

Law, Development, and Climate Change

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This seminar will be conducted in English.

In this seminar, we will be interested in the relationship between law, and two large and concrete problems. One is development. How do we get states that are currently less developed to become more developed? How do we get more states to be more like Switzerland, the state with the highest current Human Development Index (HDI) ranking? Is that even the right way to think about development? The other large problem is climate change, both as a result of earlier (unsustainable) development and as a serious obstacle to it today. Law has something to do with the reaction to both problems – but what exactly *does* it have to do with them? What should or can law do about them, or not do?

Topics

In this seminar, students have a choice. I will provide a list of topics, and you *may* select a topic from that list. But you do not have to do so: you may also choose a topic of your own, provided that it relates to one or both of the broader themes of the seminar (to Law & Development, to law and climate change, or both).

If you decide to choose your own topic, then you will need to meet with me individually so we can ensure that it is manageable and will work as a seminar paper or thesis. Otherwise, there is no difference: it will not affect your mark, for example. It is only intended to give those who have a particular interest that is not on the list of topics a chance to follow that interest, and to give those who want to try out developing their own topic an opportunity to do so.

Since many of you will be new to Law & Development, you will find on Learnweb some key examples from the scholarly literature, as an introduction. (You are not required to discuss those in your final paper, or to agree with them: they are just things you might find useful when starting out in this area).

Law & Development as a field is directed to ‘developing’ countries – so if you are writing a paper in this area, it will need to be set in that context or be about policies directed to countries or issues within this category. Papers on climate change, however, may consider any country or region. International legal topics are welcome in both cases, as are more theoretical papers or papers that draw on law and another discipline, such as political science or gender studies.

Dates and process

The time and place of the first meeting will be announced via the Learnweb page. If you wish to take the seminar, you must attend the first meeting. If you are unable to attend, please write to me in advance to excuse yourself.

We will discuss the publication of topics, the selection process, and the process for picking your own topic if you wish to, at the first meeting. Further details will be provided via the Learnweb page.

The tentative dates of the seminar will be Friday 27.11.2026 and Saturday 28.11.2026. Depending on the final numbers, we will not need full days on each day, but you should ensure you are available for both.

Your papers will be due after the seminar, so that you have a chance to take into account feedback and suggestions received during the seminar. Papers will be due by Tuesday 22.12 at 18:00. Papers should be submitted to fowkes@uni-muenster.de. You also need to submit a paper copy; I will provide instructions on the submission process closer to the time.

This deadline is designed to ensure that you are not compelled to write your paper over the winter break, but it does mean you would be wise to have your draft in good shape before the seminar meeting.

The above deadline does not apply to Bachelor students writing on the 12-week timetable. In that case, the 12 weeks will begin once we have finalized the topic (so if you are choosing your own topic, that might not be the first time we speak).

Bachelor students will need to submit their finalized topics in both German and English for the marking sheets. This is **not** the same as registration: Bachelor students must ensure they are properly registered to fulfil their thesis requirements during the seminar.

Formal Requirements

Enrolment will be capped at 15. If the seminar is over-subscribed, selection will be made on the basis of academic record.

Papers for bachelor thesis topics are expected to be 10 000 words; for those writing regular seminar papers 6000 – 8000 words, and for those taking the 'short' version 3000 – 4000 words. All word limits are inclusive of footnotes (but *not* of a bibliography, an index or table of contents if you include these). These are (in your interests) strict limits: I will penalize papers that do not meet them.

Students taking the seminar as a Kolloquium, without writing a full paper, will be expected to submit a discussion paper, which forms the basis for their oral presentation in the seminar. The discussion paper should be an outline of the argument to be presented of no more than 3000 words. You should acknowledge your sources in the text with a brief citation – e.g. '(Fowkes, 2020)' – and include the full citation in a bibliography (which is not included in the word count).

There is no prescribed format, provided all sources are duly cited to avoid plagiarism. That means that I require you to cite your sources, but I do not require a particular form of citation, or other particular formalities.

All participants will then present their paper during the seminar, in 10-15 minutes, followed by a group discussion. Presentation software such as Powerpoint may be used but is not required.

For those writing a paper (including Bachelor students), your presentation and participation in group discussion counts 20% of the seminar mark, and the written paper 80%. For those doing an oral presentation with a discussion paper (Kolloquium), your participation in the group discussion counts 20% of the seminar mark, and your presentation 80%. I will take your written outline into account, but (as required by the new rules) the assessment will be of your presentation in the seminar. Kolloquim students will be assessed together with a second assistant examiner (Beisitzerin/Beisitzer).