



**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**



CONFÉRENCE UNIVERSITAIRE
DE SUISSE OCCIDENTALE

**CALL FOR PAPERS: “Law and Crisis: Exploring Legal
Scholarship in Times of Global Disruption”
(University of Geneva, 21 April 2026)**

Date and Venue of the Conference

The conference will take place on 21 April 2026, at the [University of Geneva's Espace Colladon](#) (Rue Jean-Daniel Colladon 2).

Organizers

- Mrs Jana Ruwayha (UNIGE)
- Ms Nolwen Guilleman (UNIGE)
- Ms Elín Schutte (IHEID)
- Ms Hélionor de Anzizu (UNIGE)
- Mr Lucas Mathieu (IHEID)
- Ms Margaux Germanier (UNIGE)

This conference is organized by the University of Geneva in collaboration with the Conférence Universitaire de Suisse Occidentale (CUSO).

Conference description

On 20 January 2026, Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada, used his special address at the Davos Summit to declare that we are ‘in the midst of a rupture’. He called it ‘the end of a pleasant fiction and the beginning of a harsh reality, where geopolitics, where the large, main power geopolitics, is submitted to no limits, no constraints’.¹ Carney’s words adequately capture a widely shared sense of crisis, of profound malaise about where the world order is heading, felt not least within the legal discipline. This malaise was far from soothed by Donald Trump when, in an interview with the New York Times, he declared: ‘I don’t need international law. I’m not looking to hurt people’.²

Lawyers see their discipline affected by all types of ‘crises’ in their daily work: climate crisis, health crisis, war, democratic backsliding, and so on. But as we enter the year 2026, it becomes difficult to deny that a more profound, more pervasive shift is taking place. What happens when major powers not only disregard certain rules within the law, but openly disregard the law altogether as something they need to take into account?

The aim of this workshop is to bring PhD candidates in law together to reflect on recent developments, and what they mean for our discipline. It invites critical and interdisciplinary legal scholarship that examines crisis as a moment of rupture, continuity, acceleration, or normalization within legal frameworks. How do we put words on what is happening to the rule of law at the moment, and how do we project ourselves and our research onto the future in light of these events?

¹ ‘Davos 2026: Special address by Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada’, (Weforum.org, 20 January 2026), <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2026/01/davos-2026-special-address-by-mark-carney-prime-minister-of-canada/> accessed 23 January 2026.

² David E. Sanger e.a., ‘Trump Lays out a Vision of Power Restrained Only by “My Own Morality”’, *New York Times* 8 January 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/08/us/politics/trump-interview-power-morality.html> accessed 23 January 2026.

Conference format

The one-day conference will be divided into four thematic sessions. In each session, a specialist in the field will deliver a short presentation, followed by presentations of papers by doctoral students. Each student will receive individual feedback from the specialist on their work and presentation.

Conference sub-themes and areas of inquiry

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- States of Emergency and Democratic Backsliding
- International Humanitarian Law in Times of Crisis
- Crisis Governance, International Institutions, and Global Legal Order
- Environmental and/or Climate Law and Crisis

Submissions may address crises at the domestic, regional, or international level and may adopt doctrinal, theoretical, empirical, historical, or interdisciplinary approaches.

Participation details

- We invite submissions of **abstracts of no more than 400 words** along with a one-page curriculum vitae to Ms Margaux Germanier (margaux.germanier@unige.ch) **by 22 February 2026**. The following information should be included with your abstract: your name, affiliation, email address.
- Successful applicants will be notified by email **by 1 March 2026**.
- We welcome submissions from PhD students from CUSO-affiliated universities (Universities of Fribourg, Geneva, Lausanne, Neuchâtel, IHEID/Graduate Institute Geneva).
- A maximum of 12 contributions will be selected.
- Speakers at the conference will later be asked to submit a **complete draft of 1'500 to 4'000** (footnotes excluded; OSCOLA citation style) of the paper they will present at the conference **by 7 April 2026**.
- Submissions can be made in **English or French**.
- During the conference, each speaker will present for a maximum of 15 minutes and will then receive feedback from expert commentators and engage in a discussion with other participants (10 to 15 minutes).

Funding and reimbursements

- Meals:
 - Lunch will be provided at the University of Geneva in a business-lunch format.

- CUSO Doctoral Students:
 - Travel costs are reimbursed exclusively via the MyCUSO platform, based on a second-class, half-fare ticket from the doctoral student's home institution to Geneva.

Contact

Should you have any questions regarding the conference, feel free to contact Ms Margaux Germanier (margaux.germanier@unige.ch).

PROVISIONAL PROGRAM ³

8h30 - 9h00 : Introduction and welcome of participants

9h15 - 10h45 : 1st session : States of Emergency and Democratic Backsliding

Moderator: Dr. Marie Laur (Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Neuchâtel)

10h45 - 11h15 : Coffee break

11h15 - 12h45 : 2nd session : Crisis Governance, International Institutions, and Global Legal Order

Moderator: Prof. Fuad Zarbiyev (Geneva Graduate Institute)

12h45 - 14h15 : Lunch break

14h15 - 15h45 : 3rd session: International Humanitarian Law in Times of Crisis

Moderator: Prof. Gloria Gaggioli (University of Geneva)

15h45 - 16h15 : Coffee break

16h15 - 17h45 : 4th session: Environmental and/or Climate Law and Crisis

Moderator: Dr. Elena Cima (Senior Lecturer and Researcher, University of Geneva)

17h45 - 18h15 : Concluding remarks

18h30 : Apéro

³ the final program titles might slightly change, and selected participants will receive it in due course.