



The Politics of Law and the Humanities: Crisis, Austerity, Instrumentalism

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Seventeenth Annual Conference March 10-11, 2014. Organized by the [Association for the Study of Law, Culture and the Humanities](#) at [University of Virginia, School of Law](#).

DEADLINE: October 15, 2013

We invite your participation. The Association for the Study of Law, Culture and the Humanities is an organization of scholars engaged in interdisciplinary, humanistically-oriented legal scholarship. The Association brings together a wide range of people engaged in scholarship on legal history, legal theory and jurisprudence, law and cultural studies, law and literature, law and the performing arts, and legal hermeneutics.

We want to encourage dialogue across and among these fields about issues of interpretation, identity, and values, about authority, obligation, and justice, and about law's place in culture. This year's conference theme is as follows: The Politics of Law and the Humanities: Crisis, Austerity, Instrumentalism.

How will law and the humanities scholarship fare against the pressure of the science and technology paradigm that has now permeated the institutional frameworks of academia? Will it mime the general humanities and, as suggested by the defeatist pomp of many national "crisis reports", merely retreat to its traditional position as the well-mannered guardian of liberal values?

Will law and the humanities scholarship be subsumed under the science



paradigm's instrumental ethos by either taking on aims and objectives sanctioned by government policies or by domesticating its own political potential to address those very same policies? Or can we imagine more salutary alternatives to defeatism and instrumental subsumption?

The terrain is well known. The ongoing economic crisis has engendered a worldwide decline in funding for research in the humanities showing sharp decreases between 2009 and 2012 with funds almost cut in half each year. The global trend is also detectable at national levels, with growing gaps between public investment into STEM subjects and the humanities.

But the changes do not merely concern the fiscal prioritization of diminishing resources. The social sciences, including law, are under constant political pressure as lawmakers question the value of curiosity-driven basic research. This pressure is then mirrored at the institutional level of individual law schools emphasizing their vocational remits at the expense of research and scholarship. And this research and scholarship is itself increasingly cast in reformist, practical, and "policy relevant" terms, and directed to issues of perceived topical and regulatory concern.

The implied allegation is simple enough: basic research in the humanities and social sciences is, if not obsolete, then at least a luxury we can't afford in these times; because it cannot satisfy the more immediate needs of market-driven societies in the current economic climate, it is politically irrelevant.

But can we imagine new ways to claim - or, perhaps, to reclaim - our political relevance? Are we relevant in other, perhaps more radical ways? And if we are, how? Is there a politics that is specific to law and the humanities? Or can we articulate the limits to the conversation about "relevance" in a way accessible to minds focused on instrumentality? How might we respond to our critics, or do we ignore them?

Participants are encouraged to reflect on this broad, but not exclusive, conference theme. In addition to sessions that connect to the theme, examples of other types



of sessions we expect to organize include: History, Memory and Law; Reading Race; Law and Literature; Human Rights and Cultural Pluralism; Speech, Silence, and the Language of Law; Judgment, Justice, and Law; Beyond Identity; The Idea of Practice in Legal Thought; Metaphor and Meaning; Representing Legality in Film and Mass Media; Anarchy, Liberty and Law; What is Excellence in Interpretation?; Ethics, Religion, and Law; Moral Obligation and Legal Life; The Post-Colonial in Literary and Legal Study; Processes and Possibilities in Interdisciplinary Law Teaching.

We urge those interested in attending to consider submitting complete panels, and we hope to encourage a variety of formats-roundtables, sessions at which everyone reads the papers in advance, sessions in which commentators respond to a single paper. We invite proposals for session in which the focus is on pedagogy or methodology, for author-meets-readers sessions organized around important books in the field, or for sessions in which participants focus on performance (theatrical, filmic, musical, poetic).

How to register: ASLCH uses a two part registration system (this will all be explained in detail on the website). First you register your paper or panel and pay a \$35 membership fee. Then after January 10th, 2014, assuming your paper or panel is accepted, you go back to the same website (an email will be sent on that day to remind you) and pay the conference fee. Here is the link to register: <https://www.regonline.com/17thannualmeetingLCH>