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## Roundtable Discussion : Postsecular Comparative Law

**Professor Ralf Michaels**

Duke University School of Law

**Chairperson: Assistant Professor Arif Jamal**

### Abstract

Comparative law is feeling the significance of religious laws, but it doesn't quite know what to do with them. There is some treatment of religious laws, but mostly on the margins – as "other laws" in macro-comparison, as "completely other perspectives" in micro-comparison. By and large religious laws are more of an ornament for comparative law rather than a proper subject. The strengthening of religious laws is categorized and dealt with as a problem for the law: comparative law asks how the law of the state should interact with religious laws, but not what these religious laws themselves have to say. This discrepancy between actual significance and scholarly treatment is a problem. Naturally it is not enough to simply demand that comparative law pay more attention to religious laws. There are reasons for the difficulties that comparative law has with religious laws and these reasons must be acknowledged. On the one hand, it is necessary to have a better understanding of what it is we understand religious laws to be and, in particular, what their religious character means for comparative law. On the other hand, however, some reflection is needed with regard to how comparative law as a discipline must adjust if it seeks to adequately compare religious laws.

### About the Speaker



Ralf Michaels is an expert in comparative law and conflict of laws, and a professor at Duke University School of Law. His current research focuses mainly on three issues: the role of domestic courts in globalization, the role of conflict of laws as a theory of global legal fragmentation, and the status and relevance of law beyond the state, including religious law. He has authored numerous articles on all three topics. Michaels is the editor or co-editor of two special volumes of the American Journal of Comparative Law: "Beyond the State? Rethinking Private Law", 2008 (also published as a book) and "Legal Origins", 2009, as well as a book and a journal issue on conflict of laws: Conflict of Laws in a Globalized World (2007); Transdisciplinary Conflicts, Law and Contemporary Problems, 2008. Michaels has been a visiting professor at the Universities of Panthéon/Assas (Paris II), Princeton, Pennsylvania, Toronto, and the London School of Economics, and will be a visitor at Tel Aviv University. He has also held senior research fellowships at Harvard and Princeton, as well as the American Academy in Berlin and the Max Planck Institute for Private Law in Hamburg. In 2015, he gave lectures on private international law at The Hague Academy for International Law. Michaels studied law at the Universities of Passau and Cambridge, UK. He is married and has three daughters. His skills at the piano are in steady decline.

### Date

**7 December 2016, Wednesday**

### Time

**3:00 pm to 5:00 pm**

### Venue

**Lee Sheridan Conference Room  
Eu Tong Sen Building  
NUS (Bukit Timah Campus)**

### Programme

**3:00 pm Welcome & Introduction by Chairperson**

**3:05 pm Presentation by Professor Ralf Michaels**

**3:20 pm Comment on paper by Dr Jaclyn Neo**

**3:30 pm Roundtable Discussion / Question & Answer**

**5:00 pm End of Programme**

*This is a closed-door event. Participation is by invitation only.*