

CUTLER FELLOWS PROGRAM

International Law as a Public Good:

Building Order Amidst Uncertainty



February 4-6, 2027

Washington, D.C.



Overview

Salzburg Global's Cutler Fellows Program invites 60 outstanding students from the top 15 U.S. law schools to join a unique and vibrant community of peers, global experts, and top scholars devoted to international, transnational, and comparative law. Each Fellow brings a draft paper, presents it in the equivalent of a faculty workshop, and receives publication-focused critique from leading professors of international law. The program's hallmark is this rigorous feedback, which extends past what any single law school can offer, sharpening legal arguments and helping Fellows identify publication pathways. In this setting, Fellows also build lasting ties with peers and faculty, entering a professional network of international lawyers that goes far beyond law school.

Equally distinctive is the community and career support the program fosters. The Cutler Fellows Program connects students who might otherwise find limited peers in international law, creating bonds that carry forward into professional life. Fellows receive mentorship on both traditional and non-traditional career paths, gaining insight from alumni and practitioners working across government, academia, law firms, NGOs, and international organizations. With hundreds of alumni worldwide, the program provides Fellows with an enduring community and a career-oriented network that grows in size and influence each year.

Launched in 2012, the Cutler Fellows Program honors Lloyd N. Cutler's commitment to strengthening the international rules-based order through leadership development. The program empowers Fellows to tackle cutting-edge issues in international law, foster leadership skills, and build lasting collaboration between the legal and public service sectors.

This Year's Focus

Each year's programming is organized around a shared theme, with faculty roundtables, student panels, and practitioner conversations placing Fellows' work within broader debates about the future of international law. This year's theme, **International Law as a Public Good: Building Order Amidst Uncertainty**, focuses on the role international law plays in providing public goods that no state can secure on its own: peace and stability, predictable rules for economic exchange, protection of fundamental rights, cooperation on shared challenges, and mechanisms for resolving disputes without coercion or force. Those functions are increasingly under strain. Democratic backsliding, authoritarian governance, geopolitical rivalry, and growing skepticism of international institutions are weakening the consensus that has sustained much of the international legal order. Across fields from trade and technology to human rights and climate change, international law is increasingly contested — sometimes treated less as a shared framework for cooperation than as an obstacle to national policy or an instrument of strategic competition. This year's program will examine how international lawyers can preserve and renew international law's capacity to provide these essential public goods, even in a world of deeper political disagreement, fragmented institutions, and declining consensus.

Program Format

Each Fellow comes to the program with a draft paper developed at their home law school. A full day of faculty workshops then gives Fellows the opportunity to present that work to leading international law professors from across the United States, as well as to peers working on related questions. Fellows are grouped thematically so that they receive feedback from faculty and students who share relevant interests, expertise, and methodological approaches. The aim is not simply to comment on the paper as it stands, but to help each Fellow sharpen the legal argument, identify weaknesses or gaps, and think concretely about pathways to publication.

- • • The workshop experience is complemented by broader conversations about the profession of international law. A Knowledge Café brings Fellows together with early-career international lawyers working across government, international organizations, law firms, NGOs, and academia. In a more informal setting, Fellows can ask candid questions about career choices, transitions between sectors, building expertise, and navigating the early stages of an international legal career. The format is designed to provide practical guidance, mentorship, and access to professionals close enough to the beginning of their own careers to offer particularly relevant advice.
- • • The program also features the Annual Salzburg Debate, an Oxford-style debate on a pressing issue of international law. Bringing together distinguished voices to argue opposing positions, the Debate gives Fellows the opportunity to see difficult legal and policy questions tested through structured argument, rebuttal, and exchange.
- • • Just as important, the program creates space for Fellows to build



- • • relationships with one another. By bringing together students from leading law schools who share a commitment to international, transnational, and comparative law, the program helps create the kind of intellectual and social community that many students may not find at their home institutions. Those connections—among Fellows, faculty, alumni, and practitioners—are intended to continue well beyond the weekend and become part of an enduring professional network.

Program Goals

- Facilitate and advise top law students as they prepare and refine academic papers on contemporary issues in international law for publication and policy impact.
- Build a network of rising leaders working on issues central to international law and associated institutions.
- Convene top voices to mentor the next generation of lawyers in public and private international law.
- Deepen knowledge and shift future legal and policy conversations around key international legal challenges, ranging from the use of force to the protection of individual liberties, the coherence of the international economic order to the future of the global environment.

Participant Profile

The program accepts up to 60 law student Fellows at the 2L, 3L, and LLM levels. Four students are selected by each of the 15 participating law schools: Berkeley, Chicago, Columbia, Cornell, Duke, Georgetown, Harvard, Michigan, New York University, Northwestern, Penn, Stanford, UCLA, Virginia, and Yale. Students' areas of interest and the topics of their papers may include any topic in international, transnational, or comparative law, including international human rights and humanitarian law; national security law; international environmental and climate law and policy; international courts and tribunals; international finance, investment, monetary and trade law; international technology and artificial intelligence (AI) law, or the comparative law of other legal systems.

Application

Application processes for this program are conducted through our 15 partner law schools and may vary from school to school.



About the Cutler Center

The Lloyd N. Cutler Center for the Rule of Law was established in 2010 to honor the legacy of long-serving Chairman of the Salzburg Global Board and Legal Advisor to President Carter and President Clinton, Lloyd N. Cutler. Today the Cutler Center hosts the annual Cutler Lecture and the Salzburg Cutler Fellows Program in Washington, DC, and the International Law Fellows Network in Salzburg. The Salzburg Cutler Fellows Program is made possible through the generosity of donors. To learn more about supporting the program, please contact Jordyn Scott.

About Salzburg Global

Salzburg Global Seminar Inc. is an independent non-profit organization founded in 1947 with a mission to challenge current and future leaders to shape a better world. For 78 years we have gathered open-minded leaders for breakthrough conversations, seeking to overcome barriers and open up a world of better possibilities.

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