

Call for Papers: Research Workshop, University of Glasgow School of Law, 29 May 2025 “The Political Universes of International Courts”

“I understood that I had collided with the edge of the political universe in which the tribunal was allowed to function.”
(Carla del Ponte, *Madame Prosecutor*)

International courts and tribunals form established features of international law and governance. This institutional terrain, however, is not stable. Just as historically governments have established and, over time, reformed or closed numerous such tribunals, so various of the international courts and tribunals established in the post-Cold War period have begun to encounter similar experiences at the hands of their government stakeholders, ranging from reform initiatives to backlash and, in some instances, closure.

In short, the fortunes of international adjudication have ebbed and flowed over time, closely intertwined with shifts in the surrounding international political environments: their “political universes”.

To recognise these tendencies and shifts, however, is only a starting point. Accordingly, in an effort to make better sense of the manner in which governments, international courts and other constituencies - including domestic and transnational legal and policy communities - interact, influence and effect one another over time, this interdisciplinary workshop invites consideration of the political universes of international adjudication.

We are particularly interested in papers exploring:

- What features constitute the “political universes” of international adjudicatory bodies? How might these differ across institutions, institutional forms, and areas of activity?
- What factors shape the political universes of international courts and tribunals?
- How do international courts and tribunals manage, avoid, and transgress the boundaries of their political universes?
- Approaches to international courts and judges as strategic and political agents, as well as principled legal actors.
- What determines how governments respond to different forms of court behaviour, including politically adverse findings?
- How do international courts and tribunals (and judges and arbitrators) seek to protect or enhance institutional autonomy?
- To what extent does international law’s “invisible college” form part of the political universe of different international courts?

The organisers particularly encourage the presentation of work from post-graduate and early-career researchers, as well as from more established scholars.

Abstracts (of not more than 400 words) should be submitted to polcourts@glasgow.ac.uk by 5pm UK time, Friday 31 January 2025, and should be accompanied by a brief biographical statement not to exceed 100 words. Successful applicants will be notified by the end of February 2025.

Lunch and refreshments will be provided. Successful applicants will, however, be expected to bear the costs of their own travel and accommodation. Some limited funding may be available to assist in partially offsetting these costs: this will be awarded taking into account need and quality of submission. If you are seeking financial support to attend the workshop, please advise in your application, along with details of the amount sought.

For further information visit: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/law/research/themes/international/events/poli-courts>

The organisers gratefully acknowledge the support of: