

HISTORY RESEARCH SEMINAR

Andreas Takis

(Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

‘Transplanted Traditions: Trusts and Authority in Australia’s Migrant Communities’

Friday, 19 September 2025, 11.15 am – 12.30 pm ACST
Social Sciences South 149 (SSS 149), Bedford Park and online
via Microsoft Teams [join by entering meeting ID: 478 832
857 416 6 and passcode: Pm6gR7fE]

Abstract

This seminar explores how migrant communities in Australia embed older and often non-Western legal traditions—especially those stemming from Byzantine canon law and Ottoman waqf practice—into the institutional forms provided by the Anglo-Australian common law system. At the heart of this dynamic is the charitable trust, a legal device that has proven remarkably flexible in accommodating religious, cultural, and social practices not native to liberal, individualist legal imaginaries. Far from being inert legal transplants, these adaptations are sites of normative negotiation, where communal memory, authority, and identity are reshaped in diasporic conditions. While the common law trust is formally neutral, its flexibility enables the transplantation of hierarchical, patriarchal structures under the guise of charitable purpose. Drawing from legal anthropology and postcolonial theory, Andreas Takis will try to situate the trust not merely as a tool of economic administration but as a medium of cultural survival and political organization. He examines how migrant communities—particularly Greek Orthodox and Islamic—revive institutional logics rooted in empire, hierarchy, and sacral authority under the auspices of liberal legal neutrality. These structures often reinforce vertical power relations, such as the paternalism of religious elites, while offering limited pathways for internal contestation or participatory reform. Finally, the paper interrogates whether such embedded legacies serve the democratic aspirations of pluralist societies or instead perpetuate forms of symbolic and institutional subordination within migrant life. The paper calls for a critical legal framework—grounded in multicultural accommodation and normative openness—that neither erases tradition nor exempts it from accountability. The Australian state’s role, then, is not to sever law from culture, but to ensure that traditions embedded in legal form remain open to voice, dissent, and transformation in the name of democratic coexistence.



Andreas Takis is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Methodology of Law at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. His academic work focuses on legal philosophy, political theory, human rights, and migration law. He has authored numerous peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, as well as several monographs, including *Law’s Moral Indifference* (Polis, 2006; revised English edition forthcoming from Hart Publishing, 2025), *On Artistic Freedom* (Savalas, 2009), and *Democracy: Beyond Liberalism* (Polis, 2024). He co-translated the Greek edition of John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* and has served as a reviewer for *Jurisprudence: An International Journal of Legal and Political Thought*. Takis has held key public positions in Greece, including Deputy Ombudsman for Human Rights (2003-2009), Secretary General for Migration Policy (2010-2012), and Chair of the Board of the Metropolitan Organization of Museums of Visual Arts of Thessaloniki (MOMus, 2015-2022). From 2022 to 2025, he served as President of the Hellenic League for Human Rights. He is a frequent speaker at academic and public forums on law, democracy, and civil liberties.

Semester Break: 22 September – 3 October

After break (Friday, 10 Oct): Kirsten McGavin (*Flinders University*), ‘Pacific History and Speculative Fiction’.