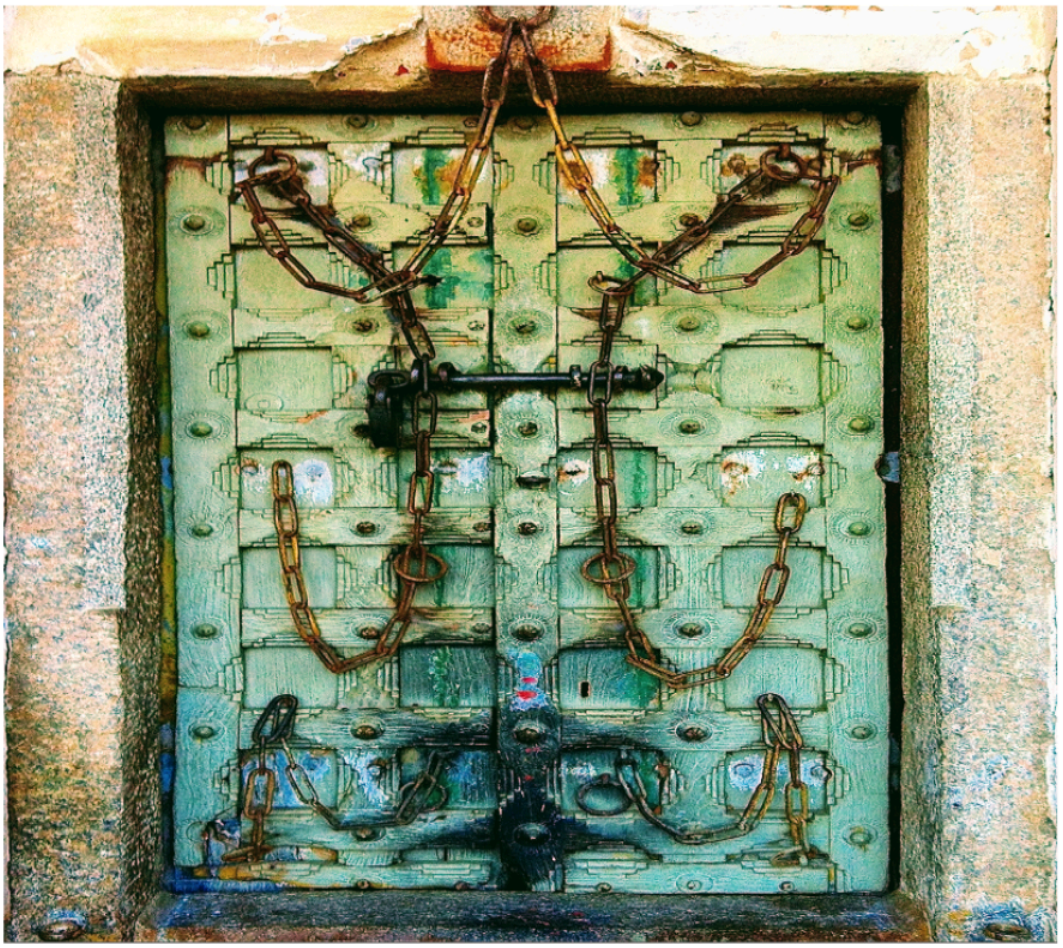
CENTRE ON LAW & SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION
CMI

PhD COURSE

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

AUGUST 2-20 2027



EFFECTS OF LAWFARE

COURTS AND LAW AS BATTLESGROUNDS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The course is organised by LawTransform (CMI-UiB Centre on Law & Social Transformation), **Department of Government, UiB,** and sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Research in Norway through the project *Autocratization Dynamics: innovations in research embedded, student led learning* managed by the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) and the Research Council of Norway (NRC) International Partnerships for Excellent Education, Research and Innovation (INTPART) program.

Effects of Lawfare: Courts and Law as Battlegrounds for Social Change

In all parts of the world, complex webs of legal norms and institutions - global, national, and local - regulate our societies and lives, and courts and law are important arenas for political struggle. Constitutional reforms and international treaties aim to transform social dynamics from above and achieve political goals by changing governance structures and strengthen - or weaken - protection of citizens' rights. Individuals and groups engage in legal mobilisation from below to seek justice for their cause. In either case, myriad international activists and experts are ready to engage with local partners, creating dense global networks of actors, legal norms, and adjudicative institutions. In this context, it is urgent to better understand law as a political field. What is the transformative potential in the turn to rights and law? Does it provide institutional spaces for the voices of marginalised groups and tools that can provide political leverage? Or does it, rather, demobilise and depoliticize struggles in ways that exacerbate unequal power-relations, and provide tools for autocrats? These are urgent issues on which there are deep disagreements in the literature. The course offers an introduction to the scholarly debates on the potential and limits of law as an instrument of social change, and opportunities to engage with some of the foremost scholars in the field, and international research projects currently seeking more compelling answers to these questions.

The course combines

- **in person public seminars** that form part of the
  Bergen Exchanges on Law & Social Transformation (#BeEx2027) 16-20 August.
- Real-time **online seminars** specifically designed for the course
- An individual **mentoring session** with a relevant researcher
- **Group work** to discuss the course readings
- Individual **presentations** with feedback on projects

The Bergen Exchanges on Law & Social Transformation is an international conference that forms an integral part of the PhD course. You will have the opportunity to participate in discussions with leading scholars in the field in academic sessions as well as during social events. In seminars, keynotes, and roundtables, we examine a broad field: the centrality of law in struggles over democracy and in autocrats' strategies for power and control, including why academic freedom, "gender ideology", the family and child rights have become central battlefields for autocrats. We will analyse the economics of autocratization and its legal underpinnings; drug policy and dynamics of criminalization; criminal insanity laws and the synergies of art, protest and legal contestations in contemporary political struggles. We will analyse legal strategies employed in complex contestations over indigenous rights, natural resources, and climate change policies - and much more.

For each session, there are mandatory readings and recommended readings. We hope this gives all of you material for further reading on issues of special interest. See the Reading List here

Students will receive 5 ECTS if they:

- Read at least the mandatory readings and prepare before the online sessions

- Participate in 80% of lectures, including online sessions and events during Bergen Exchanges
- Actively participate in group work in breakout rooms for reflecting on course readings
- Submit a project description (up to 3 pages)
- Present their project and comment on fellow students' presentations
- submit a paper abstract (200-300 words)

Check out the assignments' requirements in Mitt UiB "Assignments" section.

Postdoctoral researchers and MA-level students will be accepted if space permits. The PhD course is open to applicants from Norwegian and international institutions. Participation is free of charge, but applicants must pay their own travel and accommodation.

Program for PhD course 2-20 August 2027

(with a preliminary digital meeting in June)

Effects of Lawfare

Courts and law as battlegrounds for social change

Course leader:
Siri Gloppen (University of Bergen)
Course coordinator:
Ana Côrtes (University of Bergen)

Lecturers include: **Siri Gloppen** (University of Bergen), **Maria Popova** (McGill University) **Michael McCann** (University of Washington), **Dan Brinks** (University of Texas at Austin), **Jackie Dugard** (Columbia University and University of the Witwatersrand), **Rachel Cichowski** (University of Washington), **Lise Rakner** (University of Bergen), **Tom Keck** (Syracuse University), **Camila Gianella** (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú), **Catarina Barbieri** (Peace Research Institute Oslo)

Digital pre-course meeting **Date to be confirmed - in June 2027**		
* Introduction to the course * Round of introductions (Elevator Pitches) * Introduction to assignments and online resources		
Individual mentoring sessions will be scheduled for each student during the course and will happen during or after the Bergen Exchanges		
2-6 and 9-13 August, daily 15:00 – 19:00 Bergen time - Digital module		
Monday 2 August - 15:00 - 18:00 Bergen time		
15:00 - 18:00	**Session 1: Welcome** **Introducing Lawfare**	Siri Gloppen
Wednesday 4 August - 15:00 - 18:00 Bergen time		
15:00 -18:00	**Group work on reflecting on the course's mandatory readings in breakout rooms and discussing in plenary**	Siri Gloppen
Thursday 5 and Friday 6 August - Project presentations by topics		
15:00 - 18:00	**Project presentations** (in groups)	
15:00 - 18:00	**Project presentations** (extra date if needed)	

Monday 10 August - 15:00 - 19:00 Bergen time

15:00 - 17:00	**Courts and judges**	Maria Popova
17:15 - 19:00	**Social movements and legal mobilization**	Michael McCann

Tuesday 11 August - 15:00 - 19:00 Bergen time

15:00 - 15:55	**Effects of law- from constitutions to litigation**	Dan Brinks
16:00 - 16:55	**Transformative constitutionalism**	Jackie Dugard
17:10 - 19:00	**Research methods in empirical legal studies**	Rachel Cichowski

Wednesday 12 August - 15:00 - 19:00 Bergen time

	Meet the author sessions: Leading researchers from the LawTransform network (tbc*) discuss their research projects and methods	

Thursday 13 August - 15:00 - 19:00 Bergen time

	Meet the author sessions: Leading researchers from the LawTransform network (tbc*) discuss their research projects and methods	

Friday 14 August - Publication advice and teaching

15:00 - 17:00	**Teaching**	Ruth Rubio-Marín
17:15 - 19:00	**Publishing in peer-reviewed journals**	Catarina Barbieri

16 – 20 August, daily 9:00 – 19:00 - Bergen Exchanges

BERGEN EXCHANGES ON LAW & SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

- See separate program for BeEx2027