



**ATHENS INSTITUTE**

# **Abstract Book**

**9<sup>th</sup> Annual International Forum on Ethics  
and Human Rights  
4-9 May 2026, Athens, Greece**

**Edited by  
Jorge Emilio Núñez and Olga Gkounta**

2026



Abstracts  
9<sup>th</sup> Annual International Forum  
on Ethics and Human Rights  
4-9 May 2026, Athens, Greece

Edited by Jorge Emilio Núñez and  
Olga Gkounta

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## Preface

This book includes the abstracts of all the papers presented at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual International Forum on Ethics and Human Rights (4-9 May 2026), organized by the Athens Institute.

A full conference program can be found before the relevant abstracts. In accordance with Athens Institute's Publication Policy, the papers presented during this conference will be considered for inclusion in one of the Institute's many publications only after a blind peer review process.

The purpose of this abstract book is to provide members of the Athens Institute and other academics around the world with a resource through which they can discover colleagues and additional research relevant to their own work. This purpose is in congruence with the overall mission of the association. Athens Institute was established in 1995 as an independent academic organization with the mission to become a forum where academics and researchers from all over the world can meet to exchange ideas on their research and consider the future developments of their fields of study.

To facilitate the communication, a references section includes all the abstract books published as part of this conference (Table 1). I invite the readers to access these abstract books –these are available for free– and compare how the themes of the conference have evolved over the years. According to Athens Institute's mission, the presenters in these conferences are coming from many different countries, presenting various topics.

**Table 1.** *Publication of Books of Abstracts of Proceedings, 2018-2026*

Year	Papers	Countries	References
2026	28	16	Núñez and Gkounta (2026)
2025	29	18	<a href="#">Frenkel and Gkounta (2025)</a>
2024	30	20	<a href="#">Frenkel and Gkounta (2024)</a>
2023	49	25	<a href="#">Frenkel and Gkounta (2023)</a>
2022	30	17	<a href="#">Papanikos and Gkounta (2022)</a>
2021	23	12	<a href="#">Papanikos (2021)</a>
2020	20	10	<a href="#">Papanikos (2020)</a>
2019	34	23	<a href="#">Papanikos (2019)</a>
2018	29	18	<a href="#">Papanikos (2018)</a>

It is our hope that through Athens Institute's conferences and publications, Athens will become a place where academics and researchers from all over the world can regularly meet to discuss the developments of their disciplines and present their work. Since 1995, Athens Institute has

organized more than 400 international conferences and has published over 200 books. Academically, the institute is organized into 7 divisions and 37 units. Each unit organizes at least one annual conference and undertakes various small and large research projects.

For each of these events, the involvement of multiple parties is crucial. I would like to thank all the participants, the members of the organizing and academic committees, and most importantly the administration staff of the Athens Institute for putting this conference and its subsequent publications together. Specific individuals are listed after the Editors' Note.

**Gregory T. Papanikos**  
**President**

## **Editors' Note**

These abstracts provide a vital means to the dissemination of scholarly inquiry in the field of Ethics and Human Rights. The breadth and depth of research approaches and topics represented in this book underscores the diversity of the conference.

Athens Institute's mission is to bring together academics from all corners of the world in order to engage with each other, brainstorm, exchange ideas, be inspired by one another, and once they are back in their institutions and countries to implement what they have acquired. The 9th Annual International Forum on Ethics and Human Rights accomplished this goal by bringing together academics and scholars from 16 different countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Libya, Lithuania, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, USA), which brought in the conference the perspectives of many different country approaches and realities in the field.

Publishing this book can help that spirit of engaged scholarship continue into the future. With our joint efforts, the next editions of this conference will be even better. We hope that this abstract book as a whole will be both of interest and of value to the reading audience.

**Jorge Emilio Núñez & Olga Gkounta**  
**Editors**

**9<sup>th</sup> Annual International Forum on Ethics and Human Rights, 4-9 May 2026, Athens, Greece**

**Organizing & Scientific Committee**

All Athens Institute's conferences are organized by the Academic Council. This conference has been organized with the assistance of the following academic members of Athens Institute.

1. Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos, President, Athens Institute.
2. Dr. Jorge Emilio Núñez, Head, Law Unit, Athens Institute & Reader, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK.

## FINAL CONFERENCE PROGRAM

9<sup>th</sup> Annual International Forum on Ethics and Human Rights, 4-9 May 2026,  
Athens, Greece

### PROGRAM

Monday 4 May 2026

08:30-09:15

**Registration**

09:15-10:00 **Opening Speech and Welcoming Remarks**

**Speaker: Gregory T. Papanikos**, President, Athens Institute & Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA.

**10:00-11:30 Session 1**

**Moderator: Matthias Huehn**, Mary S. Carey Chair in Ethics & CST, Saint Vincent College, USA.

1. **Jose Manuel Castillo Lopez**, Full Professor, University of Granada, Spain.  
*Title: Judicial Corruption and Law Enforcement in Spain: A Perspective from the Economic Analysis of Law.*
2. **Ziaul Huq**, Professor, University of Nebraska Omaha, USA.  
**John Erickson**, Associate Professor, University of Nebraska Omaha, USA.  
*Title: Clash Of Cultures: Lean and Six-Sigma – Combining Them for Efficiency and Effectiveness.*
3. **Linda Brancaleone**, PhD Candidate, University “Magna Græcia” of Catanzaro, Italy.  
*Title: Precarity as Structural Vulnerability: Rethinking the Italian University Reform.*
4. **Gregory T. Papanikos**, President, Athens Institute & Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA.  
*Title: Assessing Impact of the Russia-Ukraine War on Germany’s Economic Growth.*

**11:30-13:30 Session 2**

**Moderator: Olga Gkounta**, Researcher, Athens Institute.

1. **Matthias Huehn**, Mary S. Carey Chair in Ethics & CST, Saint Vincent College, USA.  
*Title: Reducing the Gap in Our Values Influence Through Values Reflection.*
2. **Pawel Mazur**, Postdoctoral Researcher, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania.  
*Title: Balancing Shareholder Equality and Engagement: Access to Corporate Information in Modern Corporate Governance.*
3. **Camille Wallemacq**, PhD Student, University of Mons, Belgium & Julien Vandernoot, Professor, University of Mons, Belgium.  
*Title: Income Heterogeneity and Electoral Tax Manipulation: Panel Evidence from Swiss Cantons.*
4. **Min Li**, Professor, School of Economics and Management, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, China.  
*Title: Audience Acceptance of Chinese and Indian Films in North America: The Effect of Cultural Distance.*
5. **Aseel Al Rashdan**, Associate Professor, Jerash University, Jordan.  
*Title: Social Diversity and Human Social Diversity in the Workplace: A Pathway to Innovation and Institutional Justice.*

**13:30-14:30 Session 3 – A Symposium on “Universities at a Crossroads: Challenges and Opportunities I”**

**Moderator: Gregory T. Papanikos**, President, Athens Institute & Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA.

**Speakers:**

1. **Gary Comstock**, Alumni Association Distinguished Undergraduate Professor of Philosophy, North Carolina State University, USA.  
*Title: Teaching Americans to Think: One \$4 Million Bet on Civil Discourse.*
2. **Ingrid Brenner**, Associate Professor, Trent University, Canada.  
*Title: The Effect on Budget Cuts on Education.*
3. **Athena Elafros**, Associate Professor, University of Lethbridge, Canada.  
*Title: Disability at a Crossroads: Access in the University.*
4. **Claudia Mitzeliotis**, Professor, Mercy University, USA.  
*Title: Designing A Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Master’s Degree Program.*
5. **Teodora Duarte-Quilao**, Professor, Webster Geneva Campus, Switzerland.  
*Title: Unfolding the Ongoing and Unending Journey of Knowing and Beyond.*

**Interventions:**

1. **Palle Larsen**, Senior Researcher, UCL University College, Denmark.

**14:30-15:30 Lunch**

**15:30-17:30 Session 4**

**Moderator: Mahmut Kubilay Akman**, Professor, Uşak University, Türkiye.

1. **Claudia Mitzeliotis**, Professor, Mercy University, USA.  
*Title: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Multiple Family Group Therapy in Reducing Stress among Families Coping with Autism.*
2. **Adel Zeglam**, Consultant Neurodevelopment Paediatrician and Professor, University of Tripoli, Tripoli University Hospital, Libya.  
**Najah Wahra**, Pharmacist, Primary Health Care Center, Tripoli, Libya.  
*Title: The Physician’s Obligations in the Performance of His Work. A Keyhole Look at the Libyan Law on Medical Liability.*
3. **Jason Hickey**, Associate Professor, University of New Brunswick, Canada.  
**Morgan Greer**, Under One Sky Frindship Center, Canada.  
*Title: The Sakələməlsowakən Family Wellness Program: An Indigenous-Led Model of Holistic Nursing and Community Care.*
4. **Athena Elafros**, Associate Professor, University of Lethbridge, Canada.  
*Title: Epilepsy as Method.*
5. **Palle Larsen**, Senior Researcher, UCL University College, Denmark.  
*Title: Sustainable Leadership and the Food Waste Paradox in Danish Nursing Homes: Balancing Ideals, Institutional Structures, and Everyday Practice.*
6. **Elias Papadopoulos**, Medical Student, Temple University, USA.  
**Simon Kanis**, Graduate Student, Georgia Institute of Technology, USA.  
*Title: Attuning a Faster R-CNN Machine Learning Model for Breast Tumor Ultrasound Imaging.*

**18:00-20:00 Session 5 – Visit Aristotle’s Lyceum**

**It requires pre-booking**

**20:30-22:30 Athenian Early Evening Symposium (Sequence of Events: Ongoing Academic Discussions, Dinner, Wine and Water, Music, Dance)**

**Tuesday 5 May 2026**

**09:00-10:30 Session 6 – A Symposium on Ethics**

**Moderator: Morgan Greer**, Under One Sky Frindship Center, Canada.

1. **Edwin-Nikko Kabigting**, Associate Professor, Adelphi University, USA.  
**Teodora Duarte-Quilao**, Professor, Webster Geneva Campus, Switzerland.  
**Mi Jin Doe**, Clinical Associate Professor, Binghamton University, USA.  
*Title: A Humanbecoming Perspective on Dignity.*
2. **Gary Comstock**, Alumni Association Distinguished Undergraduate Professor, North Carolina State University, USA.  
*Title: Critical Thinking and Civil Discourse in Democratic Cultures: ThinkArguments, an Answer to the Challenge of Scaling an Online Course for Non-Students.*
3. **David Matas**, Lawyer & International Advisory Board Member, International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China, Canada.  
*Title: Professional Ethical Standards Addressing Organ Transplant Abuse Abroad.*

**10:30-12:00 Session 7**

**Moderator: Frederick Desroches**, Professor, St. Jerome's University, University of Waterloo, Canada.

1. **Miglena Zhiyanski**, Professor, Forest Research Institute – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria.  
**Elena Todorova**, Assistant Professor, Forest Research Institute – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria.  
*Title: Integrating Socio-Ecological Approach for Recognizing Sport Activities as Cultural Ecosystem Services Provided by Forest Ecosystems.*
2. **J. Scott Kenney**, Associate Professor, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada.  
*Title: Gendered Social Capital Work: Examining the Practices of Two Men's Organizations.*
3. **Aarushi Bhandari**, Assistant Professor, Davidson College, USA.  
**Kevin McElrath**, Assistant Professor, Davidson College, USA.  
*Title: Teaching Intrinsic Motivation in a Time of Artificial Intelligence: Can Mindfulness Help?*
4. **Ari Hautaniemi**, RDI Specialist, LAB University of Applied Sciences, Finland.  
*Title: Workplace Layouts and AI: Adoption and Attitudes in Knowledge-Intensive Work.*

**12:00-14:00 Session 8**

**Moderator: Ari Hautaniemi**, RDI Specialist, LAB University of Applied Sciences, Finland.

1. **Frederick Desroches**, Professor, St. Jerome's University, University of Waterloo, Canada.  
*Title: Issues in the Enforcement of Human Trafficking Legislation in Canada.*
2. **Bernard Sepinwall**, Adjunct Professor, McGill University, Canada.  
*Title: The Evolution of Consumer Rights and the Promotion of Equality in the Marketplace.*
3. **Helena Kubatova**, Associate Professor, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic.  
**Miroslav Dopita**, Associate Professor, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic.  
*Title: Universal Tertiary Education at Public and Private Universities in the Czech Republic.*
4. **Kevin McElrath**, Assistant Professor, Davidson College, USA.  
**Chris Marsicano**, Associate Professor, Davidson College, USA.  
*Title: Uncovering a National College-High School Recruitment Network in the United States: 2019-2023.*
5. **Sharyn Sepinwall**, Professor, Concordia University, Canada.  
*Title: A Sociological Analysis of Stress among University Students in Failed Standing.*
6. **Tuesday Barnes**, PhD Student, Morgan State University, USA.  
*Title: Reimagining Diasporic Solidarity: Reflections from Arusha, Tanzania.*

**14:00-15:00 Session 9 - A Symposium on "Universities at a Crossroads: Challenges and Opportunities II"**

**Moderator:** Claudia Mitzeliotis, Professor, Mercy University, USA.

**Speakers:**

1. **Parisa Gazerani**, Professor, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway.  
*Title: Rethinking Universities in an Era of Complexity.*
2. **Palle Larsen**, Senior Researcher, UCL University College, Denmark.  
*Title: Navigating Complexity: Challenges and Opportunities for Universities in an AI-Driven Era.*
3. **Jose Manuel Castillo Lopez**, Full Professor, University of Granada, Spain.  
*Title: The Challenge that Artificial Intelligence Poses to Traditional Research and Teaching Objectives and Methods. The Perspective of Fraud.*

**Interventions:**

1. **Hans Rudolf Pfaendler**, Professor Ludwig-Maximilians University, Germany.

**15:00-16:00 Lunch**

**16:30-19:30 Session 10**

**Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk**

The urban walk ticket is not included as part of your registration fee. It includes transportation costs and the cost to enter the Parthenon and the other monuments on the Acropolis Hill. The urban walk tour includes the broader area of Athens. Among other sites, it includes: Zappion, Syntagma Square, Temple of Olympian Zeus, Ancient Roman Agora and on Acropolis Hill: the Propylaea, the Temple of Athena Nike, the Erechtheion, and the Parthenon. The program of the tour may be adjusted, if there is a need beyond our control. This is a private event organized by the Athens Institute exclusively for the conference participants.

**20:30-22:30**

**An Ancient Athenian Symposium: Continuous Dialogues, Timeless Flavors (featuring authentic ancient Athenian dishes, local wine, and sweet delicacies from ancient Athens)**

**Wednesday 6 May 2026**

**An Educational Visit to Selected Islands  
or Nafplio & Mycenae Visit**

**Thursday 7 May 2026**

**Visiting the Oracle of Delphi**

**Friday 8 May 2026**

**Visiting the Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion**

**Saturday 9 May 2026**

**11:00-13:00 - The Academic Discussion continues in the downtown open agora (close to the Aristotelian Lyceum)**

**Aseel Al Rashdan**

Associate Professor, Jerash University, Jordan

## **Social Diversity and Human Social Diversity in the Workplace: A Pathway to Innovation and Institutional Justice**

Social diversity in the workplace has become one of the most prominent modern trends adopted by forward-looking institutions seeking excellence and development. This study explores the concept of social diversity from a comprehensive perspective, encompassing differences among employees in terms of gender, age, culture, religion, physical and mental abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The study highlights the importance of diversity in fostering organizational creativity, promoting fairness and equity, and increasing efficiency and productivity. It also addresses the challenges associated with managing diversity, such as cultural biases and communication barriers, and proposes practical mechanisms to overcome them, including inclusive policies, staff training, and cultivating a respectful and open work environment.

The study concludes that achieving social diversity is not only an ethical and humanitarian imperative but also a fundamental pillar of institutional success and sustainability in an era of competitiveness and innovation.

### *Objectives*

- To define social diversity and its key dimensions in the workplace.
- To highlight the benefits of diversity on innovation and institutional justice.
- To identify challenges related to managing diverse workforces.
- To propose effective strategies for promoting inclusion and equity.
- To offer practical recommendations for building diverse and sustainable work environments.

### *Methodology*

This paper adopts a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach. It relies on a review of existing literature, legal frameworks, and organizational reports related to social diversity in the workplace. Relevant case studies and international best practices are examined to assess the practical implications of diversity policies. The study also

analyzes challenges and strategies using a comparative perspective,  
drawing insights from various organizational and cultural contexts.

**Tuesday Barnes**

PhD Student, Morgan State University, USA

**Reimagining Diasporic Solidarity:  
Reflections from Arusha, Tanzania**

This session offers a reflective exploration of my time this summer in Arusha, Tanzania, and the transformative insights I have gained through engaging with the intellectual legacies of Pan-Africanism and Black Consciousness. Grounded in my reading of Steve Biko's "I Write What I Like", I interrogate my own positionality as an African American in Africa – navigating the complexities of identity, privilege, and solidarity within the broader African Diaspora. Being on the continent has compelled me to confront internalized narratives shaped by Western epistemologies and to rethink my relationship to the global South. This journey has not only deepened my awareness of the historical and contemporary dynamics that shape diasporic relations, but also inspired a commitment to more intentional community-building and cross-border solidarity with African people. By reflecting on moments of discomfort, learning, and unlearning, I seek to contribute to broader sociological conversations about diasporic connection, decolonial consciousness, and the ongoing work of imagining liberatory Black futures. This session aims to bridge personal narrative with sociological inquiry, inviting others to reflect on how physical and intellectual returns to Africa might inform their scholarly and political commitments.

**Aarushi Bhandari**

Assistant Professor, Davidson College, USA

&

**Kevin McElrath**

Assistant Professor, Davidson College, USA

## **Teaching Intrinsic Motivation in a Time of Artificial Intelligence: Can Mindfulness Help?**

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Large Language models (LLMs) become pervasive, sociologists identify the need for pedagogical practices that support learning in this rapidly changing atmosphere. Some scholars suggest that students who are intrinsically motivated—i.e. enjoy the process of learning as its own goal—are less likely to misuse AI compared to students who are extrinsically motivated—i.e. by goals external to learning such as grades or instructor approval. Previous research shows that some mindfulness activities support intrinsic motivation for a variety of tasks and activities. This study adds to the literature by examining the relationship between mindfulness practices and intrinsic motivation in the sociology classroom. We collect self-reported survey data from students (N=215, multiple observations per student) on intrinsic motivation over 12 weeks across two different semesters. Each week, students engaged a brief 10-minute mindfulness activity in class using the Buddhify mobile app before completing an in-class writing exercise. Using within-subjects design, we employ mixed effects models to examine change over time. Predicted values show that students' overall intrinsic motivation improves over the course of the 12 week data collection. This study has implications for pedagogy surrounding AI in the sociology classroom and the overall impacts of mindfulness practices on student wellness and motivation.

**Linda Brancaleone**

PhD Candidate, University “Magna Græcia” of Catanzaro, Italy

## **Precarity as Structural Vulnerability: Rethinking the Italian University Reform**

This proposal critically assesses the most recent reform of the Italian academic pre-tenure system – from the Bernini bill to the Occhiuto-Cattaneo amendment – arguing that it not only fails to resolve but actively institutionalises academic precarity as a condition of structural vulnerability. Moving beyond a merely contractual or labour-market reading, the proposal conceptualises precarity as an existential and political phenomenon situated within contemporary regimes of biopower. The reform cycle is shown to fragment early-career trajectories through multiple short-term contractual figures (research contract, post-doc appointment, research assignment), each characterised by discontinuity, unequal access to welfare, dependence on competitive funding and, in several cases, the erosion of the public-law principle of open competition. Far from enabling stabilisation, the reform legitimises a layered labour hierarchy in which convenience for universities outweighs the social sustainability of research careers. Empirical evidence – particularly gender-based asymmetries, territorial disparities in funding, and extremely high working hours across all groups – confirms that the costs of this system are borne collectively, affecting not only individuals’ life projects but also the democratic and epistemic function of the university itself. Drawing on insights from Foucault’s notion of biopolitics and Butler’s distinction between precarity and precariousness, the proposal contends that precarious academic workers are governed as optimisable yet disposable bodies, deprived of temporal autonomy and rendered incapable of making long-term life decisions. This “epistemo-normativity” – an ideology of knowledge reduced to measurable output, detached from care, continuity and community – produces a university that risks becoming a machine for attrition rather than a site of critical inquiry. The conclusion argues that academic precarity must be reframed as a question of justice and citizenship, not employability, and that any reform capable of genuine transformation must guarantee predictability, income adequacy and substantive rights rather than proliferating ever finer contract typologies. Treating precarity as a mere technical problem of recruitment design is therefore insufficient: it is a political matter, and one that determines whether the university can continue to serve as a

democratic institution of knowledge rather than an extractive hub of  
contingent labour.

**Jose Manuel Castillo Lopez**  
Full Professor, University of Granada, Spain

## **Judicial Corruption and Law Enforcement in Spain: A Perspective from the Economic Analysis of Law**

The general problems of the Judicial Administrations in Europe, and particularly in Spain, are profound and diverse, but perhaps the most relevant and evident are the time delay in legal resolutions and the influence of economic conditions of users both regarding simple access to the Judicial Administration and in the very sense or result of different legal proceedings. In fact, one of the most serious deficiencies of the Spanish public administration is the notable opacity or scarce transparency for citizens and, as a result of this, the high level of corruption and the unequally distributed benefits thereof. This situation is of course transferred to the Judicial Administration, judges, lawyers and procuradors (formal representatives before the courts) via private proceedings.

The main purpose of this research is to contribute to the increasingly growing debate on the legal-political phenomenon called lawfare, with significant theoretical elements that enable both to recognize it and to distinguish it from other phenomena that bear similarity. In particular, the interest lies in analysing in depth the term, from its connection with the field of war at its start, its historical development, the transformation suffered by the term to house the products of the link between political power and the judicial power, until its constituent elements and their nature using methodological tools that allow to determine, from the discussion with the literature, whether or not there is a phenomenon that can be called lawfare.

Economic analysis of corruption views it as an activity that generates efficiency and resource losses, distorts competition, reduces investment and economic growth, and negatively impacts social well-being. Although some studies suggest that beneficial "functional corruption" may exist in certain contexts of rapid growth, the prevailing view is that corruption acts as a burden by diverting resources from public purposes and eroding trust in institutions.

**Gary Comstock**

Alumni Association Distinguished Undergraduate Professor, North  
Carolina State University, USA

## **Critical Thinking and Civil Discourse in Democratic Cultures: ThinkArguments, an Answer to the Challenge of Scaling an Online Course for Non-Students**

A universal feature of cultures upholding human rights is respect for critical thinking and civil discourse. Here, I describe a quasi-randomized controlled experiment at North Carolina State University testing the effectiveness at scale of ThinkArguments, a low-cost online course designed to teach mass audiences these essential democratic practices.

While the protection of human rights and democracy requires critical thinking, 49% of university graduates lack proficiency in this area. This session will introduce thinkARGUMENTS, a low-cost, evidence-based online course designed to close this gap, and describe an experiment at NC State University to test its effectiveness. Preliminary results will be presented showing the course improves critical thinking test scores by nearly a full letter grade. Gains reached 16% when followed by a face-to-face course.

Participants will experience a short thinkARGUMENTS exercise, explore national data on critical thinking readiness, and discuss strategies for integrating scalable, high-impact interventions into their own programs. Takeaways include: a proven instructional model, ready-to-use exercises for teaching argument analysis, and a framework for combining online and in-person instruction to maximize student learning gains.

First-year students taking the \$25 course in a large (n=250 students) classroom improved their critical thinking test scores by almost a full letter grade. Critical thinking among NC State Honors students:

Percentage change from beginning to end of first year

No intervention - 2

Intervention 1 thinkARGUMENTS + 6

Intervention 2 thinkARGUMENTS + one face-to-face course +16

These are significant effects in an area in which it is hard to move the needle.

The session will be interactive, designed to engage participants in analyzing both the problem of underdeveloped critical thinking (CT) skills, the challenge of delivering CT instruction at scale, and the effectiveness of the thinkARGUMENTS intervention. By the end of this

session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the worldwide gap in critical thinking proficiency among university graduates and its implications for career readiness.
2. Analyze preliminary evidence showing the effectiveness of the thinkARGUMENTS online intervention in improving students' critical thinking skills.
3. Evaluate the benefits of combining online and face-to-face instructional approaches to achieve significant learning gains in large classrooms using an online, low-cost, course.
4. Identify practical, scalable strategies they can adapt to strengthen critical thinking instruction in their own courses and institutions.

Participants will leave with:

- A proven, scalable model showing how a \$25 online intervention can significantly improve first-year students' critical thinking skills, even in large classes.
- Sample thinkARGUMENTS exercises—short, high-impact activities for analyzing and constructing arguments, ready to adapt for immediate classroom use.
- An implementation framework for blending online modules with face-to-face instruction to achieve measurable gains (between 6% and 16%) in critical thinking proficiency across diverse learning environments.

**Frederick Desroches**

Professor, St. Jerome's University, University of Waterloo, Canada

## **Issues in the Enforcement of Human Trafficking Legislation in Canada**

The term “human trafficking” refers to the recruitment, transportation and/or control and exploitation of a person for the purposes of profit. Those trafficked include migrants searching for better financial opportunities as well as victims forced into the sex industry or exploited through farm, domestic, or other labor. The problem of trafficking in persons has become a pressing topic in many countries including the EU and North America. The issue has become central to national and international security concerns since the 1990s, particularly given the apparent prominent involvement of organized crime – drawn to the industry due to the enormous profits to be made and the relatively low risk of detection. Responding to such concerns, the international community has advocated for laws and effective law enforcement to deal with the threats posed by this increasingly challenging problem.

This paper analyzes the manner in which Canadian police services use conspiracy laws, criminal organization (organized crime) legislation, immigration laws, and human trafficking statutes to investigate and prosecutes cases involving the trafficking of persons for sexual, forced labour, and illegal migration purposes. The paper analyses the structure and functioning of criminal syndicates involved in human trafficking and the variety of police responses to the types of criminal activities involved. An analysis of the research literature in on human trafficking in various countries allows us to compare the manner in which victims are recruited, transported, and exploited with data from the Canadian police cases.

Because of its location bordering the United States, and far from source countries for migrant populations, Canada has a relatively modest problem with illegal human migration issues. The data from this study reveals that the most common human trafficking charges relate to what was formerly classified as prostitution offences. A critical analysis of changing legal definitions of prostitution and related offences is presented.

**Athena Elafros**

Associate Professor, University of Lethbridge, Canada

## **Epilepsy as Method**

What would it look like to conduct oral histories by, for, and with epileptics in ways that center the experiences of people with epilepsy? This is the question that our six-member research collective of epileptics and academics has sought to answer. To answer this question, we reflect upon our experiences working as a disabled collective and drawing upon “disability as method” scholarship (Schalk, 2017; Mills & Sanchez, 2023) in our working practices. In line with Schalk (2017, para 1) we “understand critical disability studies as a method, an approach, a theoretical framework and perspective—not (exclusively) a study of disabled people.” In this paper, we reflect upon the practices we have adopted since we began meeting as a research circle in October 2024 for our research project *Seizures Unscripted: Oral Histories of Epilepsy in Canada and the United States*. We reflect upon how epilepsy as method is rooted in crip spacetime (Price, 2024), is collective and tentative, accessible, tenacious, and relational. We conclude by noting that epileptic experiences and knowledge have much to offer these important conversations of “disability as method.”

**Ari Hautaniemi**

RDI Specialist, LAB University of Applied Sciences, Finland

## **Workplace Layouts and AI: Adoption and Attitudes in Knowledge-Intensive Work**

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly becoming integrated into knowledge-intensive work, but its implementation varies significantly across different workplace settings. Previous research has pointed out that open-plan office designs, often touted as enhancing collaboration and transparency (BHIVE Workspace 2024; Hui, Ulang & Yun 2025), may ironically lead to fewer face-to-face interactions and a greater dependence on digital communication platforms (Bernstein & Turban 2018; Gharaei & Ghomeishi 2023). Additionally, these layouts have negatively impacted mental and social well-being (Węziak-Białowolska et al. 2018; Ramantswana, Mmamabolo & Appel-Meulenbroek 2024). In a complementary vein, recent findings suggest that remote employees increasingly view AI systems as companions, relying on them for cognitive assistance and emotional interactions (Batty 2025; Hamilton 2025; Tang et al. 2023).

The growing presence of AI in workplaces must also be considered within the sustainability framework. The widespread adoption of AI and cloud infrastructures brings about significant environmental implications, particularly concerning the energy and water consumption associated with data centres (JRC 2023; Ember 2025). The European Commission (2023) has already stressed the pressing need to assess and regulate the sustainability of data centres throughout the European Union. Thus, the social and ecological impacts of AI adoption are closely tied to the physical design of workplaces and the day-to-day practices of employees.

In this context, the current study investigates how different workplace configurations – namely, traditional closed offices (housing 1-4 occupants), open-plan offices, and remote home-based setups – affect attitudes toward and patterns of AI usage. It is hypothesised that workers in open-plan offices will turn to AI tools more frequently for focused tasks due to interruptions and noise, driving them to seek mediated alternatives (H1). Remote workers are expected to have broader emotional engagements with AI (H2). At the same time, those in closed offices are anticipated to rely more on immediate human colleagues and utilise AI more instrumentally (H3).

The study will employ a survey design, targeting employees in knowledge-intensive sectors across diverse organisations with varying workplace policies. Key measures will include the frequency and scope of AI usage (for task support, coordination, creativity, and emotional support), perceived usefulness, trust, levels of workplace social support, interruptions, privacy, psychological safety, and awareness of environmental costs. Demographic and organisational variables such as age, gender, role, tenure, and technological self-efficacy will be controlled. The analysis will utilise multivariate methods to explore mediating effects among spatial arrangements, workplace norms, and AI adoption.

This paper aims to enrich the field of organisational sociology by providing empirical evidence on how the material environment at work shapes the sociotechnical dynamics surrounding AI usage. The findings will contribute to theoretical frameworks regarding human-AI collaboration and offer practical insights for designing organisations, ultimately fostering more informed approaches to the integration of AI in future workplaces.

**Jason Hickey**

Associate Professor, University of New Brunswick, Canada

## **The Sakəlmə̀sowakə̀n Family Wellness Program: An Indigenous-Led Model of Holistic Nursing and Community Care**

Urban Indigenous families in Canada face significant health inequities rooted in colonial legacies, systemic racism, and persistent barriers to culturally safe care. In response, Under One Sky Friendship Centre (UOS) in Fredericton, New Brunswick, developed the Sakəlmə̀sowakə̀n (“feeling strong within yourself, your family, and your community”) Family Wellness Program – a comprehensive, Indigenous-led model that integrates nursing, case management, and wellness services within a culturally grounded framework.

Launched in 2021 in response to the impacts of COVID-19, the program began with Indigenous nursing outreach, Healing Spaces mental health counselling, and weekly nurse practitioner services. It has since expanded into a multi-faceted model that includes two Registered Nurses, a Jordan’s Principle Navigator, a Research and Program Facilitator, an Outreach/Community Programs Lead, four Mental Health Counsellors, and one Nurse Practitioner. Together, the team provides primary care, counselling services, crisis intervention, case management, health promotion, and community wellness initiatives, including prenatal education and the establishment of an Arctic Acres 360° Grow Dome to support food security and cultural education.

An assessment of program effectiveness was conducted in collaboration with the University of New Brunswick, using a community-based participatory action research approach to ensure Indigenous perspectives informed outcomes and indicators. Findings demonstrated that the program promoted holistic wellbeing, enhanced adherence to care, and addressed systemic and cultural barriers. Service delivery data further highlight the program’s growth and impact: in the 2021/2022 fiscal year, the program offered 544 support services; in 2022/2023, this rose to 886 services; and in 2023/2024, the program delivered 1,283 services. Data analysis for 2024/2025 is underway, with early indicators suggesting an even greater increase in demand and reach.

Looking forward, the program is set to continue expand significantly with the opening of UOS’s new primary health centre in 2026, which will host primary care and birthing services five days per week. This trajectory reflects a sustainable model of Indigenous-led, community-

based nursing that integrates cultural knowledge, family-oriented care, and collaborative evaluation to advance equity in health service delivery.

The Sakəlməlsowakən Family Wellness Program demonstrates how Indigenous leadership in nursing and community health can bridge service gaps, support family wellbeing, and inform broader policies on culturally safe, integrated care.

**Matthias Huehn**

Mary S. Carey Chair in Ethics & CST, Saint Vincent College, USA

## **Reducing the Gap in Our Values Influence through Values Reflection**

The Normative Paradox of Responsible Management Education is that business academics intend to imbue social values in their students but deliver programs, contents, and methods that actually promote selfishness and egoism. In this essay, we develop a values lens on dominant theories and education for management. We propose that management academia engages with values too little. Both competing paradigms, the rationalist and the idealist, enforce *logoi* that operate with defined values, and have one correct solution for every values-related problem. We offer two propositions for business pedagogy. First, make students reflect on their values and discuss the values underlying the theories we teach. Second, engage in robust discussions about these values for students to discover their personal priorities. This approach will nourish students' ability to apply their newly developed values ability by looking at low-level, everyday managerial situations. On a higher level, this pedagogy helps management academics to engage in education and not in indoctrination.

**Ziaul Huq**

Professor, University of Nebraska Omaha, USA

&

**John Erickson**

Associate Professor, University of Nebraska Omaha, USA

## **Clash of Cultures: Lean and Six-Sigma – Combining Them for Efficiency and Effectiveness**

Both six-sigma and Lean focus on a company culture characterized by increased customer satisfaction through continuous improvement, however, the path they follow to achieve that is not the same. Both the approaches, i. e., Lean and six sigma via Total Quality Management (TQM), prang from the same root; however, the approaches they follow in harnessing strategy, system, processes, and employees are different -- - Lean uses a people system, while six-sigma is a technology driven system. Lean six-sigma is a combination of two distinct systems that include the efficiencies of lean, and process innovation features of six-sigma that offer efficient and effective performance. The environmental factors for LSS implementation include both organizational and workforce competencies. This paper hypothesizes that workforce skills and organizational competencies needed to execute LSS develop through experience with other data driven quality systems and lean implementations, and the foundation for a quality culture for Lean six-sigma (LSS) takes root only through years of practice. Although literature demonstrates the requirements for a dominant quality culture for LSS, the competency issues have not been addressed through a formal study. In this study we address the workforce competency issues and organizational competency issues through a detailed analysis of eight LSS implementations. These selected LSS companies were categorized, through a detailed study, into successful and unsuccessful adopters based on their level of experience with quality programs. Seven workforce environmental factors – the content validity of which were verified through literature review – were tested for both successful and unsuccessful adopters support our hypothesis that competency for LSS develops through implementation of other quality/lean programs that are precursors to LSS. Most unsuccessful LSS adopters performed poorly on all workforce environmental factors, but their performance on goal setting and process control & improvement were the poorest.

**Edwin-Nikko Kabigting**

Associate Professor, Adelphi University, USA

**Teodora Duarte-Quilao**

Professor, Webster Geneva Campus, Switzerland

&

**Mi Jin Doe**

Clinical Associate Professor, Binghamton University, USA

## **A Humanbecoming Perspective on Dignity**

There are many ethical challenges in fostering human dignity in light of the many deceptions that have arisen in healthcare situations worldwide. These challenges can be viewed in light of the ethos of Parse's humanbecoming paradigm. Dignity is the ethos of the humanbecoming paradigm with four explicit ethical tenets; reverence, awe, betrayal, and shame. The purpose of this presentation is to illuminate a deeper understanding of dignity to advance the science and art of nursing thereby upholding the integrity and worth of nursing. Reverence from the humanbecoming paradigm is the solemn regard for human presence which is recognizing the uniqueness of others. Awe is beholding the unexplainable mystery of human existence. Betrayal is a violation of human trust. Shame is humiliation with dishonoring human worth. These ethical tenets are foundational to addressing the ethical challenges faced by nurses and recipients of care globally. Reverence comes with an awareness of inherent differences that acknowledges the uniqueness of the individual. Betrayal surfaces with a shift in the trust-mistrust rhythm. Shame dishonors the worth of individuals. Awe may arise as a choice as individuals bear witness to the surprises and wonders of human existence. Professionals who live humanbecoming uphold the integrity of human dignity in honoring the inherent wisdom and desires of the individuals they serve. In this presentation, each ethical tenet is explored with relevant exemplars for the myriad ethical challenges that nurses and the recipients of care encounter in day to day living. Parse's ethical tenets offer a unique way for nurses to honor the recipients of care thereby valuing their dignity and worth.

**J. Scott Kenney**

Associate Professor, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada

## **Gendered Social Capital Work: Examining the Practices of Two Men's Organizations**

Declining social cohesion, increased social division, social isolation, and loneliness are becoming significant issues in the 21st century. For example, the social landscape in North America exhibits a situation where too many people are facing too many issues with too little social support (Putnam, 2001). This becomes particularly problematic when gender is added to the picture. Some forms of masculinity, particularly broader adherence to traditional gender roles among older men may exacerbate these matters, with data attesting to a “friendship recession” (Equimundo, 2023). Meanwhile, younger men are struggling in education and employment, while addiction rates rise and life expectancies shorten. Indeed, as they remain less likely than women to seek out help and assistance, men predominate in in society’s rising “deaths of despair” (Pasquini, 2025).

Of course, sociologists have been considering related matters ever since Durkheim first discussed anomie (Durkheim, 1897). Beyond his discussion of variations in social integration and regulation as the root of social problems (exemplified by suicide), attention has turned in more recent years to matters of social capital (Putnam, 2001). Indeed, beyond Robert Putnam’s famous reframing of these matters, much has been written about the nature of social capital, including, for example, Bourdieu’s famous distinction between economic, cultural, and social capital (Bourdieu, 1985), and Aldrich’s (2012) distinction between bonding, bridging, and linking capital.

Nevertheless, the issue of masculinity and social capital has not been as prominent in these discussions as it could be. Connell’s (1995) assertion that masculinity as an identity has tremendous social capital contrasts with the above scenario in a variety of ways. Meanwhile, discussions of social capital in relation to masculinity show little unifying focus. Thus, there have been studies of connection and masculine identity maintenance among gay and straight men (Lamarche, Croft, and Atkinson, 2025); masculine capital and young mens’ health (de Visser and McDonnell, 2013); masculine culture’s moderating effect on social capital (Duani, Evangelista, Marir, and Samin, 2023); masculine capital and spousal social control over men’s health behaviors (Arnell, 2024);

and the role of social capital in community based resource management (Siegelman, Haenn, and Basurto, 2019).

The current paper begins to address these problems in two specific ways. First, it seeks to shift focus away from what social capital *is* to its *ongoing construction*. Building upon earlier work suggesting ways to increase social capital (Claridge, 2013), the concept of *social capital work* is proposed, a dynamic, agentive focus that shifts the conversation to activities over structure. Further, social capital work is gendered in nature, focusing on the intersection between gender and different styles and practices of social capital construction.

These ideas are then illustrated by an examination of two specific organizations. First, key aspects of the author's previous qualitative study on Canadian Freemasons will be examined to both review and empirically elaborate this concept. Secondly, another men's organization with international reach, "Men's Sheds," will be considered to further elaborate and critically refine this concept into a useful theoretical tool for further sociological study in this important area.

**Helena Kubatova**

Associate Professor, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic  
&

**Miroslav Dopita**

Associate Professor, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic

## **Universal Tertiary Education at Public and Private Universities in the Czech Republic**

The aim of this contribution is to follow up on last year's presentation, which sought to answer the research question: What is a student like in the age of universalism, i.e., what do students with universal access to higher education expect from their university studies? We were interested in what value students attach to higher education, its organization, their own learning, teaching, their teachers, and social contacts at school. To answer this question, we conducted quantitative research at one social science department of a public university. Our theoretical framework was Trow's theory of the gradual transformation of higher education systems from elite to mass to universal. The universality of tertiary education fundamentally changes not only the number of students, but also their profile and motivation. Teachers no longer work only with highly motivated students, but encounter problems previously known only from compulsory schooling, especially low motivation to study.

Our results did not correspond to this model. Although we are in a phase of universal higher education, respondents do not consider their studies to be an obligation, but still perceive them as a privilege, as was the case in the era of elite higher education: students are proud to be university students. They consider their teachers to be experts, but at the same time they think that we teach in an incomprehensible way. Only one-third of students are bored in class, but most believe that they can apply their skills in class. Most students think that studying is not beyond their capabilities, but at the same time they have problems organizing their time for studying.

This result surprised us, so we decided to repeat the research at a private university. The aim of our contribution is to present a comparison of the results of research at a public university with the results at a private university.

Our paper will consist of three parts. In the first part, we will summarize Martin Trow's theoretical concept and present the context of Czech higher education, particularly public and private universities. In

the second part, we will focus on the results of the comparative research.  
In the third part, we will discuss the results.

**Palle Larsen**

Senior Researcher, UCL University College, Denmark

## **Sustainable Leadership and the Food Waste Paradox in Danish Nursing Homes: Balancing Ideals, Institutional Structures, and Everyday Practice**

Food waste has become a central challenge in Danish nursing homes, reflecting broader tensions between rising demographic pressures, sustainability goals, and the realities of daily care work. This study examines how leadership styles, organisational structures, and contextual conditions influence the ability of nursing homes to work sustainably and reduce food waste. Drawing on a mixed-methods design, combining nationwide survey data with qualitative interviews, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of how leaders navigate paradoxes between care, efficiency, and sustainability.

Quantitative results show that leaders with higher seniority, stronger educational backgrounds, and close contact with practice are significantly more successful in implementing sustainable initiatives. Relationship-oriented and change-oriented leadership styles correlate positively with holistic and critical sustainability discourses, whereas task-oriented leadership shows little or no association with sustainability efforts. Leaders who exhibit scepticism toward sustainability are markedly less engaged in implementing concrete measures. These results demonstrate that sustainability work is not merely technical or administrative but deeply linked to leadership identity, organisational culture, and the ability to engage staff meaningfully.

The qualitative findings highlight the persistent food-waste paradox: while nursing homes aim to meet complex nutritional needs and deliver person-centred care, rigid procurement systems, documentation requirements, and standardised meal production often lead to overproduction and waste. Case studies show that value-based, dialogical, and practice-near leadership fosters engagement, innovation, and reductions in food waste, whereas top-down administrative leadership models tend to face resistance and achieve limited results. Staff engagement, psychological safety, and interdisciplinary collaboration are identified as central conditions for success.

The study's theoretical framework integrates paradox theory, sustainable and regenerative leadership, and organisational perspectives on New Public Management and rationalisation. These perspectives illuminate how leaders must navigate competing demands—care vs. efficiency, rules vs. flexibility, stability vs. innovation—while building

organisational coherence and collective capacity. The findings point to the need for leadership approaches that support reflection, learning, and local adaptation rather than relying solely on standardised procedures.

Overall, the study demonstrates that sustainable leadership in eldercare requires more than technical solutions: it demands relational competence, reflective capacity, and the ability to create shared meaning around sustainability. Reducing food waste thus becomes both a practical and symbolic task—an indicator of how well organisations balance resident wellbeing with responsible resource use. The study concludes by offering recommendations for practice, including systematic competence development, digital tools for monitoring and ordering, cross-sector partnerships, and leadership models that strengthen psychological safety, interdisciplinary collaboration, and organisational learning.

**Min Li**

Professor, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, China

## **Audience Acceptance of Chinese and Indian Films in North America: The Effect of Cultural Distance**

North American audience acceptance is an important indicator to test the international appeal of a country's films. After 2007, the acceptance of Chinese films by North American audiences was surpassed by Indian films, and there was a large fluctuation and decline. Using the China and Indian films' data of films released in North America from 2000 to 2021, this paper analyzes the direct effects of gatekeeping behavior and cultural embedment on the box office of Chinese and Indian films in North America, as well as the moderating effects of cultural distance on audience gatekeeping behavior and audience acceptance. The research finds that the audience gatekeeping behavior significantly affects the North American box office of Chinese and Indian films, and aggravates the fluctuation and decline of the North American box office of Chinese films. Different from the findings of previous scholars, when only Chinese and Indian films are used as samples, genres with higher cultural embeddedness such as drama and comedy are more favored by North American audiences. Cultural distance positively enhances the influence of distributor gatekeeping on the North American box office. This paper enriches the theoretical research perspective of foreign films' audience reception. The Research finding is helpful for film producers, exporters and distributors to precisely understand the audience's acceptance of foreign films and formulate more perfect marketing and distribution strategies.

**David Matas**

Lawyer & International Advisory Board Member, International  
Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China, Canada

**Professional Ethical Standards Addressing Organ  
Transplant Abuse Abroad**

In most countries, organ transplant demand far exceeds organ donor supply. Those in need of transplants often end up waiting months and years.

China, in contrast, offers transplants on demand. Bookings for transplants can be made in advance even for vital organs - heart, liver and lungs. An independent people's tribunal concluded in 2020 that the mass killing in China of practitioners of the spiritually based set of exercises Falun Gong for their organs for transplants was certain, beyond doubt. Twelve United Nations human rights experts in 2021 found the evidence about forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience in China as extremely alarming, of utmost concern.

Transplant tourism into China raises ethical concerns for health professionals and institutions outside of China. Yet, professional ethical standards have, for the most part, not been adopted to address those concerns.

The Transplantation Society developed in 2006 an Ethics Committee Policy Statement on the Chinese Transplantation Program which, since October 2024, no longer appears on its website. The International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation in 2022 developed its own ethics policy related to Chinese transplantation. These two policies relate to Chinese and foreign transplant professional interaction.

The Canadian Society of Transplantation and Canadian Society of Nephrology issued a policy statement in 2011 on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism which addressed transplant tourism in the context of patient health professional interaction. Global Rights Compliance, an international legal not-for-profit in 2022 published an advisory report and guidance on mitigating human rights risks when interacting with international medical institutions and professionals in transplantation medicine.

There are only four countries in Europe - the UK, Ireland, Belgium and Italy - which have specific extra-territorial legislation addressing transplant tourism and complicity in organ transplant abuse abroad. There are nonetheless several other countries in Europe with general domestic legislation directed against organ transplant abuse which has extraterritorial effect. No country in Europe, though, has mandatory

reporting of transplant tourism by health professionals and institutions to government authorities. There has been transplant professional hesitancy in endorsing this mandatory reporting because of its adverse impact on patient professional confidentiality.

This ethical/human rights landscape relating to transplant tourism raises questions about what the proper ethical standards should be for transplant health professional and institution interaction with Chinese transplant health professionals and institutions, about health professional and institution counselling of potential transplant tourist patients into China, about medical treatment of transplant tourist patients returning from China, and about the proper transplant professional response to legislative proposals for mandatory reporting by transplant health professionals and institutions to designated government authorities on transplant tourism. The proposed presentation would address each of these questions with a European focus.

The general conclusion would be that there needs to be, for Europe, country specific ethical/ human rights standards related to each of these matters. The presentation will suggest what these standards might be.

**Pawel Mazur**

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## **Balancing Shareholder Equality and Engagement: Access to Corporate Information in Modern Corporate Governance**

Company law is based on the idea of the separation of ownership and control, giving rise to agency conflicts between managers and shareholders. These conflicts are amplified by information asymmetry, which impedes effective oversight of management. Corporate law seeks to mitigate these issues by regulating the flow of information between companies and shareholders. Information exchange occurs in three forms: mandatory disclosure, shareholders' right to request information beyond mandatory requirements, and voluntary provision of supplementary information by the company. This presentation aims to assess the extent to which shareholders should have equal access to such information.

Mandatory reporting obligations assume that companies may withhold sufficient information, thereby limiting shareholders' ability to make informed decisions regarding their proprietary rights. Information necessary to exercise voting rights at the general meeting and other fundamental shareholder rights should be available for all shareholders on an equal basis.

However, rules on mandatory disclosure should not preclude direct communication between companies and shareholders. Lessons from the 2007–2009 financial crisis highlight that active oversight by major investors can prevent managers from pursuing myopic or excessively risky strategies. Consequently, direct dialogue between boards and key investors is a cornerstone of effective corporate governance in listed companies. Such a dialogue requires mutual trust and openness. If the information provided to selected investors during bilateral meetings with the company were to be disclosed to all the remaining shareholders this could be difficult to achieve.

Nonetheless, selective communication with certain investors may conflict with traditional principles of equal shareholder treatment. In the context of corporate information, equality is often interpreted as providing identical information to all shareholders. For example, § 131(4) of the German Stock Corporation Act (*Aktiengesetz*) allows any shareholder to demand, during a general meeting, information previously provided to another shareholder, irrespective of its relevance to the agenda. Similarly, Article 428 §§ 6–7 of the Polish Commercial Companies Code enforces even stricter rules. These provisions suggest

that certain European corporate laws adopt a standard of absolute informational parity. Yet, rigid application may hinder engagement with key investors, which relies on mutual trust and the ability to address strategic matters that are not immediately relevant to all shareholders.

A nuanced approach reconciles these concerns. Selective disclosure can be permissible if the decision to provide additional information to some shareholders is made in good faith and does not unfairly disadvantage other shareholders. This approach prevents arbitrary discrimination while enabling effective engagement.

This research contributes to legal scholarship by linking debates on shareholder engagement with the principles of equality in corporate law. It argues for interpreting regulations in a manner that prevents discriminatory practices—such as providing additional information to select investors without justification—rather than imposing absolute parity in information access. Balancing transparency and targeted engagement could enhance governance by enabling informed oversight while maintaining fairness among shareholders. Legislative reform or reinterpretation of existing rules may thus be warranted to reconcile these objectives, promoting both shareholder equality and active participation in corporate decision-making.

**Kevin McElrath**

Assistant Professor, Davidson College, USA

&

**Chris Marsicano**

Associate Professor, Davidson College, USA

## **Uncovering a National College-High School Recruitment Network in the United States: 2019-2023**

This research builds a national recruitment network linking higher education institutions to U.S. high schools. Previous research shows that the college admissions process operates as a site of social stratification, disproportionately advantaging students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Using anonymized cellular geolocation data, this study identifies college admissions staff and the high schools they visit between 2019 and 2023, constructing a national, bipartite college-high school recruitment network for U.S. colleges. This is the first study to map college recruitment activity at a national scale using observed recruiter behavior. Descriptive analyses reveal substantial demographic and geographic stratification in the types of high schools visited by college type (public / private). Multivariate models assess how institutional characteristics, school demographics, and geographic context are associated with variation in the number of recruitment visits high schools receive. These findings expand our understanding of recruitment in higher education and the social stratification that may unfold from this process.

**Claudia Mitzeliotis**  
Professor, Mercy University, USA

## **Evaluating the Effectiveness of Multiple Family Group Therapy in Reducing Stress among Families Coping with Autism**

Parents raising a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have higher levels of stress than other disabilities. Mothers raising a child with ASD reported less parenting competence, a decrease in marital satisfaction difficulty adapting compared to mothers of children coping with Down's Syndrome. Parents tend to isolate themselves, avoiding social contact with the outside world. There are limited services available for parents. A study was implemented using the psychoeducational model to help parents cope with ASD and evaluate the effectiveness of the model. Multiple Family Group Therapy (MFGT) is a psychoeducation model that has been seen as the most effective evidence-based practice in both clinical trials and community settings. The model is flexible, incorporating both illness information and strategies for coping. McFarlane and Lukens (2004) found the MFGT model to be the most effective of the evidence-based practice models in treating families coping with illnesses ranging from schizophrenia to cancer. The historical background of Multiple Family Group Therapy began with Peter Lacquer in 1977 was the first to discuss the importance of providing education. Multiple Family Group Therapy served as the intervention. McFarlane expanded on his concept framework and designed Multiple Family Group Therapy (MFGT). The study used this model with families coping with a child having ASD. Parents were enrolled in a 4-week program that met weekly. Both parents were required to attend the groups. The Parental Stress Index short form (PSI-SF) tool measured the outcome in relation to parental stress in raising a child with ASD. PSI-SF focuses on percentiles in the data analysis. It measures the Parental Stress Index in 3 domains: parental stress, parent-child difficulty interaction, and difficult child. Parents filled out the PSI-SF before beginning the group and at the end of the 4-week group session. A questionnaire was filled out at the completion of each group session. This was used to evaluate the group process. Parents who participated in the study expressed not feeling alone and enjoyed sharing and supporting one another. The education came from within the group, parents helping one another. The father stress index post-group went up in some cases. The outcome supported the use of MGFT to assist parents

with coping with raising a child with ASD. The study had its limitations. It is difficult to recruit families to commit to weekly sessions.

**Elias Papadopoulos**

Medical Student, Temple University, USA

&

**Simon Kanis**

Graduate Student, Georgia Institute of Technology, USA

## **Attuning a Faster R-CNN Machine Learning Model for Breast Tumor Ultrasound Imaging**

**Purpose:** Breast cancer is a leading cause of death among women globally, making early detection vital. This project develops a deep learning model to detect and classify breast tumors in ultrasound images as benign or malignant, outputting a bounding box and confidence score to support clinical decision-making.

**Methods:** A Faster R-CNN was fine-tuned using ResNet18, ResNet50, and MobileNet V3 backbones on a physician-annotated breast ultrasound dataset. The ultrasound images were obtained from a publicly available dataset collected in 2018 from Baheya hospital, Cairo, Egypt, consisting of 780 images in PNG format, categorized into three classes: normal, benign, and malignant. Images were preprocessed with physician-annotated bounding boxes indicating tumor presence.

The dataset was augmented using a process of resizing to 1000x900x3 pixels, normalization, rotation, and flipping. Anchor boxes were initialized via K-means. Model architecture was adjusted by adding dropout layers, frozen batch normalization, and testing varied learning rates (lr) and weight decay (wd) values to improve performance. Performance was evaluated using mAP@0.5 and classification accuracy (ACC).

**Results:** The best MobileNet V3 configuration (lr=1e-3, wd=5e-4, 40 epochs) achieved mAP=0.88 and ACC=0.95 but started overfitting early. The best ResNet18 results were achieved with lr=1e-4 and wd=1e-4 over 40 and 70 epochs. After adjusting the model architecture with dropout layers, new anchors, or frozen Batch Normalization layers, the ResNet18 model attained ACC values between 0.78 to 0.85 and mAP@0.5 values between 0.55 to 0.58 (Table 1). The final model reached validation accuracy of 0.71 and mAP@0.5 of 0.48.

**Table 1.** *Augmenting the Dataset and Changing the Architecture of the Faster R-CNN Can Generalize Better and Provide Better Performance*

Best attempts of training Faster R-CNN with backbone ResNet18 (fine-tuned)									
	Edits: (D)ata, (A)rchitecture	lr	epo	wd	mom	AP@0.5 (Benign)	AP@0.5 (Malignant)	mAP@0.5	ACC
Augmented	D	1e-4	40	1e-4	.9	0.71	0.62	0.55	0.78
Augmented, dropouts(0.5), new anchors	D, A	1e-4	40	1e-4	.9	0.70	0.63	0.55	0.82
Augmented, dropouts (0.5)	D, A	1e-4	70	1e-4	.9	0.78	0.58	0.58	0.82
Augmented and frozen Batch Norm layer	D, A	1e-4	40	1e-4	.9	0.76	0.55	0.54	0.85

Conclusion: Faster R-CNN shows promise for breast tumor detection in ultrasound images, with dropout and frozen batch normalization improving generalization. Improved performance was achieved by adjusting the learning rate and weight decay. Future work should focus on increasing performance on small tumors, integrating an FPN model, and expanding annotated training data to improve robustness across tumor sizes and morphologies.

**Gregory T. Papanikos**

President, Athens Institute & Professor (Adjunct), University of  
Tennessee, Knoxville, USA

## **Assessing Impact of the Russia-Ukraine War on Germany's Economic Growth**

This paper quantifies the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on Germany's economic growth using time-series regression analysis for the period 1996–2025. Controlling for eurozone-wide economic conditions, the results indicate that the war has reduced Germany's annual GDP growth by approximately 1.5 to 1.6 percentage points since 2022. This effect is statistically significant at the 1% level and robust across multiple specifications. The magnitude of this impact makes the war the fourth most severe negative shock to Germany's economy in the post-reunification period, after the 2009 Great Recession, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, and the 1992–1993 Exchange Rate Mechanism crisis. The findings highlight Germany's particular vulnerability and suggest that the war represents a substantial structural break in the country's growth trajectory. These results have important implications for understanding the economic costs of geopolitical conflicts and for designing appropriate policy responses.

**Bernard Sepinwall**

Adjunct Professor, McGill University, Canada

**The Evolution of Consumer Rights and the Promotion of  
Equality in the Marketplace**

The 1970's and 1980's were noted for the adoption of laws attempting to bring about fairness and equality, not only in the marketplace, but also in the contractual relationships between individuals. As well, access to the courts, and to obtaining justice, were facilitated. One notable example of this trend was the creation of consumer protection laws.

Recently, we have heard of efforts to reverse these trends --- most specifically, the attempts of the United States' government to dismantle and eliminate its primary consumer protection agency, namely, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

This timely talk will focus on the rationale for, and the history of, consumer protection laws. It will discuss some of the principal components of these laws.

The primary tool for protecting consumers is through imposing mandatory legal obligations on the merchants dealing with consumers such that any deviation from these obligations will annul the transaction in the consumers' favour. For example, there is certain compulsory information that must be contained in consumer contracts. There must be "truth in advertising". In other words, advertising must mean what it says, and must say what it means.

These laws would apply to consumer car purchases and repairs, to door-to-door sales, to consumer bank loans and credit cards, to gym memberships and dancing lessons, and so on.

We will look at what legal recourses are open to consumers who believe that their rights have not been respected, including the right to claim punitive damages. We will also look at the recourses that consumer protection agencies may exercise to assure that the laws are respected.

Finally, we will look at ecommerce --- in particular, consumer online purchases --- and how these have been treated by these laws.

All of this will be done through drawing upon practical examples gleaned from the presenter's more than thirty years experience as a Lecturer and Trial Attorney in the field.

**Sharyn Sepinwall**  
Professor, Concordia University, Canada

## **A Sociological Analysis of Stress among University Students in Failed Standing**

This study examines how institutional pressures, socioeconomic constraints, health and family situations and financial insecurity are particularly acute for students who are on academic probation at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada.

The fear of further failure, the worry that they will not be able to meet the required GPA, the pressure of an increased workload as a result of the need to retake failed courses, and scheduling conflicts with outside employment are just a few of the unique stressors that these students experience.

At Concordia University, the Student Success Center provides a comprehensive, accessible resource to meet these needs and challenges and workshops are designed to provide the skills necessary for success.

The required course students on probation must take and the one that I have been teaching for the last few years, is entitled Skills For Success. This course focuses on helping students develop effective self-management skills in order to deal with the stressors as they navigate personal and academic challenges.

My talk will focus on the academic, psychological and social stressors that these students experience, as well as the learning objectives of the course I teach. Through their perseverance, resilience and academic achievement, most of these students successfully find their path back to an acceptable academic standing.

**Camille Wallemacq**

PhD Student, University of Mons, Belgium

&

**Julien Vandernoot**

Professor, University of Mons, Belgium

## **Income Heterogeneity and Electoral Tax Manipulation: Panel Evidence from Swiss Cantons**

This study explores the influence of electoral cycles on the tax burden in Switzerland, by analysing the fluctuations of fiscal variables according to income brackets and electoral calendar. Using Hausman specification tests to validate the model, results reveal no generalized electoral cycles, with most coefficients remaining low and statistically insignificant, indicating a general neutrality of tax policies for electoral purposes.

However, a targeted trend is emerging where high-income taxpayers benefit from significant reductions in the variable studied before and during election years. This suggests a selective strategy favouring affluent voters, probably because of their economic or political weight, and raises questions about the fairness of electoral processes and the representation of social preferences.

Analysis of control variables shows that large jurisdictions exhibit more pronounced electoral effects, but only for low-income groups, perhaps because of their greater sensitivity to tax changes or their higher number in these areas. However, the cantonal financial balance does not have a significant impact on results, contrary to theoretical expectations, which may reflect strict budgetary discipline or homogeneous public management practices.

In summary, while Switzerland largely avoids systematic tax manipulation during elections, some measures disproportionately favour high-income earners, suggesting potential bias in pre-election political decisions. These findings call for a more in-depth analysis of the relationships between institutional structures, socio-economic composition and voting behaviour.

**Adel Zeglam**

Consultant Neurodevelopment Pediatrician and Professor, University  
of Tripoli, Tripoli University Hospital, Libya

&

**Najah Wahra**

Pharmacist, Primary Health Care Center, Tripoli, Libya

## **The Physician's Obligations in the Performance of his Work: A Keyhole Look at the Libyan Law on Medical Liability**

Background: Patients must be able to trust doctors with their lives and well-being; to justify that trust, we as a profession have a duty to maintain a good standard of practice and care to show respect for human life. Medical liability will result from any professional error arising from the practice of a medical activity that causes harm to others and the occurrence of damage is a presumption of fault or breach of the obligation.

Aims: To have a keyhole look at the Libyan law on Medical Liability and discuss few medico-legal cases.

Methods: The National Council for the Determination of Medical Liability (NCDML) affiliated to Ministry of Health is the official body responsible for determining the extent to which medical responsibility is established. (Law number 17 of 1986). Examples of some medico legal cases will be presented where medical issues intersect with legal considerations often involving the interpretation and application of laws and regulations in the context of healthcare.

Results: The term "malpractice" within the medical community describes acts of negligence, deviation, incompetence, or professional errors that result in harm to the consumer (patient) due to actions that do not adhere to standards.

The Ministry of Health and the suppliers, manufactures, distributors and users are jointly liable for damages resulting from the use of medical tools, devices and medicines.

Conclusion: Changes in the medico-legal landscape and increased litigation have made doctors cautious about the amount, quality, and type of treatment they provide. Defensive medicine occurs when doctors order tests, procedures, visits, or avoid high-risk patients or procedures primarily to reduce their exposure to malpractice. Positive Defensive Medicine occurs when Extra tests or procedures are ordered to reduce malpractice liability. Avoiding certain patients or procedures is referred to as Negative Defensive Medicine.

**Miglena Zhiyanski**

Professor, Forest Research Institute - Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,  
Bulgaria

&

**Elena Todorova**

Assistant Professor, Forest Research Institute - Bulgarian Academy of  
Sciences, Bulgaria

## **Integrating Socio-Ecological Approach for Recognizing Sport Activities as Cultural Ecosystem Services Provided by Forest Ecosystems**

This study advances the understanding of sport activities as an integral component of Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES) provided by forest ecosystems and green infrastructure. Although forest-based sports (such as hiking, trail running, mountain biking, and orienteering) generate substantial cultural, social, and health-related benefits, they remain insufficiently represented in ecosystem-services assessments, spatial planning, and natural-capital evaluations. Building on recent bibliometric evidence and extended conceptual analyses, the study examines the functional linkages between forest conditions, green infrastructure design, accessibility, and the delivery of sport-related CES. The Parangalitsa Reserve (Rila Mountains, Bulgaria) is used as a case-study region to demonstrate how high-value forest landscapes and their surrounding buffer zones can support the integration of sport-related CES, assessed by implementation of sociological studies performed among different stakeholders. Particular attention is given to identify the perspectives for utilization the potential of protected areas, where zonation systems (core areas, buffer zones, transition zones) provide a governance framework for balancing conservation, recreation, and sport. Buffer zones emerge as multifunctional spaces where sport activities can be planned and managed to enhance CES while safeguarding eco-sociological integrity. Integrating sport activities into CES assessments and mapping can significantly strengthen territorial planning, highlight the societal value of natural capital, and support multifunctional landscapes that maintain biodiversity and deliver long-term public benefits.

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