

## The “global south” and liberal values in the historiography of human rights

### Call for Papers

As a fundamental component of the liberal script, human rights represent a favoured terrain of academic inquiry across the social sciences. Over the last few years, in particular, the subject's historiography has become increasingly contested. This historiographical trend offers fertile ground for examining the place of liberal values in twentieth-century contestations over human rights. For this purpose, we are organising a workshop to be held in Berlin on 4-5 May 2023. The workshop is intended as a first step towards a joint publication, which will take the form of an edited volume with a leading university press or a special issue in an academic journal.

Accordingly, we invite original abstracts touching on either of (or both) these two interrelated issues.

1. What have been the contributions of states and non-state actors in and of the “global south” to the development of international human rights? Specifically, to what extent did those contributions embrace (and perhaps affect the content of) liberal values, including the rule of law, democracy, and the protection of individual entitlements?
2. What kinds of contestations to human rights norms and practice emerged from the “global south” over the twentieth century? Were those contestations informed by normative scripts antithetical to liberalism, and do any alternative visions of human rights form part of those scripts? Does any of these challenges resonate in contemporary disputes, for example concerning the relationship between human rights and material inequality, global health, or the environment?

By focusing on the relevance and ambiguity of liberal values, the project aims to investigate whether international debates on human rights were motivated by competing normative scripts, leading to potentially different norms and institutions than the ones that crystallised in existing international instruments. We are especially interested in empirical studies grounded in hitherto unexplored archives. We also welcome contributions relating the above-mentioned issues to questions of historiographical method as they have emerged in subfields like the digital humanities, practice theory, and network analysis.

We invite scholars working in the social sciences – including but not limited to historians, political scientists, IR and legal scholars – to **submit a 300/500-word abstract and a short bio as a single file by 6 January 2023 to Prof. Tobias Berger ([tobias.berger@fu-berlin.de](mailto:tobias.berger@fu-berlin.de))**. Please contact Prof. Berger for any queries about the call. Successful applicants will be informed by 31 January 2023. Travel and accommodation costs for attending the workshop will be covered by the organisation.

The project is part of the Cluster of Excellence “Contestations of the Liberal Script” (SCRIPTS) and is directed by Tobias Berger (Freie Universität Berlin), Anna Holzscheiter (Technische Universität Dresden), and Thomas Risse (Freie Universität Berlin).