



Conference on Remaking the UK Constitution: Politics and Process

The Bonavero Institute of Human Rights at the University of Oxford, The Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law and The Constitution Unit at University College London are jointly hosting a conference “Remaking the UK Constitution”, scheduled to take place at the Bonavero Institute on **22nd and 23rd February 2019**.

Brexit has generated a widespread recognition on all sides of the debate that the UK is in the midst of one of the greatest constitutional upheavals in its history. Consequently, there is growing interest across and outside the political parties in revisiting some fundamental aspects of the UK constitution.

Remaking the UK Constitution is a conference about *how* to remake the UK constitution in a democratically legitimate manner. It will focus on constitutional processes which would be capable of attracting broad support: a prerequisite of lasting constitutional design. Our hope is that this inclusive discussion of *how* the constitution could be remade will facilitate further engagement with *whether* it should be and *what* constitutional changes might be necessary and desirable (questions that should be decided by the process itself). A draft programme of the conference is attached.

The conference will bring together senior politicians, leading scholars, legal practitioners, policy makers, civil servants, and leading journalists to create an accessible and influential set of debates and exchanges. It will be video recorded to ensure that it becomes a public event that is informed by arguments and information of the highest intellectual quality.

The discussions in the conference will be distilled into a public report – *Remaking the UK Constitution* – to be co-published by Bonavero, Bingham and the Constitution Unit. The report would be published a short time after the conference with a view to influencing public debate. Stuart White and Anthony Barnett will edit a subsequent edited collection of the papers presented.

We are thus writing to invite you to attend the conference, with further details attached below. Please RSVP at <https://goo.gl/forms/LsayHGhKVxJegoF22> at the earliest. Additionally, funding for travel and accommodation is available for doctoral students (MPhil or DPhil) working in the fields of constitutional reform or implications of Brexit or in fields closely related to the conference. Students must be based outside Oxford in order to be eligible. In order to be considered for funding, please fill in [this form](#).

Best wishes,

Kate O'Regan
Director
Bonavero Institute of Human Rights

Alan Renwick
Deputy Director
UCL Constitution Unit

Murray Hunt
Director
Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law



PROGRAMME & LIST OF SPEAKERS

Friday 22nd February 2018

10.30am: Registration and coffee

11:00am - 12:30pm Session 1: Introductory Framing Session

The introductory session will set the scene in relation to constitution-making in the UK and provide a survey of relevant concepts and comparative political experience relating to constitution-making. There will be three presentations in the first session, each lasting between 20 minutes and to be followed by 30 minutes of questions/comments from the floor. The aim of this session would be to equip the audience with the relevant conceptual and political building blocks for participating meaningfully in the conference.

The first lecture will consider where we are constitutionally by outlining recent constitutional changes in the UK and why the UK might want to go down the path of re-making its constitution in the first place. It will engage with various discussions and attempts to advocate a written constitution for the UK.

The second lecture will explore some of the key concepts relevant to constitution writing: notably deliberative democracy and civic republicanism which are also highly relevant to current discussions.

The third lecture will explore some of the comparative political experience with a view to contextualising the British experience. It will address how deliberative democratic theory has led to the establishment of forms of “mini-publics” including citizens’ assemblies, but also consider other forms of constitution making.

Chair: Professor Kate O’Regan, director of the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights and judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa (1994 - 2009).

Speakers:

1. **Professor Robert Hazell**, founder of the Constitution Unit at UCL, Professor of Government and the Constitution in UCL’s School of Public Policy.
2. **Associate Professor Stuart White**, Fellow in Politics at Jesus College, Oxford. Research areas: philosophical and institutional issues in the relationship between democracy, property and citizenship.
3. **Dr Alan Renwick**, The Constitution Unit, University College London

1pm – 2pm Lunch

2:00pm – 4:00pm: Session 2: Brexit and the UK Constitution

This panel will explore the contemporary opportunities for building a broad based political consensus about the need for a constitutional remaking process and what that process should be. Panellists will address the prospects of building such consensus, the current opportunities for remaking the Constitution and what steps might be required to start the process.

Chair: Lord David Anderson QC (Brick Court Chambers), former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, cross-bench “People’s Peer”.

Panellists:

1. **Rt Hon Gisela Stuart**, Constitutional Reform Group Steering Committee member and Chair of Wilton Park
2. **Frances Foley**, Compass
3. **Professor Vernon Bogdanor**, Professor of Government, King's College London. Books include ‘Beyond Brexit: Towards a British Constitution’.
4. **Dr Elliot Bulmer**, Senior Programme Officer, Constitution Building Programme of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance; specialises in institutional design, particularly in Westminster-derived contexts.

4pm - 4.30pm Tea

4.30 pm – 6.00 pm: Session 3: Thinking about constitution-making in the four constituent countries of the United Kingdom

This session will introduce the current debates and concerns relevant to each of the four countries that make up the United Kingdom, and how those concerns might need to be considered in designing a process for constitution-making in the United Kingdom. Each speaker will speak for twenty minutes, and will be followed by questions for about 40 minutes.

Chair: TBA

Panellists:

1. *Wales:* **Professor Laura McAllister**, Professor at the Wales Governance Centre, Cardiff University. Research areas: devolution and constitutional matters in Wales.
2. *England:* **Sunder Katwala**, Director, British Future, an independent, non-partisan thinktank engaging people’s hopes and fears about integration and migration, opportunity and identity, so that we share a confident and welcoming Britain, inclusive and fair to all.
3. *Northern Ireland:* **Dr Robin Wilson**, openDemocracy, general editor of Social Europe and an expert adviser to the Council of Europe on intercultural integration and author of *Meeting the Challenge of Cultural Diversity in Europe: Moving Beyond the Crisis* (Edward Elgar, 2018).
4. *Scotland:* **Lesley Riddoch**, Scottish journalist, author, campaigner and Director of the policy group Nordic Horizons.

4.00 pm – 4.30 pm Tea

6.00 pm – 6.30pm Drinks Reception

6.30pm Dinner

9.00 pm After dinner speaker: Anthony Barnett, Co-Founder, openDemocracy, on ‘The comic tragedy of reform in Britain’.

Saturday 23rd February

9.00 am – 10.30 am Session 4: The flexibility of a new constitution

This session will explore the different ways in which constitutions may be amended, and what entrenchment of constitutions means for constitution-making. e.g referendums, super majorities, and constitutional review processes. Each speaker will speak for 15 minutes followed by a discussion.

Chair: Professor Jeff King, Professor of Law at the Faculty of Laws, University College London, teaches public law and constitutional theory.

Panellists:

1. **Professor Dr Matthias Mahlmann**, Chair of Philosophy and Theory of Law, Legal Sociology, and International Public Law, University of Zurich. Research areas: Comparative Constitutional Law, International Law, Legal philosophy, Law and Society.
2. **Dr Silvia Suteu**, UCL Faculty of Laws, University College London
3. **Professor Richard Bellamy**, Professor, University College London; Director of the Max Weber Programme, European University Institute
4. **Professor Dr Maartje de Visser**, Singapore Management University
5. **Professor Peter C. Oliver**, Full Professor and Vice Dean Research, Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa. Works in the field of constitutional law, history and theory -- federalism, Commonwealth, sovereignty, constitutional amendment.

10.30am - 11.00 am Tea

11.00am –12. 30am: Session 5: Citizens’ Assemblies and other forms of Mini-Publics

This session will discuss contemporary examples of citizens’ assemblies and other forms of mini-publics. It will focus on the lessons we can learn from particular national experiences for the UK constitution making process. There will be four panellists each speaking for fifteen minutes followed by discussion.

Chair: Adam Ramsay, Co-Editor, openDemocracy

Panellists:

1. **Professor David Farrell**, MRIA, Head of School of Politics and International Relations, University College Dublin. Former research director of the Irish Constitutional Convention (2012-14) and research leader of the Irish Citizens' Assembly (2016-18).
2. **Professor Graham Smith**, Centre for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster. Works on democratic theory and practice, with a particular specialism in randomly-selected mini-publics.
3. **Dr Arianna Giovannini**, Senior Lecturer in Local Politics and Deputy Director of the Local Governance Research Centre at the Department of Politics and Public Policy, De Montfort University. Research areas: territorial and local politics, governance rescaling, devolution and citizens' engagement in the UK and in comparative perspective.
4. **Alexandra Runswick**, Director, Unlock Democracy - an organisation which campaigns for a written constitution for the UK, created by a citizen-led constitutional convention.

12.30 – 1.30 Lunch

1.30 pm – 3.00 pm Session 6: Constitutional Conventions

This session will discuss contemporary examples of constitutional conventions and what we can learn from them in the UK constitution making process. There will be five panellists each speaking for 10 minutes followed by discussion.

Chair: Dr Udit Bhatia, Junior Research Fellow, Jesus College and academic affiliate, Bonaverro Institute of Human Rights, University of Oxford. Research areas: democratic theory, social epistemology, and constitutional law.

Panellists:

1. **Professor Eirikur Bergmann**, Professor of Politics, Bifrost University, Iceland. Writes mainly on Nationalism, Populism, European Integration, Icelandic Politics and on Participatory Democracy, author of three novels published in Icelandic and member of the Icelandic Constitutional Council in 2011.
2. **Dr Hélène Landemore**, Department of Political Science, Yale University
3. **Professor Jeff King**, Professor of Law at the Faculty of Laws, University College London, teaches public law and constitutional theory.
4. **Professor Dr Jon Elster**, Robert K. Merton Professor of Social Science, Columbia University, Professeur honoraire, Collège de France, currently working on a comparison between the Federal Convention (1787) and the first French constituent assembly (1789-91)
5. **Professor Roberto Gargarella**, Professor of Political Philosophy and Constitutional Theory, Universidad de Buenos Aires/ Di Tella. Senior Researcher at CONICET

3.30 pm – 4 pm closing remarks