

Rough Justice



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In this first national, cross-regional study of lynching and criminal justice, now in paperback, Michael J. Pfeifer investigates the pervasive and persistent commitment to "rough justice" that characterized rural and working class areas of most of the United States in the late nineteenth century. Defining 'rough justice' as the harsh, informal, and often communal punishment of perceived criminal behaviour, Pfeifer examines the influence of race, gender, and class on understandings of criminal justice and shows how they varied across regions. He argues that lynching only ended when "rough justice" enthusiasts compromised with middle-class advocates of due process by revamping the death penalty into an efficient, technocratic, and highly racialised mechanism of retributive justice.

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