

Conference Abstracts
States of Exception and the Politics of Anger
University of Iceland, 19–20 October 2018

Claudia Aradau: “Algorithmic Decision, Negative Ostentation and the Politics of Technology”

Abstract:

Algorithms increasingly make decisions that shape our individual and collective political lives. They decide what we see, how we are taught, how books are written, party manifestos shaped, what is policed, surveilled and targeted. Moreover, algorithms often appear to make life and death decisions. Rather than reading algorithmic decisions through the tropes of exception and decisionism, we insert algorithms within relations of production and labor. We draw on Gunther Anders’s reading of the fourth industrial revolution in order to trace the transformation of decision in human-technical assemblages. Anders is a critical theorist who has undone the exceptionality of human decisions in this work on technology and the obsolescence of human beings. He has famously corresponded with one of the Hiroshima pilots, Claude Eatherly, in one of the few works available in English. He has also written letters – but has never received a reply – to Klaus Eichmann, Adolf Eichmann’s son. These sets of letters are particularly relevant as they explain the role of decision and accountability within technological processes of production. This reading leads us to a methodology of conjunction to replace the diagnosis of a disjunction between human sensory capacities, between production and use, between the subliminal and the supraliminal.

Bio:

Claudia Aradau is Professor of International Politics in the Department of War Studies and Co-Chair of the Research Centre in International Relations. Her work has explored security practices globally and has critically interrogated their political effects. She has published widely on critical security studies and critical International Relations.

James K. Galbraith: “We Have Met the Enemy and He is Us. Emergency Politics in America Under Trump”

Abstract:

The victory of Donald Trump in the 2016 elections was a dramatic version of a broad phenomenon, not limited to the United States: the rejection of rule by entitled neoliberal professionals in favor of direct rule by right-wing oligarchs with populist flair. It also reflects the curious relationship of inequality and voting outcomes in the American states: the more unequal states are uniformly Democratic whereas the more egalitarian are heavily Republican. While the 2018 elections may produce Democratic gains in the House of Representatives, trends in the movement of inequality within states in the United States pose an acute dilemma for the Democrats going forward: the working-class states that Trump captured in the upper Midwest are trending Republican, and while many Southern states are drifting toward the Democrats, they will not be contestable for, at least, several electoral cycles. The crisis of the Democrats will, therefore, deepen, and it could prove lethal absent sweeping change in leadership and program.

Bio:

James K. Galbraith holds the Lloyd M. Bentsen Jr. Chair in Government/Business Relations at the LBJ School of Public Affairs and a professorship in Government at The University of Texas at Austin. Galbraith's books include *Welcome to the Poisoned Chalice: The Destruction of Greece and the Future of Europe* (2016); *Inequality: What Everyone Needs to Know* (2016); *The End of Normal: The Great Crisis and the Future of Growth* (2014); *Inequality and Instability: A Study of the World Economy Just Before the Great Crisis* (2012); *The Predator State: How Conservatives Abandoned the Free Market and Why Liberals Should Too* (2008); *Unbearable Cost: Bush, Greenspan, and the Economics of Empire* (2006); *Inequality and Industrial Change: A Global View* [with M. Berner] (2001); *Created Unequal: The Crisis in American Pay* (1998); *Macroeconomics* [with W. Darity Jr.] (1992); and *Balancing Acts: Technology, Finance and the American Future* (1989).

David Gaunt: “Not Just ‘Another Genocide’: The Historiographic Importance of Ottoman Empire Mass Murder”

Abstract:

In the past forty years, tens of thousands of Oriental Christians have been migrating to the Nordic countries, particularly to Sweden. They come telling of a past as the victims of chronic persecution, serial massacres, including genocides. This tale of victimhood has been vehemently denied by representatives of the Turkish Republic, the successor state to the Ottoman Empire. The demand of the Oriental Christians (Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Syriacs) for official recognition of a genocide led to a recognition by the Swedish parliament. But beyond the specific issue of genocide recognition, there are several reasons why this genocide has further importance for any study of mass violence against a target population. These are the first major genocides committed by a government against its own citizen, making different from other ones committed in a colonial situation; these were the first large scale violent expulsions of targeted populations, leading to permanent dislocation; this is one of the first where there is enough archival evidence to show the government inspiration and involvement in the expulsion of the target population. Finally, the stated intention by the victors after the war to prosecute the perpetrators and organizers came to nothing, even though hundreds of criminals had been imprisoned and evidence collected.

Bio:

David Gaunt is Professor of History, Centre for Baltic and East European Studies, Södertörn University. He has written *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors. Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia during World War I* (2006) and was main editor of *Let Them Not Return. Sayfo the Genocide of the Assyrian, Chaldean and Syriac Christians* (2017) plus many articles in scholarly journals and anthologies.

Ann-Sofie Gremaud: “Geographies of Crisis: Natural Resources, Emotions and Resistance in Nordic Contemporary Art”

Abstract:

Icelandic art from around and after the financial crash of 2008 often addressed the management of natural resources and the economic crisis through different languages of resistance. In this talk, Gremaud addresses the ways that different artworks were charged with affect and showed different takes on the link between place, crisis, and aesthetic representation.

Bio:

Ann-Sofie N. Gremaud is Assistant Professor at the Department of Danish at the University of Iceland. She holds a Ph.D. in Visual Culture and has done research on the interpretation of nature in modern art. Her articles and edited volumes have focused on interpretations of landscapes, resource management, and the Anthropocene in Icelandic art as well as Danish colonial history and West Nordic region building.

Hafdís Erla Hafsteinsdóttir: “Deviant Female Sexuality and the Politics of Panic in Iceland during the Second World War”

Abstract:

The Allied occupation of Iceland during World War II is often considered to be one of the fundamental turning points in Icelandic contemporary history. During the occupation, relationships between Icelandic women and foreign soldiers caused widespread panic in government circles as well as among the public. Sexual and/or romantic relationships between soldiers and local women and girls evoked multifaceted fears and anxieties concerning broad themes of political importance, such as class, nation, urbanization, and gender-roles. Tensions quickly escalated into full-fledged panic, which led to investigations and interrogations and, finally, emergency legislation where the autonomy of women was diminished in order to satisfy the demand for action on behalf of the government. In 2012, seals were broken off documentations from Jóhanna Knudsen, a member of the police squad in Reykjavík during the war years, revealing in detail how the actions of the police in Reykjavík turned into institutionalized violence. The disclosure of the documentation allowed for a re-reading and re-evaluation of this part of Icelandic war-time history. This paper examines how female sexuality became a figure of projection for fears and anxieties during uncertain times and how tensions escalated into systematic persecutions and structural violence on the grounds of gender and class previously unknown to Icelandic society.

Bio:

Hafdís Erla Hafsteinsdóttir is currently an independent scholar. She received her BA in History from University of Iceland and MA in Women’s and Gender History from the University of Vienna. She is editor of the book *“And you know you were never here.” Queer history and historiography in Iceland* (2017). Her current project is entitled *“Hidden Women: Female Queer Sexuality in Iceland 1700–1960.”*

Guðmundur Hálfðanarson: “Is There Something New in “Neo-Nationalism””

Abstract:

In recent years, a nationalist wave has swept over much of the Western world -- and beyond. Characterized by hostility towards immigration, islamophobia, suspicion towards supranational cooperation, and emphasis on strict border controls, this trend has been dubbed neo-nationalism in an attempt to distinguish it from nationalist movements and expressions of the past. The question dealt with here is if this political wave presents anything new or if it should simply be seen as still another form of cultural nationalism.

Bio:

Guðmundur Hálfðanarson is Professor of History and Dean of the School of Humanities at the University of Iceland. He specializes in political and cultural history, focusing on Icelandic and European nationalism and the history of the nation-state.

Peter Hitchcock: “On the Biometrics of Change: Class, Measure, Security”

Abstract:

This paper takes up a contradictory moment of measure in one form of the unity of opposites—in this case, in the passionate scientificity and surveillance of biometrics (literally, life measure), in which the security of our being is defined in a data set and where freedom itself is marvelously decided on necessity, on capture. On the one hand, the paper will consider the rapid expansion of the biometric industry after 9/11 terrorist attacks in the guise of securing identity; on the other, it deals with the philosophical conditions of security (read through Foucault and Agamben) and the meaning of measure for transforming the social. Could it be that in the desire to measure the human through biometrics, we also see the unrecuperable in what counts for human? This will form the basis for a rethinking of the quality/quantity problematic in materialism. Indeed, the argument will be made, in the concatenation of private property, privatization, privacy and privation, biometrics seeks nothing less than the dissolution of its very claims to secure the measure of contemporary existence.

Bio:

Peter Hitchcock is Professor of English at Baruch College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY). His books include *Oscillate Wildly: The Long Space* (1998) and, most recently, two new works, *Labor in Culture* (2017), and *The Debt Age* [co-edited with Di Leo and McClennen] (2018). His next book is on postcoloniality and the state. He is also completing a book on commodification and financialization.

Valur Ingimundarson: “The Upsurge of the Radical Right: Fascist Equivalents and Departures”

Abstract:

The paper explores the nature of the contemporary Radical Right in Europe by offering a theoretical comparison between fascist and populist parties, by focusing on similarities and differences within populist formations, and by evaluating far-right influence on government policies and on the ideological agendas of rival political groupings. It takes issue with scholars, such as Jan Werner-Müller, who subsume authoritarian leaders—including Erdogan, Orban, and Kaczyński—under the rubric of the Radical Right instead of seeing them as representing the Nationalist Conservative Right. It is stressed that populist parties are rarely capable of influencing governments without occupying a functional role, such as facilitating conservative rule. In such an auxiliary capacity, the populist Radical Right has been in a far better agenda-setting position to oppose immigration and the EU and to espouse traditional social and cultural values based on an anti-globalist, xenophobic, and anti-Islamic agenda. And as long as it capitalizes on crisis situations across Europe, it will not only continue to carve out political spaces but also be able to claim to represent those who reject borderless supranational projects and multi-cultural Europe.

Bio:

Valur Ingimundarson is Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Iceland and Chair of the Board of the EDDA Research Center. He holds a Ph.D. in History from Columbia University. He has authored, co-authored, and edited several books and written many articles on topics such as contemporary geopolitics and governance; fascism and nationalism; the politics of justice and memory; Icelandic foreign, security, and Arctic policies; U.S.-European relations during and after the Cold War; and post-conflict politics in the former Yugoslavia. His most recent edited work is *Iceland’s Financial Crisis: The Politics of Blame, Protests, and Reconstruction* (Routledge, 2016).

Sveinn Jóhannesson: “Technology and Dictatorship in Modern American Politics, 1924-1948”

Abstract:

Over the past few years—in the wake of the Snowden revelations, the rise of drone warfare, the social media revolution, Cambridge Analytica and Donald Trump—there has been a boom in gloomy books, arguing that, today, liberal democracy’s biggest threats spring less from opposing ideologies or populist disruptions than from advanced technology and science. This talk traces the history of the idea, in American politics of the inter-war period, that constitutional democracy could be endangered by scientific innovation and the rapid emergence of new technologies. In the United States, the years following the end of World War I were distinguished by unprecedented levels of technological change (including electricity, telephones, radio, automobiles, mass production and mass consumption). Yet, the Great War also confounded the 19th liberal belief that scientific and technological progress complimented individual freedom and democratic government. The paper reconstructs the efforts of thinkers such as Bertrand Russell, Lewis Mumford, and Harold Lasswell to rethink the political meaning of “techno-science” (or “scientific technique”) and its implications for liberal political theory. They feared that 20th century science and technology were propelling an authoritarian drift in U.S. politics, which, if left unchecked by new forms of institutional controls, would hollow out America’s liberal and democratic system of government. In fact, these new forces threatened to introduce a form of dictatorship, which fit the criteria of a permanent state of exception: the expansion and concentration of central state power as well as its liberation from constitutional restraints and popular control.

Bio:

Sveinn Jóhannesson is *Past & Present Postdoctoral Fellow* at the Institute of Historical Research, at the School of Advanced Study, at the University of London. Sveinn completed his PhD at the University of Cambridge in 2018. His article, “Securing the State: James Madison, Federal Emergency Powers and the Rise of the Liberal State in Postrevolutionary America” was published in the *Journal of American History* in September 2017. Sveinn is currently working on a monograph on “the Scientific-Military State” in 19th century United States.

Andrej Kotljarchuk: “Nordic Citizens in the Soviet Great Terror: The Rescue Operation to Sweden and Issues of Citizenship, Ethnicity, and Political Belonging”

Abstract:

Access to previously unknown archival records has revealed massive expulsion of Nordic citizens from the Soviet Union as well as the rescue operation organized in 1937–38 by the Swedish embassy in Moscow. The administrative expulsion of foreigners started in the Soviet Union in May 1937. The embassies of Scandinavian countries were inundated with hundreds of requests for help from Nordic citizens in various regions of the country. The embassy of Sweden which organized the return of people faced many problems. Many people had expired passports, were born in Russia; some were not the citizens of Sweden. The rescue operation took place in the midst of the Great Terror, when the Kremlin limited access to diplomatic missions. The paper focuses on the rescue operation and issues of citizenship, ethnicity, and political belonging of those who asked for the help. These aspects have been neglected, generally, in previous research. Further, new questions will be posed:

How did the Swedish embassy treat Nordic citizens (both Swedes and non-Swedes) who applied for the help? What criteria did the Swedish Foreign Office use to define those who were in the group at greatest risk and those who could not be given legal aid? How might political belonging, citizenship and geographical remoteness play a role in this context? What was emphasized; what was silenced? How did the specific Soviet environment and the interaction between Nordic countries influence the quality of the diplomatic response?

Bio:

Andrej Kotljarchuk holds a Ph.D. degree in History from Stockholm University (2006) and a candidate of historical science degree from the Russian Academy of Sciences (1999). Currently, he is Senior Researcher at the School of Historical and Contemporary Studies, Södertörn University.

Hans Köchler: “Carl Schmitt’s ‘State of Exception’ and the Logic of Power Politics”

Abstract:

Carl Schmitt’s misconception of sovereignty is at the roots of his totalitarian state doctrine. Instead of rooting sovereignty in the autonomy of the citizen as subject of politics, he makes a secondary, or procedural, aspect its defining criterion. Linking it to the power to decide on the “state of exception,” Schmitt reverses the sequence of *origin* and *exercise* of sovereignty. In a secular and democratic context, the sovereign will of the people is the foundation of any legitimate political order and, subsequently, the “rule of law.” Emergency rule—under a state of exception—serves the purpose to preserve that very order; it is not an end in itself. Thus, emergency powers are not an expression of sovereignty *per se*, but merely a tool to defend it. Accordingly, in all democratic constitutions, those powers are not absolute. They are subject to revision by the legislative authority. Their isolated interpretation, which neglects subordination to popular sovereignty, has no basis in the domestic legal order, except under a totalitarian constitution. As regards relations between states, however, Schmitt’s doctrine of the state of exception could well be seen as a blueprint for a Machiavellian exercise of power. The decision-making rules of the United Nations Security Council allow that body’s permanent members (P5)—as a group as well as individually—to operate under a kind of permanent state of exception. Under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Council’s authority is virtually absolute; its decisions are binding upon all member states, and without the possibility of judicial review. The permanent members are “sovereign” in the Schmittian sense: standing outside of the commonly valid legal order, but part of it nonetheless—or, in the words of John Foster Dulles: “The Security Council is not a body that merely enforces agreed law. It is a law unto itself.” Because of the compromises of realpolitik among its founding fathers, Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter—more or less obliquely, though not unwittingly—embodies the logic of power politics according to Schmitt’s conception of sovereignty.

Bio:

Hans Köchler is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, and President of the International Progress Organization, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the United Nations.

Bohdana Kurylo: “Civil Society and Emergency Politics in Ukraine: Redefining the Power of the Audience”

Abstract:

Under the guise of an urgent security threat, the state might abuse its power, suspending individual rights and breaking the law. In emergency conditions, civil society may seem to be closer to a silenced audience rather than an active participant in security. Nevertheless, the current Ukraine crisis—including the Euromaidan revolution and the war in Donbas—reveals a different picture. The making of Ukrainian civil society began when the country appeared a step away from state-breaking. Might civil society still speak truth to power in extreme security conditions? What is “the power of the powerless” in the context of emergency? Focusing on the Ukraine crisis, this paper investigates the role of civil society in emergency politics. The paper’s argument is twofold. First, civil society groups can be an active participant in securitization processes, underlying the construction of emergency. Second, civil society can use emergency as a stage on which to seek empowerment. The Ukraine case presents a type of bottom-up securitization, in which rage played a pivotal role. The audience was able to overcome its passivity by physically confronting the discursive battlefield of securitization—by dying on the Maidan barricades and joining the volunteer battalions in Donbas. The security engagement of civil society redefines the actor-audience relationship, demonstrating the interplay between the decision from the top and the agency from the bottom.

Bio:

Bohdana Kurylo is a Ph.D. candidate at University College London, the School of Slavonic and East European Studies. Her research investigates the role of civil society in emergency politics, focusing on the Ukraine crisis and the European refugee crisis. Bohdana is a recipient of the Victor and Rita Swoboda Memorial Scholarship and the Overseas Research Scholarship. Her previous research projects concerned the topics of diaspora, theories of power, global governance and popular culture. Her papers have appeared in a number of journals, such as *Journal of Political Power*, *Palgrave Communications*, *European Political Science* and *Journal of Consumer Culture*.

Alexandra S. Moore: "Exception as Alibi: Redactions and the Rhetoric of Emergency in the War on Terror"

Abstract:

Immediately following the attacks of 11 September 2001, the Bush Administration responded with the rhetoric of national emergency and historical irruption to justify what Agamben has theorized as a state of exception—the suspension of law and legal norms in order to protect the future of the United States as a nation of laws. Rhetoric became new law and in policy documents. These initiatives were repeatedly deemed necessary to bolster the security state's ability to face an "unusual and extraordinary threat." This paper responds to the invocation of exceptionality in the war on terror in two ways. First, it is argued that a reading of these political and legal developments in terms of exception masks the long history of legalized abuse conducted in concert with US imperialism and domestic racism. This longer history affords a critique, too, of Agamben's theory of the state of exception, particularly in its stark separation of bare life from legal personhood. Second, the restored edition of Mohamedou Ould Slahi's *Guantánamo Diary* (2017), the only published account of Guantánamo written while its author was still captive), is used to examine how the book's repaired redactions elucidate the language of exception as alibi rather than necessity. A close reading of the redactions demonstrates the temporal inconsistencies of the Bush Administration's arguments as well as their ideological and practical perversions and inconsistencies. Finally, it is suggested that the critique of the logic of exceptionality is crucial at our current historical moment, when the former architects of a kidnapping and torture program—commonly known as the Rendition, Detention, and Interrogation—are being promoted in the Trump Administration and the President advocates torture and illegal detention.

Bio

Alexandra S. Moore is Professor of English and Co-Director of the Human Rights Institute at Binghamton University. Her publications include *Vulnerability and Security in Human Rights Literature and Visual Culture* (2015) and *Regenerative Fictions: Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis, and the Nation as Family* (2004). She has also co-edited several volumes: *Witnessing Torture: Perspectives of Survivors and Human Rights Workers* (with Elizabeth Swanson, 2018); *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Human Rights* (with Sophia A. McClennen, 2015); *Teaching Human Rights in Literary and Cultural Studies* (with Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg, 2015); *Globally Networked Teaching in the Humanities* (with Sunka Simon, 2015); *Theoretical Perspectives on Human Rights and Literature* (with Goldberg, 2011). She publishes widely on representations of human rights violations in contemporary literature and film. Her current research is on the stories that black sites in the war on terror show and tell.

Jón Ólafsson: Populism and Public Engagement: An outline of a critical conception

Abstract:

Defenders of liberal democracy often express concern about direct public influence on decision-making. Since there is much evidence of public ignorance, suggesting that individuals often lack even the basic knowledge necessary to be able to form views on many of the complicated issues that decision-makers have to deal with, why advocate public engagement? It follows that calls for more democratic participation is sometimes seen as based on populism: The demand that the “people's will” be ranked higher than political knowledge or expertise. Epistemic and deliberative democrats reject this view arguing that if conditions for a democratic discourse are right the public will quickly acquire the relevant information and turn out to be better at providing smart and creative solutions than political and scientific elites. Anti-populists however may not accept this argument, pointing out that knowledge as such is no answer to populism. What must be addressed is rather its hostility to systematic, institutional and procedural approaches to questions of ideology, power and control. To save democracy according to this view is to save political discourse which is not as such about smart solutions or individual choices but about the conceptual and ideological framework for making such choices. This criticism of epistemic/deliberative democracy accuses its proponents of naïvely failing to understand that a solutions-oriented understanding of politics leads to conformity with dominating views and undermines the role of the critically engaged citizen. From this point of view direct democracy can be seen as a direct threat to democracy. In the paper, an attempt is made to show that this version of anti-populism is based on a mistake. Public engagement in policy- and decision-making presents an opportunity for inclusive critical discussion often absent from “politics as usual.” In order to illustrate this, one needs to turn to the parameters of public discussion and expose its epistemic infrastructure. Cognitive diversity, available only through wide participation, provides a background for a sharp analysis of power which precedes public resistance to authority—a necessary part of democracy.

Jón Ólafsson is Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Iceland.

Stefán Ólafsson: “Welfare Consequences of the Great Recession in Europe”

Abstract:

The paper is based on a comparative study of welfare consequences of the recent financial crisis in Europe, which will be published by Oxford University Press in 2019 and which is edited by Stefán Ólafsson, Mary Daly, Olli Kangas and Joakim Palme. The book investigates how the burdens of the crisis were shared—between countries, between different socio-economic groups across Europe, and within individual countries. The studies are based on broad comparisons of 30 countries and deeper analyses of nine country cases. The approach is grounded in classical theories about crisis responses and relates financial hardship of populations to institutional characteristics—such as welfare regimes, currency regimes, socio-political patterns, affluence levels, public debt, and policy reactions during the crisis period—for example, stimulus versus austerity, the degree of social protection emphasis, the commitment to redistribution, and the significance of activation. The most heavily impacted countries were Greece and other Mediterranean countries, the three Baltic States, Ireland and Iceland. The studies show how the lower income groups across Europe (the lowest 30% of income receivers) were disproportionately affected with increased financial hardship during the crisis years, while the top income groups were only minimally affected. Once the upswing started again, the recovery was also slower for the lower income groups than for the higher ones.

Bio:

Stefán Ólafsson is Professor of Sociology at the University of Iceland. He has worked mainly on welfare-related issues, political economy and societal development. He has been a Director of the Social Sciences Research Institute at the University of Iceland, Chairman of the Board of Iceland's Social Security Administration, the Scientific and Technological Council of Iceland and is a board member of the EDDA Research Center. Ólafsson has recently published a book on long term development of income and wealth distribution in Iceland and is one of the editors of a forthcoming book on *Welfare and the Great Recession in Europe* (2019).

Sofia Oliveira Pais: “The Economic State of Exception during the Euro Crisis: Implications for the Rule of Law”

Abstract:

The 2008 Euro crisis—probably the most serious crisis since the beginning of the European integration process—has revealed many weaknesses in the European Union’s design and has raised doubts about its its cohesion. European institutions and EU Member States tried to find answers to deal with the Eurozone crisis and decided to assign the implementation of financial assistance to a set of institutions, the so-called Troika. However, the austerity measures imposed by Troika in many European countries, including Portugal, have weakened the rule of law, which is at the heart of the EU . Although the EU has taken measures to improve the level of compliance with the rule of law, some questions remain unanswered. In this article the principle of the rule of law will be examined from an institutional perspective: (1) What role should the European Commission have played in the Eurozone crisis? Should it be responsible for the outcomes of the financial adjustments (taking into account the recent case law of the Court of Justice, namely the Pringle case)? (2) How should the ECJ have decided during the Eurozone crisis? What kind of contribution could Constitutional Courts, such as that of Portugal, have made? (3) Could the deepening of financial integration after the crisis and the empowerment European Central Bank risk weakening once more the rule of law? These are the main issues that will be addressed in the paper, and some suggestions, which could provide for better functioning of the EU, will be proposed.

Bio:

Sofia Oliveira Pais is Professor of Law at the Faculty of Law of Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Porto). She is the Coordinator of Católica Research Centre for the Future of Law – Porto and the Director of the PhD Program (Porto). She holds a Jean Monnet Chair, awarded by the European Commission, “Current and future challenges of European integration.” She coordinated several projects in EU Law co-financed by the European Commission. She specializes in EU Law, internal market, regulation and competition law. She is editor-in-chief of Market and Competition Law Review and member of the editorial board of Católica Law Review. Author of several books, articles and conferences in EU Law, internal market, regulation and competition.

Helge Petersen: “The Historical Specificity of State Racism: An Immanent Critique of Foucault and Agamben”

Abstract:

Over the past decades, Michel Foucault’s and Giorgio Agamben’s writings on sovereignty, biopower, and exceptional violence have become highly influential sources of inspiration in the fields of critical racism, migration and border studies as well as postcolonial theory. One of the reasons for the widespread interest in these approaches is their explicit focus on a neglected aspect in political theory—namely, the relationship between state power, nationalism, and racism. Their theoretical conceptions are developed and unfolded against the background of a variety of socio-historical contexts, and, therefore, speak to a wide range of empirical research on both historical and contemporary forms of state racism. Yet, what has received much less attention in the literature on Foucault and Agamben is a critical reflection on the limitations and pitfalls of such an emphasis on transhistorical similarities rather than historical specificities. This paper sets out to develop an immanent critique of Foucault’s and Agamben’s perspectives on state racism. Its main argument is that both approaches overgeneralize their analysis of totalitarian forms of state racism and fail to take into account the specific character of state racism in contemporary democratic societies of the global north. To overcome these shortcomings, the paper proposes to move towards an alternative theoretical framework. Based on a critical reconstruction of the early writings of Stuart Hall and the late writings of Nicos Poulantzas, state racism is conceptualized, instead, as a systemic and contradictory process of inscribing and entrenching racialized states of exception into the institutional materiality of democratic nation-states. The analytical potential of this framework will be illustrated, using the example of police racism in contemporary, postcolonial Britain.

Bio:

Helge Petersen is a Sociology Ph.D. Student at the University of Glasgow. His research project seeks to develop a socio-historical reconstruction of the political conflicts over racist violence and state racism in contemporary Britain since the mid-1970s. He holds an MA degree in Political Theory from Goethe University Frankfurt and an MRes in Sociology from the University of Glasgow.

Jennifer N. Ross: “Tactics of Battle, Strategies of State: Counterterrorism and the Hurricane Katrina Exception”

Abstract:

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Christian Parenti drew sharp parallels between the devastation of the U.S. Gulf Coast and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Though disregarded by 9/11 and counter-terror scholarship, the Hurricane Katrina disaster played a vital role in the development and normalization of the post-September 11 state of exception. The paper theorizes Hurricane Katrina within the context of national security and counter-terrorism to explain how and why rescue and relief operations evolved into a heavily militarized state of exception. It is contended that the Katrina disaster reveals a crucial juncture, at which counterterror discourse and policy overlapped with mass incarceration and American racism to normalize the state of exception and reassert white supremacy. Specifically, U.S. government, media and para/military actors used rhetoric and tactics unique to the War on Terror to legitimize, first, the extreme use of force against racial minorities and, second, the controversial tactics themselves, particularly Guantanamo Bay and private security contractors. In the face of waning support for the wars abroad, key institutions were able to marshal the Katrina disaster in defense of the counter-terror state of exception, the racial status quo, and international military campaigns. Ultimately, repositioning Hurricane Katrina as both a consequence and a driver reveals how counter-terror tactics and strategies have become a fundamental feature of American domestic and international policy in the new millennium.

Bio:

Jennifer Ross is a Ph.D. candidate at William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. She received dual BA degrees in Honors English and History, as well as her Masters in English at the University of Michigan-Flint. Ross’s dissertation examines the developing counter-terror state by counterpoising the September 11 attacks and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Her research interests include the structure and function of state power, neoliberalism, disaster literature, American racisms, and digital humanities.

Mo Torres: “The “Emergency Management” of Economic Decline in the Post-Industrial United States”

Abstract:

The American Rust Belt has experienced decades of economic decline. State governments have employed a range of strategies to combat this decline, to varying degrees of success. Since 1980, Michigan has maintained an aggressive state takeover system, known as “emergency financial management” (EFM), to improve the conditions of Detroit, Flint, and other struggling cities. Like most takeover systems, Michigan’s EFM rests on the assumption that economic emergency is best mediated through heavy-handed managerialism. Michigan’s “emergency managers” have sweeping powers, including the ability to nullify collectively bargained contracts, amounting to what one former manager has celebrated as “mini-dictatorships. While EFM has achieved success in certain cases, it has had disastrous effects in others, including in Flint, where a manager created the ecological crisis known as the “Flint water crisis.” Despite the significance of this policy, few scholars have investigated the causes and consequences of EFM. The paper analyzes all on-the-record statements on EFM from 1980 to 2017 made by state lawmakers to understand how individuals justify the use of takeover to achieve economic revitalization. It will be argued that two distinct logics are at play, divided clearly along race and class lines. Lawmakers blame cities with poor Black majorities for their own decline, and use moralizing language to justify takeover. Meanwhile, lawmakers use value-neutral language to justify the takeover of cities with middle and upper class white majorities. Since 1980, 52% of Michigan’s Black residents have temporarily lost the right to self-govern under EFM, relative to 3% of whites. Future work should assess the degree to which “emergency financial management” perpetuates race and class inequalities in the name of economic uplift.

Mo Torres is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Harvard University and an Inequality and Social Policy Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. His dissertation explores the causes and consequences of “emergency financial management” as a political response to economic decline in the United States' post-industrial Rust Belt. In 2019, he will begin ethnographic fieldwork on the politics of prison privatization in Brazil as a Fulbright Scholar.

Rafael Valim: “State of Exception: The Legal Form of Neoliberalism”

Abstract:

The state of exception presents itself as a requirement of the current model of neoliberal domination. It is the means by which the democratic practice is neutralized and political regimes are silently reconfigured on a universal scale. It constitutes a decisive analytical category to reveal the “invisible” connection between phenomena that, at first, seem disconnected, but together make the key to understanding modern society. The crisis in the regulatory capacity of law, the crisis in constitutionalism, the unbearable level of global social inequality, the depoliticization of societies, the emergency of terrorism, the resurgence of fascism and intolerance in all its forms, the crisis of parliaments’ legitimacy, among other elements, all work together to form a complex scheme whose unveiling is possible by means of the heuristic virtuality of the state of exception.

Bio:

Rafael Valim holds a Ph.D. in Public Law. He is Professor at the Faculty of Law of the Catholic University of São Paulo (Brazil) and Visiting Professor at the University of Manchester.

Nadia Urbinati: "The Populism Riddle"

Abstract:

Populism is the name of a global phenomenon whose definitional precariousness is proverbial. It resists generalizations and makes scholars of politics comparativist by necessity, as its language and content are imbued with the political culture of the society in which it arises. A rich body of socio-historical analyses allows us to situate populism within the "gigantic" and global phenomenon called democracy, as its ideological core is nourished by the two main entities, the nation and the people, that have fleshed out popular sovereignty in the age of democratization. Populism consists in a transmutation of the democratic principles, the majority and the people, in a way that is meant to celebrate "a part" of the people against another one through a leader embodying it and an audience legitimizing it. This may make populism collide with constitutional democracy, even if its main tenets are embedded in the democratic universe of meanings and language.

Bio:

Nadia Urbinati is Professor of Political Theory at Columbia University. Her most recent books in English are *The Tyranny of the Moderns* (2015) and *Democracy Disfigured: Opinion, Truth and the People* (2014). She has finished a manuscript titled, *Populism in Power* to be published by Harvard University Press. Professor Urbinati writes for the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* and takes part in the political debate of her home country.