

FALL 2025 LAW REVIEW SYMPOSIUM

THE UNIVERSITY AND DEMOCRACY

Friday, November 14th, 2025
Classroom 103

Co-Sponsored By:

SCHOLARS FOR A
NEW DEAL FOR HIGHER
EDUCATION



CENTER FOR THE DEFENSE OF
ACADEMIC FREEDOM



aaup

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. || Registration & Breakfast

9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. || Welcome

Opening remarks from [Angela Onwuachi-Willig](#), Dean, Ryan Roth Gallo Professor of Law (Boston University School of Law)

Welcome on behalf of the planning committee from [Jonathan Feingold](#), Professor of Law (Boston University School of Law)

9:30 a.m. - 10:50 a.m. || PLENARY #1: Who is the University & Understanding the Moment

Who are the people and what are the perspectives that comprise the modern American university; why are universities under attack; what are the consequences, and what might we envision for the future?



Moderator:
[Nina Farnia](#), Assistant Professor of Law (Albany Law School)



[Joanna Gonsalves](#), Psychology Professor (Salem State University)



[Amy Binder](#), SNF Agora Professor of Sociology (Johns Hopkins University)



[Aziz Rana](#), J. Donald Monan, S.J., University Professor of Law and Government (Boston College)



[Mike Gavin](#), President, Delta College, Founder, Education for All (Delta College / Education for All)



[Dylan Rodríguez](#), Distinguished Professor (University of California)

10:50 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. || Break

11:00 a.m. - 12:20 p.m. || PLENARY #2: The Political Economy of the Modern University

What is the relationship between the university and capital(ism); who funds the university; what does the university fund?



Moderator: [Susan Musarrat Akram](#), Clinical Professor and Director, BU International Human Rights Clinic (Boston University School of Law)



[Jonathan D. Glater](#), Professor of Law (University of California, Berkeley)



[Sofya Aptekar](#), Associate Professor of Urban Studies (CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies)



[Allison Tait](#), Dennis I. Belcher Professor of Law (Richmond Law)



[Ryan Cieslikowski](#), Lead Organizer (Class Action)



[Jason Wozniak](#) (West Chester University)



[Michel DeGraff](#), Professor (MIT)

12:20 p.m. - 1:10 p.m. || Lunch

1:15 p.m. - 2:45 p.m. || Concurrent Panels

See below for the full guide of concurrent sessions, topics, participants, and classroom assignments.

2:45 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. || Break

3:00 p.m. - 4:20 p.m. || PLENARY #3: Who Regulates the University (from the outside)

Who controls and shapes the university from the outside; a look at non-profit corporate governance, state and federal law, and accreditation.



Moderator: **Jeremiah Chin**, Assistant Professor of Law (University of Washington School of Law)



Sandy Grande, Professor, Political Science and Native American and Indigenous Studies (University of Connecticut)



Taifha Natalee Alexander, Lecturer in Law (USC Gould School of Law)



Maryam Jamshidi, Associate Professor of Law (University of Colorado Law School)



Dana Brakman Reiser, Centennial Professor of Law (Brooklyn Law School)



Brian Soucek, Martin Luther King Jr. Professor of Law (UC Davis School of Law)



Steven A. Dean, Professor of Law (Boston University School of Law)

4:20 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. || Break

4:30 p.m. - 5:50 p.m. || PLENARY #4: Who Governs the University (from the inside)

Who controls and shapes the university from the inside; a look at boards of trustees, shared governance, labor, and institutional governance and policymaking.



Moderator: [Isaac Kamola](#),
Director, Center for the Defense
of Academic Freedom (AAUP)
(Trinity College)



[Charlie Eaton](#), Associate Professor
of Sociology (University of
California, Merced)



[Tracy Berger](#), Operations
Director (Higher Education
Labor United (HELU))



[Timothy Kaufman-Osborn](#), Baker
Ferguson Professor of Politics
Emeritus (Whitman College)



[Carliss Chatman](#), Professor of
Law (SMU Dedman School of
Law)



[Jared Anthony Loggins](#),
Assistant Professor of Black
Studies and Political Science
(Amherst College)



[Andrew J. Douglas](#), Professor of
Political Science (Morehouse
College)

5:50 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. || Conclusion

Closing remarks from [Aryssa Harris](#), JD/PhD Candidate, Editor-in-Chief Boston University Law Review (Boston University School of Law) and [Colin Fennelly](#), Senior Managing Editor Boston University Law Review (Boston University School of Law)

6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m. || Reception

CONCURRENT SESSIONS INFORMATION GUIDE

As a reminder, all concurrent sessions will take place after lunch from 1:15pm-2:45pm. Room assignments are listed.

Session 1: Universities, the Empire, and Academic Freedom Room 209

This panel reexamines the assumption that American universities safeguard free expression, arguing that they have historically curtailed dissent in alignment with U.S. geopolitical priorities. Recent suppression of pro-Palestine advocacy—through expulsions, disciplinary sanctions, and the weaponization of antisemitism charges—demonstrates institutions’ active role in reinforcing the U.S.-Israel alliance. This pattern is consistent with earlier moments: Cold War loyalty oaths, McCarthy-era dismissals, sanctions on anti-war and anti-apartheid activists, and more recent initiatives targeting scholars of Chinese descent. Across these episodes, First Amendment protections have proven malleable when confronted with the imperative of sustaining U.S. imperial legitimacy. The panel will analyze this continuity and explore strategies for cultivating scholarly networks that preserve academic freedom in the face of imperial constraint.



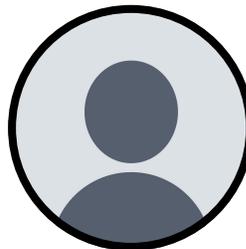
Leo Yu, Assistant Professor of Law (University of Massachusetts Law School)



Danya Reda, Assistant Professor of Law (Wayne State University)



Sahar Aziz, Distinguished Professor of Law (Rutgers University Law School)



Faisal Chaudry

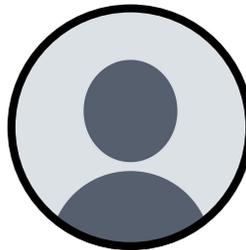
Session 2: Leveraging History to Respond to Higher Education's Obligation to Promote American Democracy

Room 212

The panel attempts to analyze the mission of universities as guardians of democracy and defenders of truth through the lens of the history of formal higher education, generally, and formal legal education, specifically. By engaging with history and historicity, the panel seeks to develop a framework from which to analyze the current impact of the coordinated actions by government officials and political organizations to challenge the foundational values promoted by institutions of higher education—democratic governance and the rule of law. In this moment, too many institutions having responsibilities to uphold democratic ideals have pre-complied or capitulated to actors committed to the gradual erosion of democratic norms. Through narratives and storytelling, examination of historical events illustrating oppression and domination and the resistance by ordinary people and organizations to these events, and memory about the promise and purpose of academic freedom within higher education, the panel seeks to encourage universities to renew their commitment to actively promote democratic ideals, retake their place as leaders of intellectual inquiry, and reembrace their role as convenors of experimentation with American democracy.



Danielle M. Conway, Dean and Donald J. Farage Professor of Law (Penn State Dickinson Law and School of International Affairs)



Darren Hutchinson



Martha S. Jones, Society of Black Alumni Presidential Professor, Professor of History, and Professor of the SNF Agora Institution; Director, Hard Histories at Hopkins. The Johns Hopkins University

Session 3: Reclaiming the Mission of Higher Education: Advancing Equity and Institutional Accountability in Social Work Education

Room 418

Given the ongoing attacks on the University as a democratic center of higher learnings, engaging in resistance to authoritative policies and practice is of utmost importance. This panel highlights a five-year initiative at BU School of Social Work that seeks to align university governance, curriculum, and culture with democratic values, equity, and justice focused practice. Panelists will share lessons from required anti-racism and structural oppression training, inclusive pedagogical supports, curriculum revisions, and community-driven policy changes. Through an honest reflection on successes, challenges, and ongoing questions, the panel will explore how academic institutions can resist entrenched inequities and move toward more participatory, justice-oriented models of higher education.



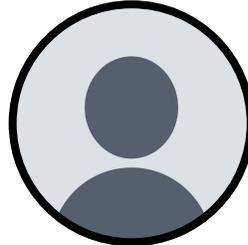
Lyndsey D. McMahan, Assistant Dean, Teaching and Innovation (Boston University School of Social Work)



Marcus Jarrett Shaw, Equity and Inclusion Student Researcher (BUSSW Equity and Inclusion Committee)



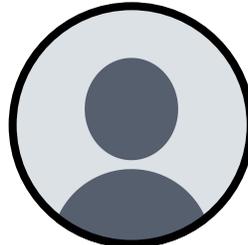
Darren Rosenblum, Professor (St. John's University)



Lily Winston Grob, Equity and Inclusion Research Assistant; Clinical MSW Student (BUSSW Equity and Inclusion Committee)



Dawn Belkin Martinez, Clinical Professor, Associate Dean of Equity and Inclusion, (Boston University School of Social Work)



Ava Thornton, Equity and Inclusion Research Assistant (BUSSW Equity and Inclusion Committee)



Layla Khayr, PhD, LICSW (Boston University School of Social Work)

Session 4: Resisting Retrenchment: Reimagining Higher Education's Democratic Role

Room 417

Three leading diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practitioners with deep backgrounds in higher education, law, and government — and active current roles protecting institutions of democracy and civil society against retrenchment — discuss the current backlash against DEI in higher education through the lens of democratic integrity and institutional purpose, and the path forward.



Pamela Coukos, CEO & Co-Founder (Working IDEAL)



Ahmmad Brown, Professor of the Practice (Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life, Tufts University), Principal Advisor (Working IDEAL)



Cyrus Mehri, Founding Partner (Mehri & Skalet), Co-Founder (Working IDEAL)

Session 5: Sites of Resistance and New Horizons for Higher Ed

Room 204

This concurrent session will explore sites of resistance and new horizons for higher education. Participants will approach these themes with varied focuses spanning constitutional law, labor law, corporate law, human rights law and beyond.



William (Chip) Carter, Professor of Law and Judge J. Quint Salmon & Anne Salmon Endowed Chair (University of Pittsburgh)



Corinne Blalock, Academic Fellow (Harvard Law School)



Yiran Zhang, Assistant Professor of Labor and Employment Law (Cornell University ILR School)



Sahiba Gil, Deputy Legal Director (Global Labor Justice)



Lolita Buckner Innis, Dean, (University of Colorado Law School)



Elizabeth King, Associate Professor (Boston University School of Law)

Session 6: Higher Education's Internal Vulnerabilities & External Threats

Room 203

This concurrent session will explore the vulnerabilities and threats higher education faces from outside and within. Specific topics of inquiry will range from the university's non-profit status, scholarly conventions within academic disciplines, and higher education's failure to meaningfully reckon with white supremacy and other vestiges of American apartheid.



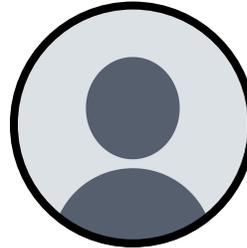
[Shilpa Jindia](#), Freelancer



[Spencer Piston](#), Associate Professor, Department of Political Science (Boston University)



[Zamir Ben-Dan](#), Associate Professor of Law (Temple University Beasley School of Law)



[Matthew Charity](#)



[Randle B. Pollard](#), Assistant Professor of Law (Albany Law School)



[Farah Adeed](#) (Boston University)

Session 7: Policing the University

Room 101

This concurrent session will interrogate questions and dynamics that coalesce around the theme of “policing the university.” Broadly construed, this will include discussion on the policing of speech and protest, the policing of curriculum and research, and policing who is a member of the university and more.



Sameer M. Ashar, Clinical Professor of Law (University of California, Irvine School of Law)



Amanda Shanor, Associate Professor & Wolpow Family Faculty Scholar (University of Pennsylvania)



Maryam Ahranjani, Professor of Law (UNLV Boyd Law)



Vanessa Miller, Assistant Professor of Law (FIU College of Law)



Sheldon A. Evans, Professor of Law (Washington University in St. Louis School of Law)



Sunita Patel, Professor of Law (UCLA School of Law)

Session 8: Competing Conceptions of the University

Room 416

The present moment continues to surface an array of converging and competing conceptions of the modern American university and its history, function, purpose, governance structure and animating values. Participants will surface and place into conversation some of those sites of debate and model how we might navigate these competing conceptions of the university and what they mean for the future of higher education and multiracial democracy in the United States.



Aaron Saiger, Albert A. Walsh
Chair in Real Estate, Land Use,
and Property Law, and Professor
of Law (Fordham University
School of Law)



Nomi Stolzenberg, Nathan and
Lilly Shapell Chair in Law (USC
Gould Law School)



Paul Horwitz, Gordon Rosen
Professor (University of Alabama
School of Law)



Michael Banerjee, PhD
Candidate (UC Berkeley Law)



Jennifer Hendricks, Professor
(University of Colorado Law
School)



Irene Ten Cate, Associate
Professor of Legal Writing
(Brooklyn Law School)