

The meta-crisis: Rethinking law and ourselves

PhD seminar
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Spogi
DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE POLITICHE,
GIURIDICHE E STUDI INTERNAZIONALI

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SYLLABUS

This two-day seminar will explore -- through a set of stories -- the failings of the Age of Reason and the promise of a new Age of Awareness. Oh, my!!! It's a simple syllabus - no readings, just some music videos we'll watch in class, and your "common knowledge" (including what most everyone acknowledges, but which we do not talk about).

Here's the timeline, with a quick overview of the themes of the stories:

Day 1: Debunking Reason

- **Shipwrecked:** consideration of the (failed) tenets of the Age of Reason (rationality, individualism, science/tech, progress/growth, secularism - drivers of the meta-crisis)
- **Cultured meat:** a focused look at how rationality is incoherent and a glimpse into value-driven intuition (using a group exercise)

Day 2: Revealing Awareness

- **Bus driver:** rethinking human decision-making and consciousness (an exploration of motives/values, incentives/actuation, norms/integrity, self/collective)
- **Ceramic bowl:** rethinking price and value (self-reflection on reductive/integrative, scarcity/abundance, financial/wealth, competition/altruism, materialism/spirituality)

The format for each of our meetings will be straight-forward, though a bit unconventional. First, a quick intro to the topic, then some music, and next a story. After this you'll have some individual work (jotting down your immediate impressions of the story), followed by some group work (discussing the topic and story with a small group of your classmates), and then a come-together discussion. I'm planning to create a recording of our discussion and have AI provide us a summary. No paper, no exam!

Oh, right. You're wondering, "What is a *seminar*?" (Isn't it something how we let important words float past us without inquiry?) Here's an etymological explanation:

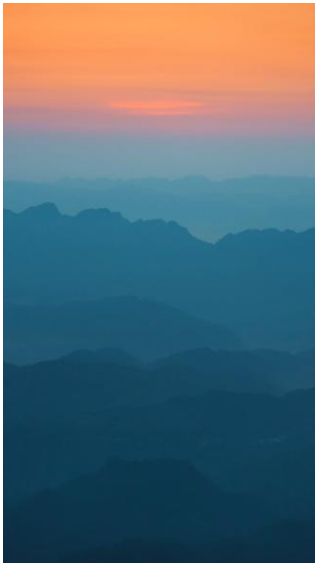
The word "seminar" comes from the German word Seminar, which was borrowed from the Latin seminārium, meaning "plant nursery" or "seed plot". This Latin word, in turn, comes from sēmen, the Latin word for "seed". The Latin seminārium was adopted by German universities to describe a group of students studying advanced topics with a professor.

Wow! It makes our enterprise feel important ... even poetic. That's the point: we are each a poet, and as lawyer-poets and (rising) teacher-poets, it's useful to hone our poetic skills. Even more so as we enter and give form to an Age of Awareness.

OK. Now you're thinking, "Who is a poet?" Let me invite you to think about that before we meet. If you'd like, spend a couple minutes reflecting on this and jotting down your thoughts. It can be the first topic we consider – kinda like clearing the desk before undertaking a big project.

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Videos:

#1 How to respond to societal collapse - Sarah Wilson (TED Talk 2025)	 A black and white illustration of a warrior in a loincloth and helmet, holding a sword aloft, fighting a multi-headed serpent. The serpent has several heads, each with a snake head. The illustration is framed by a decorative Greek key border.
#2	
#3	
#4 Longquan celadon (making Chinese ceramic bowl)	 A vertical image showing a sunset or sunrise over a range of mountains. The sky is a gradient of orange and yellow, and the mountains are silhouetted against the light.
#5	