

The Impact of Neutrality on Research and Knowledge Production in Legal Scholarship

Workshop Programme

9-10 December 2026

Blue Square (Ruhr-University Bochum)
Kortumstraße 90, 44787 Bochum, 4th floor

Wednesday 09.12.2026

09:00 – 10:00 Welcome Reception (Registration and Coffee)

10:00 – 10:30 Introduction by the Organizers: Sissy Katsoni (Ruhr University Bochum) &
Julian Hettihewa (Deakin University)

**10:30 – 12:00 1st Panel: The Conceptual and Historical Foundations of Neutrality in Legal
Scholarship**

Discussant: Jean D'Aspremont (Sciences Po)

- **Athanasios Chouliaras** (University of Nicosia) – Neutrality as a principle and as a fallacy in the construction and analysis of crime
- **Kong Soon Lim** (University of A Coruña) – Reconstructing the Language of Neutrality
- **Ansgar Pohl** (Humboldt University of Berlin) – Inventing Objectivity: Legal Scholarship and the Ideal of Neutrality in the Long Nineteenth Century

12:00 – 13:00 Lunch break

13:00 – 14:30 2nd Panel: Sociopolitical Dimensions of Neutrality in Legal Research

Discussant: Mando Rachovitsa (University of Nottingham)

- **Emilie Weidl** (University of Oxford) – The Binary as Neutral: The Influence of the Gender Critical Feminist Movement on UK Equality Law Literature
- **Atul Alexander** (WB National University of Juridical Sciences) – Neutrality as Omission: Caste and Epistemic Blind Spots in International Law
- **Fia Hamid-Walker** (University of Melbourne) – Neutrality as a Condition of Oblivion: Humanitarian Legality and the (re)Production of Colonial Knowledge

14:30 – 15:00 Coffee break

15:00 – 16:30 3rd Panel: Implications of Neutrality on Academic Infrastructure

Discussant: Stewart Manley (Maynooth University)

- **Jeffrey Sachs** (Acadia University) – Mandating Objectivity: How Legislative and Accreditation Frameworks Shape the Infrastructure of Legal Knowledge Production
- **Deborah Peters** (University of Münster) – How Inaccessibility Impedes the “Neutrality” of Knowledge Production
- **Antonis Stylianou** (University of Nicosia) – Artificial Intelligence and the Myth of Neutrality in Legal Scholarship: Algorithmic Objectivity, Epistemic Power and the Future of Legal Knowledge Production

16:30 – 17:00 Informal Reflection Session

Thursday 10.12.2026

09:00 – 10:30 4th Panel: The Methodological Implications of Neutrality

Discussant: Vasuki Nesiah (NYU)

- **Manuela Camargo de Assis** (Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory) – Sovereignty as a Neutral Fiction: Feminist Historiography and the Limits of Critique in International Law
- **Yota Negishi (Seinan Gakuin University)** – Neutrality after Jus Cogens: Gaza, Public Response-Ability, and International Legal Scholarship
- **Louisa Kate O'Connell (Maynooth University)** – Neutrality in Legal Scholarship and the Exclusion of Indigenous Epistemologies and Research Methodologies

10:30 – 11:00 Coffee Break

11:00 – 13:30 5th Panel: Is Neutrality a Reliable Criterion of Academic Rigor?

Discussant: Tor Krever (University of Cambridge)

- **Charlotte Steinorth** (Ministry of Science, Research and Arts, Baden-Württemberg) – Selective Neutrality: Human Rights Law Scholarship and the Politics of Disciplinary Legitimacy
- **Daniel Villamarin** (University of Vienna) – Injury to Narrative: Balancing Independence and Source-Access in Socio-Legal Research
- **Unyimeabasi Odong** (University of Ottawa) – Neutral Financial Myths: Fintech Legal Scholarship and the Echoing Codes of Global Financial Hierarchies

13:30 – 14:30 Lunch Break

14:30 – 15:30 Roundtable Session

15:30 – 16:00 Concluding Remarks and Outlook

This workshop is generously funded by the Volkswagen Foundation (project number: 0203001).