

Research

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN | FACULTY OF LAW

2025-2026



About our research

Research at the UCT Faculty of Law is driven by a simple but important question: how can law respond to the realities of a changing society?

Our academics, researchers and postgraduate students investigate the law as it exists, how it operates in practice, where it succeeds, and where it falls short. Their work explores some of the most pressing legal, social, economic, technological and environmental questions facing South Africa, Africa and the wider world.

From constitutional democracy and human rights to artificial intelligence, climate change, international trade, land rights and access to justice, research at UCT Law is characterised by intellectual curiosity, methodological rigour, critical engagement, and a commitment to social impact.

Research that engages with our context | UCT Law



RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

- 14 specialist research units and centres
- 2 South African Research Chairs (SARChI) - in Intellectual Property and in Mineral & Energy Resource Law
- Approximately 22 NRF-rated researchers
- Research spanning public, private and commercial law
- Strong partnerships with government, the judiciary, civil society, communities and international institutions



Centre of **Criminology**
Africa focused. Globally engaged.



IMEL
INSTITUTE OF MARINE
& ENVIRONMENTAL LAW



**SOUTH AFRICAN
RESEARCH CHAIR:**
Intellectual Property,
Innovation and Development



SPECIALIST CENTRES & UNITS

- Centre for Law & Society
- Centre for Comparative Law in Africa
- Centre of Criminology
- Centre for Rhetoric Studies
- Corporate Law and Corporate Governance Unit
- Democratic Governance and Rights Unit
- Institute for Marine & Environmental Law
- iNtaka Centre for Law & Technology
- Intellectual Property Unit
- Land Accountability Research Centre
- Mineral and Energy Resource Law in Africa unit
- Refugee Rights Unit
- Shipping Law Unit
- UCT Arbitration and Dispute Resolution Unit

Together, and along with the research endeavour of individual Faculty academics, these centres and units produce research, reports, policy analysis and other resources that contribute to understanding how law is conceptualised, practised and experienced in South Africa and beyond. Their work always extends beyond the university. Research findings are used to inform law reform and public policy; support judicial and legal processes; strengthen civil society organisations; and provide communities with tools to understand and assert their rights.

RESEARCH FOR OUR CHANGING CONTEXT

1

The Faculty's research reflects the rapidly changing environment in which law operates

Gender, equality & justice

Questions of gender, equality and justice remain an important focus in the Faculty's research focus, particularly gender-based violence & judicial process. Research into gender-based violence and the impact of gangs considers the role of policing, prosecution and the courts in delivering meaningful justice, while work in family law examines gender disparities in marriage, divorce and the distribution of family assets

Legal pluralism

Legal pluralism is a key area of research in the Faculty in the context of a society in which a number of different frameworks are in use around marriage, customary law, traditional leadership, and other areas of socio-economic endeavour

Refugee Rights & immigration law

Research on refugee rights and immigration law addresses the complex legal realities facing refugees, asylum seekers and migrants across the continent

Banking & finance law

A growing area of expertise in the Faculty, research is focused on issues around consumer credit, financial literacy, the role of AI in access to banking, digital currency, and the socio-economic implications of a cashless society

**a small spotlight on some of the work undertaken in the Faculty*



Routledge Research in International Economic Law

ASYMMETRIC POWER RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE LAW

A LEGAL ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP
AGREEMENTS



Routledge Studies in Law, Rights and Justice

CLIMATE LITIGATION AND VULNERABILITIES

GLOBAL SOUTH PERSPECTIVES

Edited by
Maria Antonia Tigre, Melanie Jean Murcott and
Susan Ann Samuel



Perspectives on Education in Africa

COMBATING SCHOOL-BASED VIOLENCE USING AFRICAN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL SAFETY

Edited by Mfundo Mandla Masuku and
Mphahlele Mphahlele

Comparative Civil Procedure

Edited by
MARGARET Y.K. WOO
CORNELIS HENDRIK VAN RHEE



COMPARATIVE SUCCESSION LAW



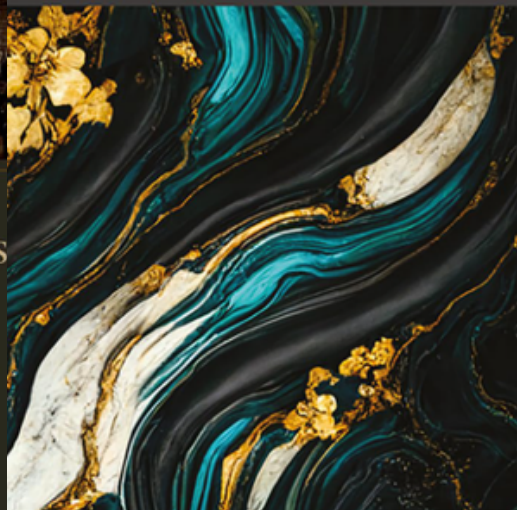
Administration of Estates

Edited by
KENNETH G C REID, JAN PETER SCHMIDT,
AND REINHARD ZIMMERMANN

OXFORD

Constitutional Interpretation

Edited by
SUJIT CHOUDHRY • CATHERINE O'REGAN
CARLOS BERNAL-PULIDO



RESEARCH HANDBOOKS IN COMPARATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL LAW
Series Editor: Tom Ginsburg

PRETORIA UNIVERSITY LAW PRESS



EDWIN CAMERON
INFLUENCES & IMPACT

Edited by
Nurina Ally & Leo Boonzaier

CSR, Sustainability, Ethics & Governance
Series Editors: Samuel O. Idowu • René Schmidpeter

Mikovhe Maphiri
Samuel O. Idowu *Editors*

ESG Disclosures in the Southern African Development Community

Accountability, Shared Value and
Regulatory Compliance

RESEARCH FOR OUR CHANGING CONTEXT

2

The Faculty's research reflects the rapidly changing environment in which law operates

Technology & Innovation

Technology and innovation are transforming economies, governments and societies. Faculty researchers are examining artificial intelligence and its implications for legislative and regulatory frameworks, as well as intellectual property, innovation, data, e-commerce, and technological development

Constitutional law & democratic governance

research in this area considers the resilience of constitutional democracies and the institutions that sustain the rule of law. This includes research into the South African and continental judiciary, judicial independence and accountability, human rights, democratic institutions and mechanisms for strengthening access to justice

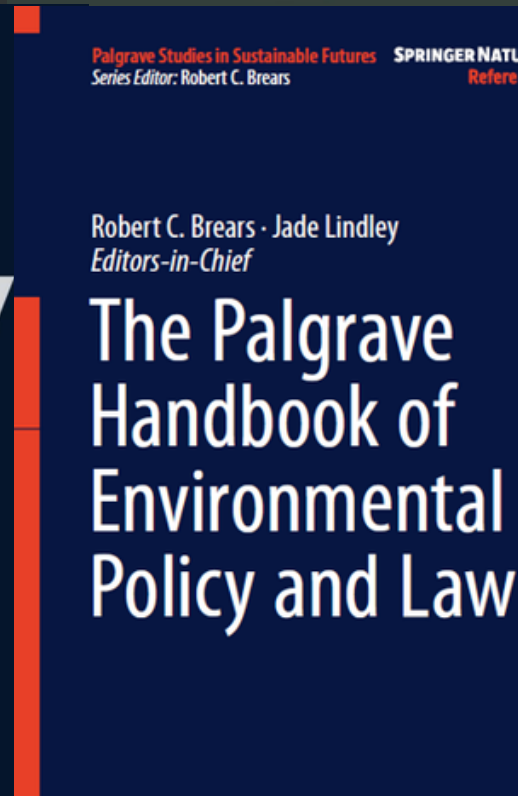
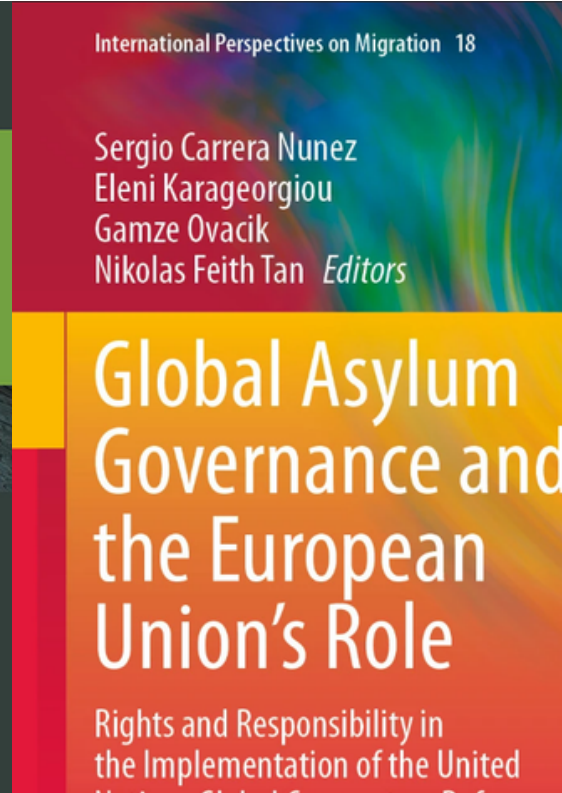
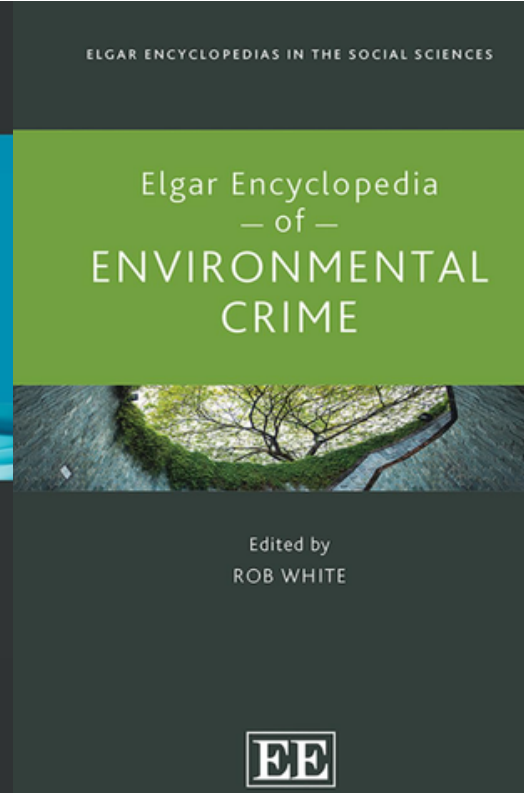
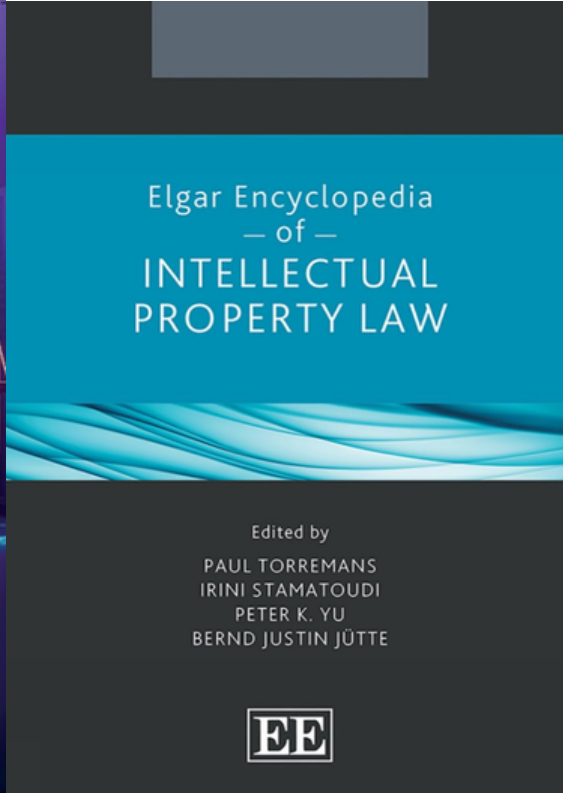
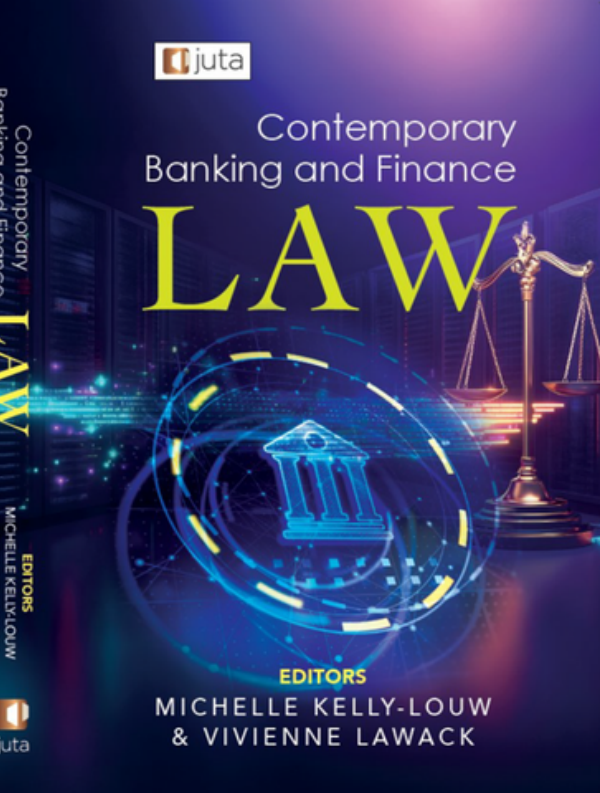
Land, mining & natural resources

Research into land, mining and natural resources considers land rights and land use in South Africa, in the contexts of customary law, mining and petroleum regulation, and the legal dimensions of Africa's changing energy landscape

Marine & environmental law

Marine and environmental challenges are another major area of research in the Faculty. Scholars investigate these issues - along with related concerns, including the environmental and social consequences of illegal wildlife trade and the legal frameworks needed to protect vulnerable ecosystems and communities

**a small spotlight on some of the work undertaken in the Faculty*



RESEARCH FOR OUR CHANGING CONTEXT

3

The Faculty's research reflects the rapidly changing environment in which law operates

Climate justice

The impact of climate change routinely impacts marginalised communities disproportionately. The changing climate has implications across other areas of law too. Research in labour law considers the impact of climate change and the transition to new forms of energy on workers and the meaning of fair labour practices

Shipping Law & the impacts of AI

Research in maritime and shipping law explores, amongst other areas, the regulation of international commerce, including the potential of AI and digital technologies to improve international trade and shipping practices

Commercial & tax law

In commercial and economic law, researchers examine banking and finance, corporate governance, taxation, international trade and the development of effective financial and regulatory frameworks across Africa. Emerging questions around cross-border e-commerce, for example, challenge traditional approaches to taxation and the protection of national tax bases

International law in a changing global context

Research in international law is focused on a number of areas, including the role of the amicus curiae in International Criminal Justice; interactions between international and domestic law; sovereign equality in international law; and other key areas of study

**a small spotlight on some of the work undertaken in the Faculty*

LEGAL PEDAGOGY, PRACTICE AND CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION

What does the future hold and look like?



Charles Maimela (Editor)

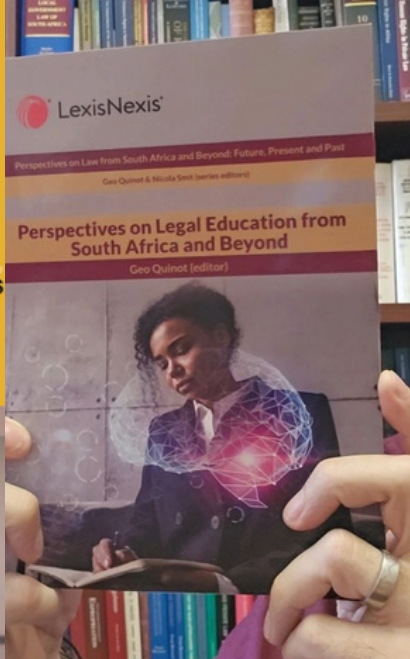
PULP

ONATI INTERNATIONAL SERIES IN LAW AND SOCIETY

Parole Futures

Rationalities, Institutions and Practices

EDITED BY
Harry Annison, Nicola Carr & Thomas Guiney



ROUTLEDGE
ENVIRONMENT AND
SUSTAINABILITY
HANDBOOKS

Emerging Globalities and Civilizational Perspectives

Irma Johanna Mosquera Valderrama
Frederik Heitmüller
Julien Chaisse
Allison Christians *Editors*

Redefining Global Governance

Trade and Investment Perspective
U and beyond

Springer

Edited by
Helen Meenan
Christa Tobler

EE
Elgar

ROUTLEDGE
HANDBOOKS



The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Ageing Issues

Global and Country Narratives



Routledge Handbook Wildlife Crime

Edited by Francis Massé,
Annette Hübschle, Laura Gutiérrez,
Rebecca W.Y. Wong, and Tanya Wyllie

Routledge Frontiers of Criminal Justice

THE STRUCTURAL EXCLUSION OF RAPE COMPLAINANTS IN SOUTH AFRICA'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

JUSTICE THROUGH PARTICIPATION

Jameelah Omar

REALISING PROTECTION
FROM AGE DISCRIMINATION



FROM RESEARCH TO IMPACT

A defining characteristic of research at UCT Law is the connection between scholarship and social impact.

Research on policing, gangs and community safety, for example, examines how crime and policing affect everyday life and access to justice. Research on land rights engages directly with communities and questions of accountability. Refugee rights research combines scholarship with legal services, advocacy and training. Work on environmental law connects legal research with conservation, climate justice and the protection of communities and natural resources.

The Faculty also contributes to the development of legal knowledge and infrastructure across the continent. Initiatives associated with the Faculty support access to legal information, judicial accountability and stronger legal institutions in Africa. Recent PhD research demonstrates the breadth of this work, spanning areas such as petroleum regulation, environmental rights in international trade agreements, and international investment arbitration. These doctoral projects form part of a wider postgraduate research community that is helping to develop new legal scholarship for South Africa and the continent.

The Faculty's research community is ultimately concerned with more than understanding the law. It asks what law can do: how can it protect rights, strengthen institutions, respond to technological and environmental change, support sustainable development and improve access to justice. In doing so, UCT Law contributes to a legal scholarship that is both rigorous and relevant; research that engages critically with the past and present while contributing to what the future could look like.

At UCT Law, research is about understanding law in the world, and exploring how law can contribute to shaping a more just and fair society.



CONTACT

UCT LAW MARKETING OFFICE
GABRIELLE RITCHIE
GABY.RITCHIE@UCT.AC.ZA

UCT LAW FACULTY RESEARCH OFFICE
LAMIZE VILJOEN
LAMIZE.VILJOEN@UCT.AC.ZA

