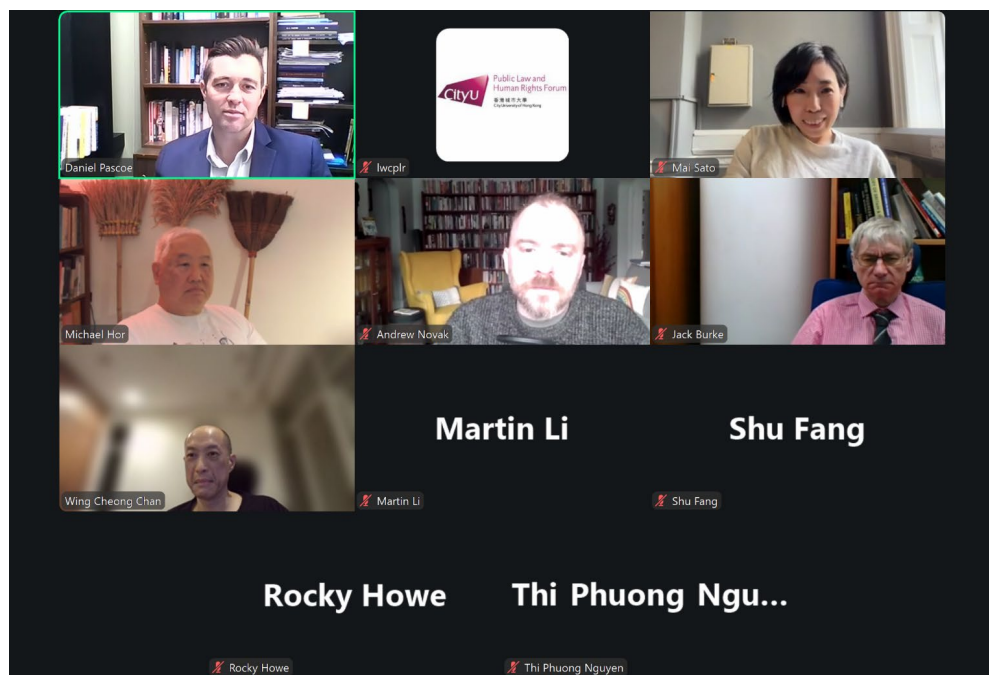


CPLR Book Review Seminar Series (5): Capital Drug Laws in Asia

25 March 2026

On 25 March 2026, the Public Law and Human Rights Forum (CPLR), in collaboration with the Asia Pacific Law Review, held the fifth edition of the Book Review Seminar Series, reviewing the book *“Capital Drug Laws in Asia”* (CUP 2025). The seminar was moderated by **Prof. Daniel Pascoe** (Associate Professor and Associate Director of CPLR, City University of Hong Kong). The book was reviewed by **Prof. Andrew Novak** (Associate Professor, George Mason University), followed by responses from the editors: **Prof. Wing-Cheong Chan** (Professor of Law, Singapore Management University), **Prof. Mai Sato** (Professor and Director of the Institute for Crime and Justice Policy Research, Birkbeck, University of London), and **Prof. Michael Hor** (Professor, The University of Hong Kong).



In his presentation, **Prof. Novak** provided a comprehensive and critical review of the book, highlighting its in-depth examination of legal frameworks and policies governing drug offences across Asian jurisdictions, with particular attention to the use of the death penalty. He commended the book for its rich empirical insights and diverse methodological approaches, especially in chapters addressing jurisdictions such as Malaysia, Singapore, China, Hong Kong

and Iran. At the same time, he identified certain limitations, including the absence of a discussion on Vietnam and a relatively limited comparative analysis of regional legal coordination and extradition practices. His full review is available on the Asia Pacific Law Review website via the following link: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10192557.2026.2629718>

In response, the editors reflected on the objectives and structure of the book, discussing the country-specific approach taken on the death penalty for drug offences across Asia. **Prof. Chan** emphasized the diversity of approaches across Asia and acknowledged the book's aim was to show different regional developments. **Prof. Sato** agreed on the omission of a Vietnam chapter and acknowledged the book's interdisciplinary approach, suggesting potential for future thematic or systematic works. **Prof. Hor** shared his 30-years of experience writing about the death penalty, particularly in Singapore and Malaysia, highlighting the need for more systematic academic research in the region. The editors also highlighted the important role played by non-governmental organisations in data collection and policy advocacy, particularly in jurisdictions where official information remains limited.

This seminar further explored broader themes arising from the book, including regional variations in the enforcement of drug laws, the concept of “de facto abolition” of the death penalty, and the challenges of conducting research in countries with restricted data transparency. Participants engaged actively during the discussion session, raising thoughtful questions and contributing to a dynamic exchange of ideas.

The seminar concluded with closing remarks from **Prof. Pascoe**, who expressed appreciation to the speakers and participants for their valuable contributions. The Public Law and Human Rights Forum looks forward to your attendance at the next edition of the Book Review Seminar Series.

For more information about the book, please visit:
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/capital-drug-laws-in-asia/259FE3BF6203A0004F027EFD93F0522A>