

Immigration & Nationalism: Finding Common Ground Between Narrative Extremes (A Special Workshop for Law, Literature, Culture & Politics)

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In the United States the contentious midterm elections of 2018 will occur shortly. The narratives dominating the public conversation in respect to immigration (currently in the news is the migrant caravan of Honduran refugees, and the move to restrict birth-right citizenship) and nationalism (“make American great again”, and “America first”) by all appearances are controlled respectively by the far right and the far left of the political spectrum. Certain it is that these more extreme narratives garner the bulk of mainstream media attention, and offer the least opportunity for identifying a common ground upon which productive public discussion can work to counter the fear-mongering and demonizing that constitute the core of these narratives. A similar dynamic has been playing out in many if not most of the nations that constitute the EU.

It is the hope of the conveners that the papers that will be shared in this special workshop will work towards addressing, from the interdisciplinary standpoint of law, literature & culture, the problem of the missing middle, and to identify ways in which a different narrative can be structured that can either bridge the extremes of the political left and right, or if that is not feasible, to work towards creating a new narrative (or resurrecting an older one). This new or restored narrative must be one that creates a broad and stable middle ground, a middle-ground that highlights the core values of dignity, democracy & diversity, and the principles that support these values—namely, that the only legitimate government is one based on the consent of those governed, and its necessary analogue, that there is at the least a fundamental initial political equality of all persons. Whether this new or restored narrative will be of sufficient power and vitality to push the extreme narratives back to their native ground, the margins, is uncertain; but it is the position of the conveners that we have a duty to try.

The conveners are therefore hopeful that given the myriad of perspectives and approaches that characterize the interdisciplinary of law, literature & culture, that the workshop will be productive in identifying such new or restored narratives with which we can begin to confront what is presenting itself as the fundamental crisis of our times. We trust that the urgency of establishing a trans-Atlantic (and hopefully even broader) dialogue on this theme is evident to all.

The special workshop will be held in English.

If you are interested in presenting a paper in this workshop, please send a short abstract (max. 300 words) to the workshop conveners by January 31, 2019. Decisions will be made by February 28, 2019. Full papers will be circulated among the workshop participants approximately two weeks before the start of the conference.

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