

Call for Papers – MANCEPT Workshops 2021

Political Theory of the Business Corporation

Conveners:

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As the power of large business corporations like Google, Walmart, and Shell increasingly appears to threaten liberal democracy, political theorists have begun to theorize the role of the business firm in democratic societies. This recent work reflects a wide range of questions and approaches. For example, Elizabeth Anderson (2017) has conceptualized business corporations as “private governments” exercising unreasonable political power. David Ciepley (2013) argues that business corporations are franchise governments that cannot be engendered through contract, but only through acts of concession by the state. Abraham Singer (2019) argues that the firm exists because of market inefficiencies, hence political theorists must take the efficiency-functions of the firm seriously.

Despite the burgeoning literature in the political theory of the business corporation, many important questions remain to be addressed. For example, the social ontology of the firm is contested. Is it a political creation for the state to achieve certain public purposes? Or should it be understood as a “nexus of contracts” between private individuals? What kinds of power do corporations exercise, and can philosophical theories of power best account for them? What, if anything, legitimates their exercise? How does the corporation fit into existing political theories, such as liberalism, republicanism, socialism and libertarianism? What constitutes just and unjust, democratic and undemocratic corporate governance structures? Should we have workplace democracy? Do corporations have obligations to protect human rights? Given that multinational corporations are global political actors, how should we theorize, and regulate, their specific form of power?

This workshop aims to facilitate dialogue among political theorists working on business corporations. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Philosophical theories of power and their applications to the business corporation.
- Theories of legitimacy, democracy and justice, and their implications for the business corporation.
- The business corporation in political theories, such as liberalism, republicanism, socialism and libertarianism.
- The social ontology of the business corporation.

- Corporate governance, workplace democracy, and workplace republicanism.
- Globalization, multinational corporations, and global justice.
- Human rights and business corporations.

We strongly encourage contributions addressing hitherto neglected topics, or that address established interpretations and arguments from a different angle.

Abstracts should be 500-1000 words, prepared for blind review. Please send your abstract and contact details to corpoerc@gmail.com, by **7th May, 2021**. Decision will be made by **24th May**, allowing graduate students who have been accepted to apply to the organizers for a bursary (the deadline for which is **15th June**).

Upon acceptance, we will ask all speakers to pre-circulate their papers amongst participants two weeks before the workshop (**24th August, 2021**). We will allocate around 60 minutes to each paper, with presentations of 15 minutes and 45 minutes of Q&A.

Registration for the conference opens in May. All participants must register to attend. This year's fees are:

Academics: £45

Graduate students, retirees, and unaffiliated attendees: £20

Non-speaker/non-presenting attendees: £15

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact Chi Kwok (c.kwok@uu.nl) or Tully Rector (t.f.rector@uu.nl).

Timeline:

Deadline for abstracts: 7th May, 2021

Notification of acceptance: 24th May, 2021

Deadline for bursary applications: 15th June, 2021

Notification of bursary application results: 22nd June, 2021

For more information, please visit <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/mancept/mancept-workshops/>