



THE IRVINE SEMINARS IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF MODERNITY

2008-2009 Series

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“The Value of Options: Statistics, Historical Models and the Path from El Salvador to Iraq”

Thursday, January 29, 2009
3:30-5:00 PM

Room 4250, SSPB (Anthropology Library)

This paper traces the multiplex process of abstraction that has transformed the 1980s war in El Salvador and its aftermath into a template for what the US military now calls “the Long War” on terror. I analyze how the resolution of the Salvadoran war has been turned into a replicable model of how to conduct counter-insurgency warfare and create a pro-US liberal democracy in Iraq. I also show how this model appears to guide US-led anti-narcotics efforts in the Americas. Finally, I examine how this model undergirds the consolidation of US counter-insurgency doctrine calling for increased “cultural knowledge,” especially the expertise offered by anthropologists.

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