

DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

LEGAL ALIENATION: EXPLAINING THE ABSENCE OF CIVIL CLAIMS

Professor David M. Engel

SUNY Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus
School of Law, State University of New York at Buffalo

Chairperson: Professor Lynette J. Chua, Vice Dean (Research), NUS Law

WEDNESDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2025

5.30 PM to 7.00 PM

NUS LAW (BUKIT TIMAH CAMPUS), WEE CHONG JIN MOOT COURT

SYNOPSIS

Lawyers handle countless injury claims, both large and small, and the media eagerly report tort cases that range from serious to frivolous and even absurd. Yet research reveals that injury victims very rarely choose to pursue lawsuits. Even in countries like the United States that are renowned for their litigiousness, only a tiny fraction of potential injury cases enter the legal system and the vast majority of losses are simply absorbed by the victims without ever contacting or attempting to settle with their injurers. This lecture will offer an explanation for a surprising phenomenon – the absence of legal claims. It will illustrate the theme of “legal alienation” with data from two different settings: the United States and Thailand. Although these two countries differ in very many ways, research on injury victims by David M. Engel and Jaruwat Engel reveals some unexpected commonalities: a distaste for the civil justice system, a reluctance to assert rights, and a tendency for injury victims to blame themselves rather than hold another person or entity responsible for their loss.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



David M. Engel studies law and society in the United States and in other countries, particularly Thailand, where he has lived, worked and taught for many years. A former President of the Law & Society Association, Engel has received the LSA's Harry S. Kalven Prize for “Outstanding Scholarship in Law and Society” and its Legacy Award for “Significant Contributions and Sustained Commitment.” Engel is the recipient of an honorary doctorate of laws from Chiang Mai University, presented in 2011 by Crown Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. He currently serves as co-director of TRIALS (Training Initiative for Law and Society

Scholars), a workshops series based at the National University of Singapore, funded by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation. He is also a founding co-editor of the *Asian Journal of Law and Society* (Cambridge University Press).

Engel has published numerous books and articles about Asian and American legal cultures as well as the effects of American civil rights legislation on men and women with disabilities. *The Myth of the Litigious Society: Why We Don't Sue* (University of Chicago Press 2016), explains why, contrary to conventional wisdom, most American injury victims never lodge a claim against their injurers. *The Asian Law and Society Reader*, (Cambridge University Press 2023, co-authored with Lynette Chua and Sida Liu) is the first collection of law and society scholarship based on research conducted in twenty different Asian countries, with extensive commentary by the editors. Together with co-author Jaruwat Engel, he has also published a study of injuries, law, and custom in Thailand entitled *Tort, Custom, and Karma: Globalization and Legal Consciousness in Thailand* (Stanford University Press 2010).

PROGRAMME

5.00PM: Registration
5.30PM: Lecture by Professor David M. Engel
6.30PM: Q&A Session with Professor David M. Engel and Jaruwat Engel
7.00PM: Dinner Reception

REGISTRATION

There is no registration fee for this lecture. Visit <https://bit.ly/40GbH52> or scan the QR Code to register

Closing Date: 1 February 2025, 5.00PM

Contact: law.events@nus.edu.sg



CPD POINTS



Public CPD Point: 1
Practice Area: Contemporary Issues in Legal Practice
Training Level: Foundation

Participants who wish to obtain CPD Points are reminded that they must comply strictly with the Attendance Policy set out in the CPD Guidelines. For this activity, this includes signing in on arrival and signing out at the conclusion of the activity in the manner required by the organiser, and not being absent from the entire activity for more than 15 minutes. Participants who do not comply with the Attendance Policy will not be able to obtain CPD Points for attending the activity. Please refer to <http://www.silecpdcentre.sg> for more information.