

VISITING SAT PAL KHATTAR PROFESSORIAL LECTURE

THE CORPORATION IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

Professor Julian Arato

Professor of Law, University of Michigan

Chairperson: Professor Tan Cheng Han, S.C.
Chief Strategy Officer, NUS Law

WEDNESDAY, 11 MARCH 2026

5.30 PM - 7.00 PM

YALE-NUS COLLEGE HALL, UNIVERSITY TOWN (KENT RIDGE CAMPUS)

SYNOPSIS

Business corporations have long posed a problem for public international law. On the one hand, the conventional wisdom is that classical international law does not recognize corporations as international legal persons. States are the paradigmatic subjects of international law, joined in the 20th century by independent international organizations. But while transnational businesses and cross-border business activities have long been recognized as objects of international legal regulation, companies are not typically understood as subjects of international law in their own right.

On the other hand, a range of international legal regimes have already endowed private corporations with all of the formal hallmarks of international legal personality: the capacity to bear international legal rights and duties (*vis-à-vis* states); the capacity to bring international legal claims (against states); and even the capacity to author rules of international law (by agreement with states).

This lecture makes the case that private corporations are already international legal persons. However, unlike states and international organizations, the international legal status of corporations is *ad hoc* rather than categorical—addressed irregularly and inconsistently across different treaty-based regimes, including human rights treaties and international investment agreements.

As a result, corporations have long been able to enjoy the powers and privileges of international legal personality while completely avoiding its associated liabilities. Perhaps the time has come to bring them more fully into the system.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Julian Arato is a Professor of Law at the University of Michigan. His scholarly expertise spans the areas of public international law, international trade, international investment law and arbitration, contracts, and corporations.

Professor Arato is an author of *International Law: Cases and Materials*, 8th ed. (2024) (with Damrosch and Murphy). He is also an author of *International Trade Law Through the Cases* (2025 edn) (with Weiler, Cho, and Claussen). His article "The Private Law Critique of International Investment Law" won the 2019 Francis Deák Prize for best article by a younger author published in the *American Journal of International Law*, as well as the inaugural ICCA—Guillermo Aguilar-Alvarez Memorial Prize.

Professor Arato is a member of the board of editors of the *American Journal of International Law*, a member of the executive board of the *European Journal of International Law*, and an editor of the *EJIL:Talk!* blog (www.ejiltalk.org/).

PROGRAMME

5.00pm: Registration
5.30pm: Lecture by Professor Julian Arato
6.30pm: Q&A Session
7.00pm: Dinner Reception

REGISTRATION

There is no registration fee for this lecture. Visit <https://bit.ly/48jdizQ> or Scan the QR Code to register.

Closing Date: 4 March 2026, 5.00PM
Contact: law.events@nus.edu.sg



CPD POINTS



Public CPD Point: 1
Practice Area: Corporate & Commercial Law
Training Level: Foundation

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