Punishment and Culture (Paperback)

By Philip Smith

The University of Chicago Press, United States, 2008. Paperback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. From the chain gang to the electric chair, the problem of how to deal with criminals has long been debated. What explains this concern with getting punishment right? And why do attitudes toward particular punishments change radically over time? In addressing these questions, Philip Smith attacks the comfortable myth that punishment is about justice, reason, and law. Instead he argues that punishment is an essentially irrational act founded in ritual as a means to control evil without creating more of it in the process. Punishment and Culture traces three centuries of the history of punishment, looking in detail at issues ranging from public executions and the development of the prison to Jeremy Bentham s notorious panopticon and the invention of the guillotine. Smith contends that each of these attempts to achieve sterile bureaucratic control was thwarted as uncontrollable cultural forces generated alternative visions of heroic villains, darkly gothic technologies, and sacred awe. Moving from Andy Warhol to eighteenth-century highwaymen to Orwell s 1984, Smith puts forward a dazzling account of the cultural landscape of punishment. His findings will fascinate students of sociology, history,...

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