson**

**‘Spectacles of Justice: Capital Punishment in the Colony of South Australia’**

**Abstract**

From 1836 until 1901, capital punishment was regularly carried out in the colony of South Australia. This paper will give an overview of the executions that took place during this period, the crowd that came to watch, and the behaviour of dying criminals on the scaffold. Special mention will be given to two groups in South Australian society that were strongly represented on the gallows in the earliest decades of settlement: ex-convicts and indigenous offenders. The ease with which one-time convicts were executed in the first decade of settlement must be linked to the foundation myth of the colony itself while the prevalence of indigenous executions tells a different story of conflict on the frontier. The South Australian experience points to a larger idea that the practice of executions was never static but changed in accordance with wider shifts occurring in colonial society.

Steven Anderson researches the history of capital punishment in colonial Australia with a specific focus on the transition from public to private executions that occurred during the 1850s. His recently completed PhD was awarded the Dean’s Commendation for Doctoral Thesis Excellence and his publications have appeared in the *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, and *Aboriginal History*.

**Friday 9th September**

**12pm noon**

**Stretton Room, Napier 420**

**ALL WELCOME**