

UCLA

**International & Comparative
Law Program**



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International Law Weekend - West

**New Frontiers, Evolving
Rules: The Future of
International Law**

February 20-21, 2026

**UCLA School of Law
Los Angeles, CA**

Co-sponsored by



JILFA

Journal of International Law and Foreign Affairs



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The International & Comparative Law Program at UCLA School of Law (ICLP) engages in research, advocacy, and public education in a broad array of areas of international and comparative law. Our faculty is composed of outstanding legal scholars and our students can graduate with a specialized certificate in international and comparative law. The program hosts events, workshops, and conferences featuring eminent scholars, practitioners, and jurists.

The American Branch of the International Law Association (ABILA) is dedicated to the study, clarification and development of International Law and the advancement of peace, equity and justice worldwide.

If you are not yet a member of ABILA, you can join at <https://www.ila-americanbranch.org/membership/>
Free for students!



Friday, February 20, 2026

12:00pm - 12:45pm: *Registration*

12:45pm - 1:00pm: *Opening Remarks* (room 1347)

- Jess Peake, UCLA School of Law
- Leila Sadat, ABILA; Washington University School of Law
- Michael Waterstone, UCLA School of Law

1:00pm - 1:45pm - *Cities as Global Norm-Shapers: Urban Power at the New Frontiers of International Law* (room 1347)

- Ambassador Nina L. Hachigian (ret.), Alliance for Local Leaders International
- Kal Raustiala, UCLA School of Law

2:00pm - 3:15pm - *Revisiting the Use of Force: Legal Norms, State Practice, and Emerging Contours in International Law* (room 1347)

- Michael Scharf, Case Western Reserve University School of Law
- Michael Kelly, Creighton University School of Law
- David Glazier, Loyola Law School
- Rachel VanLandingham, Southwestern Law School
- Milena Sterio, Cleveland State University College of Law

3:30pm - 4:45pm - *Reflecting on the Ongoing Negotiations for a New Treaty on Crimes Against Humanity: Challenges and Prospects* (room 1347)

- Leila Sadat, Washington University School of Law
- Gissou Nia, Strategic Litigation Project at the Atlantic Council
- Hannah Garry, USC Gould School of Law
- Saira Mohamed, UC Berkeley Law

4:45pm - 6:30pm: *Reception in the Courtyard*



Saturday, February 21, 2026

8:30am - 9:15am: *Registration*

9:15am - 9:45am - *Standing Up for International Law* (room 1347)

- Michael Scharf, American Branch of the International Law Association

10:00am - 11:00am - *Artificial Intelligence and the Boundaries of International Law* (room 1347)

- Julia Powles, UCLA School of Law
- Peter Yu, Texas A&M School of Law
- Ioanna Tourkochoriti, University of Baltimore School of Law
- Nina Toft Djanegara, UCLA School of Law

11:15am - 12:30pm - *A Necessary IDEA: International Human Rights Law and U.S. Public Policy in Differential Treatment of Social Groups*

(concurrent panel; room 1347)

- Chandra Bhatnagar, ACLU of Southern California
- Kevin R. Johnson, University of California Davis
- Kelley Loper, University of Denver Sturm College of Law
- Jerry Kang, UCLA School of Law
- Aaron Fellmeth, Arizona State University, Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law

11:15am - 12:30pm - *Protest and International Law* (concurrent panel; room 1357)

- Alison Dundes Renteln, University of Southern California
- Shenali Pilapitiya, University of Southern California
- Florian Kriener, Max Planck Institute, Yale Law School
- Federico Barillas Schwank, International Center for Not-for-Profit Law
- Bahar Mirhossenji, Cornell Law School
- Jess Peake, UCLA School of Law



Saturday, February 21, 2026

2:30pm - 1:15pm: *Boxed Lunch*

1:15pm - 2:15pm - *Feeding the Future: International Law and Food Security* (concurrent panel; room 1347)

- Michael Roberts, UCLA School of Law
- Daniele Manzella, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
- Jessica Lynd, White & Case LLP
- Leonie Vierck, Gates Foundation

1:15pm - 2:15pm - *Governing the Final Frontier: From Cities to Orbit* (concurrent panel; room 1357)

- Haroon Azar, UCLA Burkle Center for International Relations
- Lucius Martin, Long Beach Deputy Mayor of Economic Development
- Krystle Caponio, AstroForge
- Michael Segal, Eagle Law Group

2:30pm - 3:30pm - *“The Veto” Film Screening and Discussion: What is the Future of the Security Council?* (room 1347)

- Jennifer Trahan, New York University
- Kal Raustiala, UCLA School of Law

3:45pm - 5:00pm - *Pursuing a Career in International Law* (room 1347)

- Taylor Kilpatrick, American Society of International Law

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Friday, February 20, 2026

12:45pm - 1pm - *Opening Remarks* (room 1347)

- **Jess Peake**, Director, International & Comparative Law Program at UCLA School of Law
- **Leila Sadat**, Washington University School of Law; Board Chair, American Branch of the International Law Association
- **Michael Waterstone**, Dean, UCLA School of Law

1:00pm - 1:45pm - *Cities as Global Norm-Shapers: Urban Power at the New Frontiers of International Law* (room 1347)

As the international system adapts to shifting geopolitical realities, cities are emerging as influential actors operating far beyond their traditional municipal mandates. From climate diplomacy and human rights implementation to migration governance, digital regulation, and sustainable development, urban centers increasingly participate—formally and informally—in shaping international legal norms. This conversation with Los Angeles' first Deputy Mayor for International Affairs examines the rise of "city diplomacy" as a force driving innovation in global governance and interrogates the legal, political, and institutional implications of treating cities as transnational actors. The discussion will explore how urban initiatives challenge state-centric models, the opportunities and risks of decentralizing norm-creation, and the ways in which cities can strengthen international law's capacity to protect humanity, the planet, and future generations.

- **Ambassador Nina L. Hachigian (ret.)**, Alliance for Local Leaders International
- **Kal Raustiala**, UCLA School of Law



Friday, February 20, 2026

2:30pm - 3:15pm - *Revisiting the Use of Forces: Legal Norms, State Practice, and Emerging Contours in International Law* (room 1347)

At the end of World War II, states agreed to outlaw most uses of force through Article 2(4) of the UN Charter. International law has developed over the last 80 years to embrace the Charter's prohibition on the use of force and to allow for only two exceptions – Security Council authorization and self-defense. Yet, throughout the same period of time, including in the present day, such as in Ukraine and Venezuela, we have witnessed numerous instances of use of force by states and non-state actors. Considering this seeming juxtaposition between law and practice, this panel will convene a group of experts to analyze the existing international legal framework governing the use of force. Panelists will discuss the UN Charter, customary international law, and relevant regional instruments, in light of ongoing conflicts and uses of force, such as the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the recent Trump Administration strikes against alleged narco-trafficking boats in international waters, as well as the Trump Administration's decision to launch an attack against Venezuela in order to forcibly remove its President, Nicolas Maduro. Panelists will assess how contemporary security challenges (counterterrorism, humanitarian interventions, peacekeeping, cyber operations, and autonomous weapons systems, inter alia) interact with traditional jus ad bellum and jus in bello rules. Panelists will also explore issues of state responsibility, consent, self-defense, collective security, and anticipatory self-defense in light of modern threats. Moreover, panelists will focus on accountability mechanisms for any unlawful use of force, including regional and international courts, UN bodies, and transitional justice processes, in the context of ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and elsewhere. In addition, panelists will highlight the need for any new normative developments, and the possibility of their operationalization in doctrine and practice.

- **Michael Scharf**, Case Western Reserve University School of Law
- **Michael Kelly**, Creighton University School of Law
- **David Glazier**, Loyola Law School
- **Rachel VanLandingham**, Southwestern Law School
- **Milena Sterio**, Cleveland State University College of Law



Friday, February 20, 2026

3:30pm - 4:45pm - *Reflecting on the Ongoing Negotiations for a New Treaty on Crimes Against Humanity: Challenges and Prospects* (room 1347)

This panel examines the ongoing negotiations for a new international treaty on crimes against humanity as a key example of how international law is evolving to meet contemporary global challenges. Reflecting on the work of the Preparatory Committee meeting held in January, the discussion will explore both the procedural dynamics and the substantive content of this emerging legal instrument. Particular attention will be given to the treaty's significance as a new framework for accountability, the ways in which it responds to shifting geopolitical realities, and the negotiation process itself as a site of convergence among new and diverse groupings of states. In doing so, the panel situates the treaty and its process within broader debates about the future of international law in an increasingly complex and multipolar world.

- **Leila Sadat**, Washington University Law School
- **Gissou Nia**, Strategic Litigation Project at the Atlantic Council
- **Hannah Garry**, USC Gould School of Law
- **Saira Mohamed**, UC Berkeley School of Law

4:45pm - 6:30pm - Reception in the Shapiro Courtyard

(please note that the reception will be held outside; please dress accordingly)



Saturday, February 21, 2026

9:15am - 9:45am - *Standing Up for International Law* (room 1347)

From time to time, the rule of law has been under assault in America and around the world. From the war on terrorism after 9/11 to this year's Venezuelan intervention, academic and professional institutions are called upon to stand up for the rule of law. Doing so entails risks for Universities, law firms, and individuals. But what is the cost of inaction?

- **Michael Scharf**, President, American Branch of the International Law Association (ABILA), Case Western Reserve School of Law

10:00am - 11:00am - *Artificial Intelligence and the Boundaries of International Law* (room 1347)

The rapid global emergence of large-scale artificial intelligence systems is putting traditional legal and political frameworks to the test. Transforming economies, disrupting labor markets, altering security landscapes, and challenging core notions of sovereignty, AI raises profound questions for international law. At the same time, it creates new opportunities for cooperation and norm-building across borders.

This panel brings together leading experts in law, technology, human rights, and policy to examine how AI pushes against foundational principles—accountability, autonomy, state authority, and the protection of human dignity. Panelists will explore the implications of AI for labor and workplace governance, the risks it poses to privacy and fundamental rights, and the shifting balance of power between states and private actors who increasingly shape the digital domain. The discussion will interrogate how AI is redefining the boundaries of international engagement—and how international law must evolve to meet the challenges and possibilities of a technology that transcends borders.

- **Julia Powles**, UCLA School of Law
- **Peter Yu**, Texas A&M School of Law
- **Ioanna Tourkochoriti**, University of Baltimore School of Law
- **Nina Toft Djanegara**, UCLA School of Law



Saturday, February 21, 2026

11:15am - 12:30pm - *A Necessary IDEA: International Human Rights Law and U.S. Public Policy in Differential Treatment of Social Groups* (concurrent panel; room 1347)

As international law confronts many challenges, long-standing principles of nondiscrimination and equal rights and opportunities for different social groups face renewed hostility within domestic legal systems. In the United States especially, inclusion, diversity, equity, and access (IDEA) or DEI initiatives have come under sustained political and judicial attack, culminating in recent Supreme Court jurisprudence and executive actions that impede or prohibit efforts to address systemic inequality. These developments raise pressing questions about the role of international human rights law (IHRL) in shaping domestic legal norms and constitutional interpretation. This panel situates contemporary U.S. debates over IDEA within the broader international human rights obligations, which should inform, yet increasingly diverge from, U.S. constitutional doctrine and legislative practice. Panelists will explore the relevance of IHRL to addressing systemic inequities affecting individuals and communities based on race, ethnicity, color, gender, and disability, and will assess whether recent Supreme Court jurisprudence treating discrimination against the racial majority as indistinguishable from discrimination against minorities aligns with international legal standards.

- **Chandra Bhatnagar**, ACLU of Southern California
- **Kevin R. Johnson**, University of California Davis
- **Kelley Loper**, University of Denver Sturm College of Law
- **Jerry Kang**, UCLA School of Law
- **Aaron Fellmeth**, Arizona State University, Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law



Saturday, February 21, 2026

11:15am - 12:30pm - *Protest and International Law* (concurrent panel; room 1357)

Amid global democratic backsliding and the consolidation of authoritarian power, protest has emerged as a central site of contestation in contemporary international law. While international human rights frameworks formally recognize freedoms of expression and assembly, states continue to rely on international legal doctrines to justify far-reaching restrictions on dissent. As a result, protest occupies an ambiguous and unsettled position within the international legal order. This panel explores how international law responds to protests movements in context of political instability and regime change, examining both the protections it offers and the constraints it enables. Drawing on case studies, speakers assess whether evolving global dynamics demand a recalibration of legal norms. In doing so, the panel situates protest as a key frontier in debates about the future direction of international law.

- **Alison Dundes Renteln**, University of Southern California
- **Shenali Pilapitiya**, University of Southern California
- **Florian Kriener**, Max Planck Institute; Yale Law School
- **Federico Barillas Schwank**, International Center for Not-for-Profit Law
- **Bahar Mirhosseni**, Cornell Law School
- **Jess Peake**, UCLA School of Law

12:30pm - 1:15pm - Boxed lunch available

We invite you to take a boxed lunch and enjoy it in the Shapiro Courtyard or elsewhere in the law school or on campus.



Saturday, February 21, 2026

1:15pm - 2:15pm - *Feeding the Future: International Food Security* (concurrent panel; room 1347)

As global food insecurity rises due to conflict, climate-driven disasters, economic volatility, disrupted supply chains, and shifting geopolitics, international law is pushed into new territory. There is no single international regime governing food. Instead, food systems are shaped by a complex web of trade rules, investment agreements, intellectual property regimes, infrastructure challenges, environmental norms, and humanitarian and human rights obligations. As pressures on food systems grow, these overlapping frameworks are increasingly tested—raising questions about how existing rules apply, where gaps remain, and how legal regimes must evolve. This panel explores the future of international law through the lens of food security. It will examine how legal frameworks influence what is produced, how it moves across borders, and who has access. Bringing together experts from academia, international organizations, and private practice, the discussion will identify emerging legal challenges and opportunities for a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable global food systems.

- **Michael Roberts**, UCLA School of Law
- **Daniele Manzella**, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
- **Jessica Lynd**, White & Case LLP
- **Leonie Vierck**, Gates Foundation

1:15pm - 2:15pm - *Governing the Final Frontier: From Cities to Space* (concurrent panel; room 1357)

As space activity accelerates across commercial, civil, and security domains, governance is increasingly shaped not only by international agreements and national regulators, but by cities where space infrastructure, logistics, and risk converge. This panel examines how established space law frameworks intersect with urban governance, private actors, and on-the-ground implementation.

- **Haroon Azar**, UCLA Burkle Center for International Relations
- **Lucius Martin**, Long Beach Deputy Mayor of Economic Development
- **Krystle Caponio**, AstroForge
- **Michael Segal**, Eagle Law Group



Saturday, February 21, 2026

2:30pm - 3:30pm - “The Veto” Film Screening and Discussion: What is the Future of the Security Council? (room 1347)

Join us for a screening of this recently released documentary short focused on the problem of the veto power of permanent members of the UN Security Council, particularly when the veto blocks efforts to stop or prevent genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity. The film, featuring renowned experts on the topic, explores a path to challenging this paralysis, including having the UN General Assembly request an Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice on whether there are legal limits to the veto in the face of atrocity crimes.

- **Jennifer Trahan**, New York University
- **Kal Raustiala**, UCLA School of Law

3:45pm - 5:00pm - Pursuing a Career in International Law (room 1347)

The market for legal jobs is challenging, and specializing in a particular field, like international law, can make your job search even more frustrating. This session will discuss the steps that students and graduates can take while still in law school or in their early careers to help themselves stand out in the search for international law positions. Topics covered will include targeted job searching, managing one’s professional contacts, identifying appropriate international experiences, application dos and don’ts, and myriad other practical issues that students will encounter.

- **Taylor Kilpatrick**, American Society of International Law

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