

Expressive Claims about Symbolic Establishment

BY **Associate Professor Farrah Ahmed**
The University of Melbourne

MONDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2019
12.30PM TO 2.00PM

FEDERAL CONFERENCE ROOM, FEDERAL BUILDING, NUS LAW (BUKIT TIMAH CAMPUS)

ABSTRACT

Is religious establishment wrong when it is 'merely symbolic'? 'Symbolic establishment' refers to arrangements where a national church or religion has symbolic or ceremonial privileges – e.g. religious symbols on the national flag or prayer in Parliament. But, everyone has religious freedom, there is no discrimination based on religion and the national church receives no state funding. The United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Denmark and the other Nordic countries might be thought of as having elements of 'symbolic establishment'.

Symbolic establishment is widely thought – by philosophers, legal scholars and judges - to be wrong because of *what it expresses*. But, the typical arguments about what establishment (and indeed other legal and political arrangements) express are obscure. How are we to understand what a law privileging a church or religion expresses? To put it differently, how are we to know when expressive claims about symbolic establishment are true? This seminar will discuss the argument that we can only know if such expressive claims are true by disambiguating them and recognizing the three distinct senses in which symbolic establishment is said to be expressive.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Dr Farrah Ahmed is an Associate Professor at Melbourne Law School. Before this, she was a Lecturer in Law at the Queen's College, University of Oxford. Her research spans public law, legal theory and family law. Her recent work on constitutional statutes, constitutional conventions, religious freedom, the doctrine of legitimate expectations, the duty to give reasons and social rights adjudication has been published in the *Cambridge Law Journal*, the *Modern Law Review*, the *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, the *International Journal of Constitutional Law* and *Public Law*. Her book, *Religious Freedom under the Personal Law System*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2016.

Dr Ahmed is currently working on projects on judicial review of administrative action, secularism, religious dispute resolution, and arbitrariness in public law. She is a founding editor of the *Indian Law Review* and the *Admin Law Blog*. She also serves as Associate Director (India) of the Asian Law Centre, Melbourne Law School.

Participation is by Invitation Only

Registration commences at 12.15pm. Light refreshments will be served.

For more information, please contact Ms Alexandria Chan (E) rescle@nus.edu.sg