



Workshop: A Research Agenda for Critical Trusts Law

Johanna Jacques (Durham University) and Nick Piška (Loughborough University)

Monday 8 September 2025, 9am to 5pm

Anne Galbraith Room, Palatine Centre, Durham University*

Critical trusts law is an emerging approach to trusts law that rejects purely doctrinal analysis in favour of a wider contextual vision. This vision incorporates theoretical and empirical scholarship from law and other disciplines in order to provide a counterweight to prevailing forces shaping the understanding and development of the law in this area.

This workshop will take the critical tradition forward by setting out a research agenda for trusts law that is particularly attuned to questions of social justice, exploring trusts law within 10 contexts that are becoming increasingly important in the contemporary theory and practice of the trust: the contribution of trusts to rising wealth inequality; the intersection of trusts with tax; the colonial and imperial legacies of the trust; the global context of modern trusts; the use of trusts in commerce and in financial markets; the use of trusts in family arrangements; the intersection of trusts with environmental, social and governance matters; the regulation of trusts beyond doctrinal understandings of accountability; the impact of technological developments on trusteeship; the normative basis of the trust.

The questions that this workshop will raise will be vital to consider for anyone conducting research in trusts law today. Contributions to the workshop will be published in the forthcoming book *A Research Agenda for Critical Trusts Law* (Edward Elgar, 2026).

Speakers include:

- Brenna Bhandar (University of British Columbia, Canada) on the colonial and imperial legacies of the trust;
- Stephen Connelly (University of Warwick, UK) on the use of trusts in commerce and in financial markets;
- Bridget Crawford (Pace University New York, USA) on the intersection of trusts with tax;
- Ellen Gordon-Bouvier (University of Exeter, UK) on the use of trusts in family arrangements;
- Rob Herian (University of Exeter, UK) on the impact of technological developments on trusteeship;

* This is an in-person event, but remote attendance is available on request. Please contact Johanna Jacques (johanna.jacques@durham.ac.uk) for further information.

- Johanna Jacques (University of Durham, UK) on the normative basis of the trust;
- John Picton (University of Manchester, UK) on the intersection of trusts with environmental, social and governance matters;
- Nick Piška (Loughborough University, UK) on the regulation of trusts beyond doctrinal understandings of accountability;
- Allison Anna Tait (University of Richmond, USA) on the contribution of trusts to rising wealth inequality;
- Michael Widdowson (European University Institute, Italy) on the global context of modern trusts.

The workshop will feature a distinguished group of international scholars whose expertise spans the full range of contemporary issues in trusts law, bringing together perspectives from academia, policy, and practice

The workshop has been generously supported by Durham Law School, and is part of the [Durham Centre for Law and Philosophy](#) series of events and the [Equity & Trusts Research Network](#).

If you would like to attend the workshop, please contact Johanna Jacques (johanna.jacques@durham.ac.uk).

Workshop Programme

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| 0900 | Arrivals, welcome and introduction <i>Anne Galbraith Room, Palatine Centre, Durham University</i> |
| 0930 – 1100 | Panel 1 Trusts and the family <i>Dr Ellen Gordon-Bouvier (University of Exeter)</i> Commerce, finance and capitalism <i>Stephen Connelly (University of Warwick)</i> Normative justifications <i>Dr Johanna Jacques (University of Durham)</i> |
| 1100 – 1130 | Coffee/tea |
| 1130 – 1300 | Panel 2 Environmental, social and governance <i>Dr John Picton (University of Manchester)</i> Regulating trusts <i>Nick Piška (Loughborough University)</i> Technologies of trust <i>Dr Rob Herian (University of Exeter)</i> |
| 1300 – 1400 | Lunch |
| 1400 – 1500 | Panel 3 Inequality <i>Professor Allison Anna Tait (University of Richmond, USA)</i> Tax and political economy <i>Professor Bridget J. Crawford (Pace University New York, USA)</i> |
| 1500 – 1530 | Coffee/tea |
| 1530 – 1630 | Panel 4 Globalization <i>Michael Widdowson (European University Institute)</i> Imperial, colonial and postcolonial trusts <i>Dr Brenna Bhandar (University of British Columbia, Canada)</i> |
| 1630 – 1700 | Concluding discussion and next steps |
| 1800 | Workshop dinner* <i>Zen, Court Lane, Durham, DH1 3JS</i> |

* If you would like to join the speakers for dinner at your own expense, please contact Johanna Jacques (johanna.jacques@durham.ac.uk).