



University of Cyprus  
Department of Law

The **Department of Law** at the **University of Cyprus** kindly invite you to a research seminar on

## **Legitimacy - An essentially contested concept**

**Wednesday, 14 October 2020 at 16:00-18:00**

by Dr. Christoforos Ioannidis

Chair: Dr. Konstantinos Tsinas

### **Abstract**

This thesis will perform a conceptual analysis of legitimacy and conclude that legitimacy is an essentially contested concept. While most literature pertaining to legitimacy assumes specific conceptions of legitimacy, this discussion performs a conceptual analysis of normative (as opposed to descriptive) legitimacy. I will investigate what is the content of legitimacy as a concept detached from its individual conceptions is, explore the nature of this concept (substantive or procedural?; claim right, liberty or moral power?), illustrate its relationship with neighbouring concepts such as authority, and conclude that it is an essentially contested concept, i.e. that there can be equally reasonable, evidenced and well-argued conceptions of this concept, without an independent argument solving the dispute between the competing conceptions. To properly understand the concept of legitimacy, it must be conceptualised under a trichotomy. At the top tier of the pyramid (Tier 1) lies legitimacy in its most abstract form (legitimacy in abstracto), which is a vague standard of properness. At the next level of the pyramid (Tier 2), legitimacy becomes more specific and relevant to legal material, because here it is attached to the four object types of legal form (what can be legitimate or illegitimate?), namely individual law, action, actor, and legal order. Analysis of the concept of legitimacy at Tier 2, concludes the truth value of the claims that normative legitimacy is incompatible with nihilism, that, following Applbaum, although it is conceptually possible to understand normative legitimacy as entirely procedural, it is best understood as at least partly substantive and, again relying on Applbaum, that legitimacy is neither a claim right nor liberty right as so far understood in the literature, but moral power. Then, the thesis will illustrate what essentially contested concepts are and proceed to its main claim, i.e. that legitimacy is an essentially contested concept. Finally, proceeding to Tier 3, (normative conceptions), I analyse a conception of legitimacy of international law, justice in the sense of protecting human rights, to manifest the nature of legitimacy as an essentially contested concept.

### **Speaker Bio**

Dr Christoforos Ioannidis obtained his Bachelor in Laws (LLB) at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and his Master of Laws (LLM) in International Law at The University of Edinburgh. His LLM thesis was on the right to die as a correlative of the right to life. After teaching at universities overseas, Dr Ioannidis obtained a Master of Arts in Philosophy at Arizona State University, where he completed an MA thesis on Kelsen and regime change. Dr Ioannidis obtained his PhD in Law at The Dickson Poon School of Law, King's College London, focusing on Legitimacy as an Essentially Contested Concept. He currently teaches Legal Ethics and Ancient Greek Moral Philosophy at the University of Cyprus and Corporate Law at Ctl Eurocollege. Dr Ioannidis' research interests lie in Philosophy of Law and General Theory of Law, International Law, Human Rights, Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy. Dr. Ioannidis is currently working on justice, sovereignty, and human rights vs. human rights narratives.

### **Practical Details**

**Language:** The seminar will be conducted in English.

**Format:** Online Webinar

**Registration:** Participation is open, but you must register at the following link for access to the

Zoom meeting: <https://ucy.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUpf-GrrjMqHdU0WwjPj27F2n8Myl4nYi51>