



## **Critical Approaches to International Law Interest Group**

### **Pre-conference Workshop & Official Launch of Interest Group**

**ESIL 2025 Annual Conference**

### **Critical Methodologies for Reconstructing International Law: Rethinking Legitimacy, Authority, and Inclusion**

This pre-conference workshop invites participants to explore the role of critical methodologies to reimagine international law. The call to “reconstruct” international law reflects a growing recognition that its institutions, structures, doctrines, or assumptions require fundamental reassessment. From its origins in European imperial expansion to its contemporary entanglements with capitalist and neoliberal governance, many scholars have shown how international law has often functioned to sustain hierarchies of international power rather than to challenge them to create a more equal international order. The persistence of global inequality, ongoing colonial legacies, or the climate crisis, all demand critical engagement with international law’s foundational premises.

To respond to those pressing and interconnected global problems, critical methodologies of international law draw on different traditions to push the disciplinary boundaries of the research and practice of international law. This includes, but is not exclusive to, legal history, Critical Legal Studies (CLS), Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL), feminist legal theory, posthuman and critical environmental legal thought, Marxist and anarchist legal critiques and law-and-humanities. These approaches challenge international law’s purported neutrality, interrogate its claims to universality, and expose the political stakes of its legal forms. By foregrounding histories of marginalization, epistemic violence, and resistance, critical methodologies can facilitate a transformation of international law that is not merely reformist but foundationally re-imaginative.

**This workshop invites participants to explore the role of critical methodologies in shaping a new vision for international law.**

Key Themes and Questions. The workshop will focus on three interrelated dimensions of reconstruction: **legitimacy, authority, and inclusion**. We invite submissions that engage with, but are not limited to, the following questions:

- How can the reconstruction of international law avoid replicating Eurocentric narratives and teleologies?
- What role might critical methodologies play in ensuring that reconstruction is meaningfully transformative rather than merely adaptive?
- How can international law move beyond crisis narratives and cultivate alternative legal futures that are not grounded in a perpetual emergency?
- What methodologies can international law adopt to move beyond state-centrism and recognize the agency of non-state actors, including Indigenous peoples, social movements, and ecosystems?
- How can critical legal approaches expose and challenge the ways in which international law legitimizes forms of violence, exclusion, and dispossession?
- To what extent do existing international legal institutions constrain or enable radical reconstruction, and what alternative models of authority and governance might be possible?
- Can international law be meaningfully reconstructed within its existing epistemic and institutional frameworks, or does transformation require an epistemological break from traditional legal methodologies? What role should universities, law departments, and professional institutions like the ESIL play in this transformation? What voices must it center and what principles of academic freedom and integrity must it serve?

The workshop will end with a keynote speech or panel. More details will be announced shortly.

Submission Details. We welcome contributions from scholars, practitioners, and activists engaging with critical legal methodologies. Submissions may take traditional academic formats or adopt alternative, experimental forms of critical legal writing and praxis.

**Abstracts of no more than 300 words should be submitted by April 20 2025 to [cailesilig@gmail.com](mailto:cailesilig@gmail.com).** We aim to advise of the outcome by May 1 2025.

The following information should be provided with each abstract in the same document:

1. Name the document using your last name and the IG acronym (eg, “Bagchi\_CAIL abstract”; “Emtseva\_CAIL abstract”)
2. The author’s name, affiliation, and email address

3. The author's short biography (max 150 words)
4. Whether you intend to attend the conference online or in person

ESIL Early-Career Scholar Prize. In their submission speakers should indicate their interest in being considered for the ESIL Early-Career Scholar Prize. Please check that you meet the [eligibility conditions](#) and [key information](#) about the Prize. The ESIL Secretariat must be informed of all selected speakers who wish to be considered for the Prize before 30 April.

ESIL grants. The Interest Group is unable to provide funding for travel and accommodation. Speakers will be expected to bear the costs of their own travel and accommodation. Limited ESIL [travel grants](#) and [ESIL carers' grants](#) will be available to offer partial financial support to speakers who have exhausted other potential sources of funding.

General ESIL Conference information. Please see the [ESIL website](#) for all relevant conference information. All participants at ESIL Interest Group workshops are required to register for the Annual Conference. There will be an option to register to attend only the IG workshops. However, all participants are warmly invited to attend the entire event. *Please note that it is yet to be determined whether this pre-conference workshop will take place in-person, online, or hybrid.*

*\*We encourage you to look at the work of Liubov Popova, a Russian-Soviet avant-garde artist, painter and designer, whose work embodied the revolutionary spirit of the early Soviet era. As a key figure in Constructivism and Suprematism, she rejected traditional artistic forms in favor of dynamic geometric abstraction, bold color contrasts, and a strong sense of movement. Her compositions, such as Painterly Architectonics (1916–1918), reflected a vision of art as an active force in reshaping society. You can find more about her work here <https://www.arthistoryproject.com/artists/liubov-popova/>*