

SCANDAL

A one-day symposium

17 October 2014
University of Western Sydney
Parramatta South Campus (Main)
Building EA, Lecture Theatre
1 (EA.1.29)



Scandal seems to be a regular part of everyday life. Politicians, priests, academics, teachers, soldiers, sportspeople, racehorse owners – even artists and novelists – sometimes find the lure of easy money, fame or pleasures of the flesh irresistible. Royal Commissions, public integrity commissions and media vie with each other to expose corruption or malfeasance, while the humble take secret delight in seeing how the mighty have fallen. The printing press once allowed scurrilous pamphleteers to spread malicious rumours, tabloid newspapers and radio have taken up the task of fanning the flames of controversy, while social media puts the power to scandalise in the hands of everyone.

But what is ‘scandal’ as an intellectual construct? Should it be seen as a quality of the activity, whether genocide, lying to Parliament or selling degrees? Or does it require public exposure and outrage to become truly scandalous? Durkheim argued that crime served a useful purpose in defining boundaries and allowing society to re-affirm its identity. Perhaps scandal may also serve a similar therapeutic role: while some scandals might merely titillate, others might serve to hasten reform, unsettle dictatorships and promote accountability. This symposium brings together scholars who study scandal from historical, literary, sociological and psychoanalytical perspectives. It will surprise, shock and even scandalise you.

Many well-known and distinguished speakers including Nicholas Cowdery, Wendy Bacon, Wayne Peake, Ivor Indyk, Simon Burrows, and David Tait will present.

Further inquiries can be made by contacting the Justice Research Group at JRG@uws.edu.au.