

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Colonial Legacies in Public Law:



Histories, Theories, Pitfalls and Potentials With a focus on Africa

Masterclass with Professor Dr. Philipp Dann, Humboldt University Berlin

Ibadan, Nigeria
8 - 10 December 2025

The **African Network of Constitutional Lawyers (ANCL)**, in collaboration with the **University of Ibadan** and the support of **Konrad Adenauer Stiftung**, Foundation Office Nigeria, is happy to announce a Masterclass with Professor Dr. Philipp Dann of Humboldt University Berlin that will take place from **8 to 10 December 2025**, in Ibadan, Nigeria.

The legacies of empire and colonialism continue to be intensely debated. Indeed, the African Union (AU) has declared 2025 as the year of ‘Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations’. These legacies continue to shape various debates in public law but also indicate a new phase of globalization. The Masterclass will explore these legacies and discuss their various dimensions and implications in comparative constitutional and public international law with a specific focus on the African continent. The Class will draw on history and political theory, especially post-/ decolonial theories to contextualize public law. It will use examples (such as the concept of development and democracy) to understand how empire and colonialism have shaped comparative and domestic constitutional and public international law and their scholarly reflection over time. It will then turn to the future and collectively interrogate the potentials (and pitfalls) for re-imagining public law and its scholarship in the 21st century through and beyond the colonial lens. The Masterclass is an invitation to rethink public law and the role of legal scholarship in a truly global way mindful of the broader legacies of modernity and colonialism.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

Session 1: Comparative Constitutional Law, the Southern Turn and Reflexive Globalization – argument and framing

On the first day, the general theme of the class will be introduced and a framework of analysis established. This includes a basic engagement with colonial history and postcolonial thought as well as a reflection on the attention of public law scholarship to these dimensions so far. The Masterclass will discuss the overarching argument that a ‘Southern Turn’ and an understanding of colonial legacies provides a foundation to rethink the conceptual vocabulary of public law in the 21st century. Comparative constitutional law is a paramount area for such reflexive rethinking of public law theory.

Session 2: International law and the concept of development

The second day and session II will turn to international law, the scholarship of which was the first to engage with colonial legacies. The class will situate and discuss Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL) and theory of Africanizing international law. It will then engage in particular with the concept of development as the central paradigm to structure South-North relations in the 20th century and study its implications for international institutional, economic and human rights law in shaping international law up until today.

Session 3: Constitutional thought in reflexive globalization: examples of temporality and democracy

In the third session, the Masterclass will return to the initial argument that basic notions and the conceptual vocabulary of public law are in (and need) a process of reflexive rethinking in order to grasp and structure the realities of public authority in the multipolar world of the 21st century. The Masterclass will turn to two examples to demonstrate this process and possible outcomes of such reflexive rethinking. One is the perspective of time and temporality that allows us to highlight distinct elements of public law; the other example is democracy, a universally used notion, which still rests on conceptual considerations arising from 19th and early 20th century Europe even though it has travelled long ago. This deliberation will be informed by growing debates around 'reimagining' democracy in Africa, with some calling for 'Afrodemocracy'.

Session 4: Colonial legacies in African constitutionalism

The final session will turn to the legacies of empire and colonialism in Africa, especially in the evolution of constitutional law and constitutional thinking. Against the background of the previous sessions, this session will discuss the distinct constellations and legacies of colonialism in Africa, including in organizations of African regional integration and the way these legacies have been studied, responded and shaped narratives and governance frameworks, including over gender, over the decades. The discussions of the previous days will allow the participants to understand these developments in their own right but also in comparison to similar experiences, for example, in India or the Caribbean.

FORMAT

The Masterclass will be text- and discussion-oriented, based on a reader comprising texts by Professor Dann and other eminent works in the field. All participants are expected to have studied the reading material ahead of the Masterclass. The language of the Masterclass will be English.

All four sessions will consist of three elements: (1) an introductory input by Professor Dann, followed by a response from an eminent African scholar on the respective theme; (2) moderated discussions in breakout groups on the input and response and the assigned readings guided by a set of open questions; and (3) a plenary discussion on the theme with Professor Dann.

The Masterclass will be accompanied by a public lecture dedicated to the memory of Professor Ben Nwabueze. Details regarding the lecture will be communicated in a separate correspondence.

About PROFESSOR DANN



Philipp Dann is Professor at Humboldt University Berlin, where he holds the Chair in Public and Comparative Law. His research focuses on the role of law in the encounter and entanglement between South and North – in international, comparative and European law, in legal theory and legal history. He has published three monographs, ten edited volumes and is the editor-in-chief of the quarterly journal ‘World Comparative Law’. He is a co-founder of the ‘Law and Development Research Network’, a co-chair of the ICON chapter Germany and a principal investigator at research clusters ‘Contestations of the Liberal Script’ and ‘Varieties of Constitutionalism’. He has advised governments and other parties on constitutional matters and questions of law and development.

Established African scholars will join the course as co-presenters on each theme. The organizers will announce their names as we receive final confirmations.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications with a motivation statement together with a CV should be sent via e-mail to secretariat@anclradc.org.za and Ms Yvonne Oyieke, anyango.oyieke@gmail.com. The application deadline is **15 August 2025** and selection will be made by 10 September 2025. All invited participants will be provided with a return economy class air ticket and board and lodging in Ibadan for the duration of the Masterclass.

The Masterclass Organizing Committee

ANCL

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