

IPSA RC09 2026 Interim Meeting on
Court Roles in the Current Authoritarian Moment
Call for Papers

The Comparative Judicial Studies Research Committee of the International Political Science Association (IPSA) is convening an international workshop on *Court Roles in the Current Authoritarian Moment*. The workshop will be held on 15-16 October 2026 at the Institute for Legal Research (*Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, IIJ*) at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (*Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, UNAM*).

Objectives

Courts play an indispensable role in democratic governance—and perhaps even more so when it's under threat. As democracies globally face democratic backsliding, strained governance capacity, social upheaval, and war, courts too face new challenges in seeking to preserve and advance the rule of law and democratic constitutionalism more broadly. This workshop convenes scholars from around the world to discuss current research on these pressing issues, aiming to foster comparative analysis and collaboration across regions and disciplines. Papers adopting diverse disciplinary perspectives on the study of judicial systems, as well as innovative methodological approaches, are especially encouraged.

Themes

We welcome proposals on a range of topics related to comparative judicial studies, including but not limited to:

- Courts and democratic erosion
- Courts in newly authoritarian contexts
- Rule of law and war
- Judicial independence in fragile states
- Asymmetries of power between public and private actors
- Backlash against women's and minority rights
- Courts and migration flows
- Rule of law in microstates
- Judicial reform strategies
- Concepts and methods of the rule of law
- LLMs in comparative judicial studies

Format

We invite proposals for individual papers and fully-formed panels on these or similar topics from scholars, policymakers, practitioners, jurists, and others working in varied disciplines and regions of the world. Fully-formed panels must include a panel chair and 3-4 paper presenters; the panel chair may also be a paper presenter but is not required to be. Individual papers will be organized into thematically similar panels and could potentially be added to fully-formed panels that are not at the maximum participation limit. The working language of the workshop will be English.

Location

The workshop will be held in-person on the campus of the [Institute for Legal Research](#) at UNAM in Mexico City, Mexico on **15-16 October 2026**. A limited hybrid option is available, with one online participant allowed per panel.

Participation

To participate, submit your [paper proposal](#) or [panel proposal](#) by **31 May 2026**. Each paper abstract submitted in the proposal should clearly convey the research goals, methods, findings, and relevance for the field of comparative judicial studies. Successful applicants will be notified by **15 June 2026** and must confirm their participation by **30 June 2026**.

For questions or more information, please contact ashleymoran@utexas.edu. We look forward to welcoming you to the Institute for Legal Research at UNAM!

Organizing Committee

[Javier Martín-Reyes](#), National Autonomous University of Mexico

[Ashley Moran](#), University of Texas at Austin

[Daniela Piana](#), University of Bologna

[Luigi Rullo](#), University of Naples Federico II

[Christopher Zorn](#), Pennsylvania State University

The organizing committee is composed of members of IPSA's [Comparative Judicial Studies Research Committee](#). The research committee promotes scholarly work on law, courts, and judicial processes from a comparative perspective. This includes the study of the judiciary, legal professions, legal doctrines, legal systems, and legal cultures, as well as how they relate to constitutions, executives, legislatures, political parties, federalism, political culture, and other sociopolitical dynamics. The ultimate aim is to enhance knowledge of the shared and unique features of judicial systems in countries around the world.

Co-Sponsoring Institutions

The [International Political Science Association](#) was founded in 1949 under the aegis of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Its mandate is to support the development of political science in all parts of the world, building academic networks linking East and West, North and South. Its aim is to create an inclusive and global political science community in which all can participate. It seeks to promote collaboration between scholars in emerging and established democracies and to support the academic freedoms needed for the social sciences to flourish.

The [Institute for Legal Research](#) at the National Autonomous University of Mexico contributes to the solution of social and political problems related to national and international legal issues. Its work focuses primarily on the study, teaching, dissemination, and understanding of legally relevant phenomena. To this end, it conducts comparative and interdisciplinary research, enabling the generation and dissemination of expert knowledge with academic excellence. The Institute is based at UNAM, which was founded in 1551 as the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico and is today the largest university in Mexico and Latin America.