



University  
of Glasgow

**POLITICS SEMINARS**  
**CANDLEMAS TERM**

## **CARNEGIE LECTURE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**MONDAY 28 MAY 2012, 15:00-17:00**  
**ADAM SMITH BUILDING, ROOM 916**

# **“Violence and Civilization in the Western States-Systems”**

Martin Wight – one of the leading members of the ‘English School’ approach to international relations - suggested that the modern states-system possesses an ‘international ethic’ that did not exist in classical antiquity. A related standpoint can be found in the writings of Norbert Elias, and specifically in his comment that what has come to be known as genocide produces levels of moral indignation today that did not exist in the ancient world. Those observations exist alongside claims that very little has changed in world politics over the centuries or millennia. International relations is the ‘realm of recurrence and repetition’ according to Wight. Elias maintained that what changes most are the methods of killing and the numbers of people involved. This paper considers apparent tensions within Wight and Elias’s perspectives on world politics. The argument of this paper is that important resources for advancing that inquiry exist in process sociology. They are to be found in three inter-related concepts: the ‘scope of emotional identification’ between people, the ‘We/I’ balance in different figurations, and idea of the ‘social standards of self-restraint’. Together those concepts can be used to develop understandings of the relationship between violence and civilization in different systems of states. Does the modern states-system possess an ‘international ethic’ that did not exist in classical antiquity? Are people today shocked by forms of violence such as genocide that did not arouse moral indignation in classical antiquity? Have the fundamentals remained the same? How are any differences to be explained? Those are key questions about civilizing processes in international systems that await further exploration.

**Prof Andrew Linklater**  
*Aberystwyth University*

Andrew Linklater has been Woodrow Wilson Professor of International Politics at Aberystwyth University since 2000. He previously taught at the Universities of Tasmania and at Monash University in Australia, and at Keele University. His publications include several books and articles on critical and normative theories of international relations including *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Polity Press 1998) and *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Assessment* (with Hidemi Suganami, CUP 2006). Over the last few years his research has focused on harm and world politics, and on connections between process sociology and International Relations. His book, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations* was published by CUP last year. He is currently completing a book provisional titled, *Violence and Civilization in the Western States-Systems*.

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