



Course Directors:

Markus Böckenförde, Centre for Global Cooperation Research, Duisburg/University of Giessen, Germany
Renata Uitz, Department of Legal Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

Course Manager:

Gedion Hessebon, Department of Legal Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

Faculty:

Jill Cottrell, Katiba Institut, Nairobi, Kenya
Charles Fombad, Department of Law, University of Pretoria, South Africa
Yash Ghai, Faculty of Law, University of Hong Kong
Christina Murray, University of Cape Town, South Africa

BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION

This one-week research course intends to tackle complex societal, political and legal problems in constitution-building from an interdisciplinary perspective, informed by field experience. We seek to combine different disciplines (mostly comparative law and political science) and perspectives (comparative governmental systems; electoral systems; de-centralization; human rights; comparative constitutional law; good governance; etc) to offer new insights on a classic subject of the highest academic and practical relevance.

The course will address the subject from four different angles, all of them related to specific challenges in Africa. The first one highlights constitutionalism in Africa in general, the different roles and meanings of a constitution, the merits and risks of constitutional borrowing, and the role of external / international influence in constitution building. The second angle accounts for the fact that new constitutions often follow conflict, loaded with the expectation to herald a new era of peace and democracy, leaving behind authoritarianism, despotism or political upheaval. The third angle of the course addresses how constitutional designs respond to competing claims, be they religious, ethnic, linguistic, and how they accommodate different stakeholders, how they tame the executive, introducing instruments of checks and balances and how constitutions aspire to prevent stalemates and promote gender equality. Finally taking into account the fact that the management of constitutional change and maintenance of constitutional stability are ongoing problems, the course will explore the issue of constitutional implementation, review and redemption as part of the constitutional building process.

The course is designed to be a forum for exchange and mutual learning for young scholars and practitioners from the civil sector, from public administration, from regional and international institutions. Considerable parts of the course are designed to integrate both, relevant research questions and actual challenges from the praxis experienced by the participants. Participants have the unique opportunity to exchange views and experiences with the most prominent African scholars, having been involved in many constitution building processes on the ground.

Applications are invited from graduate students, researchers and scholars working on constitutional building in Africa and with prior knowledge of the field as well as from practitioners in the respective field.



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✉ P.O. Box: Budapest 5, P.f.: 1082, H-1245

☎ (36 1) 327 3811, Fax: (36-1) 327-3124

E-mail: summeru@ceu.hu

Skype: ceu-sun

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