



LH
SS
MNLU MUMBAI

Maharashtra National Law University Mumbai's

**The Law, Humanities and Social Sciences
Collective**

Virtual Symposium & Call for Abstracts

**“How Relevant are the
Humanities and Social Sciences
in Law Schools in India?”**

12th-14th May, 2023

CONCEPT NOTE

In 1951, when IIT Kharagpur established India's first Humanities and Social Sciences department in a STEM campus, it charted a new trajectory in interdisciplinary studies. At its core lay the vision of making the sciences and technology more humane, humanising and attuned to the project of nation building in a fledgling republic. Nearly three quarters of a century later, the IITs, and India's premier STEM schools generally, boast of some of the most robust research and teaching/learning ecosystems in the humanities and social sciences in the country. Despite stronger moorings in the humanities and social sciences, the National Law Universities in India, the earliest of which is now almost four decades old, are yet to replicate the success of their peers in STEM in instituting vibrant interdisciplinary environments. Most of these law schools remain avowedly specialised, single-discipline setups with a glancing nod at humanities and social sciences subjects in the first two years of a five-year B.A., LL.B. undergraduate programme. While efforts have been made in a few to introduce interdisciplinary research programmes in public policy, these remain doggedly law-centric and mirror the general trend of curricular emphasis in law schools: a tendency to use 'non-law' subjects as add-ons to the teaching and practice of law.

Two interrelated approaches guide the teaching of law: an academic model and a professional one. While some curricula emphasise on the larger social cultural contexts within which specific laws take shape or work, others remain more skill-centric. At any given time, law schools try out various combinations of these two approaches, both across and within the courses in programmes of study. In doing so, the legal curriculum invariably engages with questions of discipline and interdisciplinarity. Do courses that veer too much into engaging with social and cultural contexts of the law pose a threat to the discipline? Or do they actually make the discipline more dynamic and in-step with the times? In other words, does law constitute a closed, self-contained system with its own rules and procedures, or is it a system continuously in dialogue with extra-legal contexts and contingencies? Relatedly, if law is at all a 'juridical science' as is sometimes claimed, is it like the physical sciences based on objective, universal reason, or does it approximate more closely the subjective and particular approaches of the human sciences?

Globally over the past few decades, methods and insights from humanities and social sciences have reconfigured the study and research of laws. Thus, anthropological and sociological approaches to Disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity in legal studies Social order and moral norm, custom and law Law as punishment/discipline Law in Europe's former colonies Thus, anthropological and sociological approaches to legal education posit law as an institutionalised system, codified and authorised by the State, while norms and customs are tacit rules dispersed throughout the social domain. Anthropological and sociological approaches to legal education and research have looked at law as a mechanism of social order, alongside such traditional systems as customs and norms.

A pertinent question here is: is law derived from social norms/customs or does it bear a more complex relation? Historical approaches study the relation between law and changing governmental imperatives and relations of power, and differences between metropolitan and colonial laws. Cultural studies approaches explore the way law constructs social identity based on differences of class, caste, race and gender, in seeking to either entrench dominant ideologies or resist them. Literary studies-based approaches interpret court judgments as texts: how do they construct meanings and authorise them through practices of conviction and punishment?

A very good example of such an approach is the jurist Robert Cover's essay "Violence and the Word" (1986). Philosophy interrogates the interplay of ethics and legality in shaping conceptions of justice. Perspectives on law in body-culture studies focus on the body as a site of legal intervention in contexts like disease, organ transplant, surrogacy and euthanasia, issues that have gained immense relevance in contemporary times. Thus, interdisciplinary approaches seem to overwhelmingly suggest the need to broaden the horizons of legal study and better contend with prevalent and emerging social cultural conditions.

Submission Guidelines for Abstract

In that vein, this symposium invites abstracts of about 200-250 words on the following themes:

1. **Disciplinarity & Interdisciplinarity in Legal Studies**
2. **Social Order and Moral Norm- Customs and Law**
3. **Law as Punishment/ Means of Discipline**
4. **Law in Europe's Former Colonies**
5. **Caste, Class and Gender in Legal Discourse**
6. **Law, Justice and Ethics**
7. **Legal Positivism and the Normativity of Law**
8. **Law in/as Literature**
9. **The Body in Law**
10. **Digital Humanities and Law**

We are open to abstracts that might develop into either reflective or research papers. While this call is open to all academicians, scholars and students, we are also keen to hear and learn from first hand accounts of current candidates and past graduates of the five year B.A., LL.B. programme in India. Since this symposium is a tentative first step towards a cross-institutional platform for dialogue, we encourage only those who would be able to devote time and meaningfully engage with their peers throughout the sessions to apply.

Please email the abstracts to **symposiumlhss@mnlumumbai.edu.in** on or before **9th March 2023**.

The registration fee for all participants (both presenters and attendees) is **INR 500/-**.

Important Dates and Deadlines

<i>Submission of Abstracts...</i>	15 March, 2023
<i>Decision on Abstracts...</i>	22 March, 2023
<i>Registration Deadline...</i>	30 March, 2023
<i>Submission of Final Paper...</i>	25 April, 2023
<i>Dates of Symposium...</i>	12-14 May, 2023

Invited Speakers

Dr. Linda Steele

*Senior Lecturer,
Faculty of Law,
University of Technology,
Sydney*

Dr. Dilip K. Das

*Professor,
Department of Cultural Studies
The English and Foreign
Languages University,
Hyderabad*

Samyak Ghosh

*PhD. Candidate,
School of Middle Eastern,
Asian and African Studies,
Columbia University,
New York*

Adv. Disha Wadekar

*Advocate, Supreme Court of
India
Member, Community for
Eradication of Discrimination
in Education and Employment*

Dr. Aravinda Bhat

*Assistant Professor,
Manipal Centre for
European Studies
Manipal Academy of
Higher Education*

Prof. Kishu Daswani

*Professor,
Government Law
College, Mumbai &
National Law School of
India University
Bangalore*

Patron

Prof. (Dr.) Dilip Ukey
*Hon'ble Vice
Chancellor,
Maharashtra National
Law University,
Mumbai*

Co-Patron

**Prof. (Dr.) Anil G.
Variath**
*Registrar,
Maharashtra National
Law University,
Mumbai*

Advisor

Dr. Kiran Rai
*HoD UG,
Maharashtra
National Law
University,
Mumbai*

Connect with Us

In case of any query, please feel free to contact:

Dr. Upamanyu Sengupta at (022) 25703188 (between 10.30 am
and 4.30 pm); or

Email us at **symposiumlhss@mnlumumbai.edu.in**; or

Also, follow us on LinkedIn & Instagram for further updates.