

*Netherlands Network for Human Rights Research*

Annual PhD training

## ***How to Position Yourself as a Human Rights Scholar: Methods, Activism and Academic Culture***

Wednesday 31<sup>th</sup> May 2023 – Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Location: VU Campus, Faculty of Law, Initium building  
Room: IN2A-45/47

- 09:30 – 10:00      **Walk-in + coffee/tea**
- 10:00 – 10:15      **Welcome and opening remarks**  
Prof. mr. Hemme Battjes, dean of the VU Faculty of Law and professor of EU migration and human rights law
- 10:15 – 11:45      **Methodologies in Human Rights Research**  
10:15 – 10:30  
*Introduction on combining dogmatic and empirical research methods in Human Rights Research by mr. dr. Anja Eleveld, VU Faculty of Law*  
  
10:30 – 11:45  
*Four parallel sessions will start, all focusing on a different methodology approach and the challenges that PhD candidates may encounter using these methods for their own research.*  
  
Session 1: dr. Nieke Elbers: Quantitative research methods  
Session 2: drs. Lea Zuyderhoudt, MA: The use of semi-structured interviews  
Session 3: mr. dr. Anja Eleveld: Systematic case law analysis  
Session 4: dr. Berber Laarman: Action research
- 11:45 - 13:15      **Lunch Break at restaurant Oliver's**  
<https://www.olivers.nl/>

13:15 – 14:45

**Workshop: ‘What’s Wrong with Human Rights Activism?’**

Prof. dr. Wouter Veraart, professor of legal philosophy, VU Faculty of Law

*How far should judges and legal scholars go in their defense of human rights and legal activism? Given the fact that almost everywhere the rule of law is under threat, and that lawyers usually care for checks and balances between the different branches of power, this is an urgent question. This workshop tries to navigate a realm of legal activism in which we are witnessing historic court cases addressing climate change and other pressing issues, but also populist attacks on the 'undemocratic' judiciary, which would possess far too much power. Two divergent views of two former top judges on the role of the judge in a democracy, will serve as a starting point in the discussion.*

Recommended literature:

Aharon Barak, 'The Role of a Supreme Court in a Democracy', *Hastings Law Journal* 53 (2002): 1205-1216.

Jonathan Sumption, 'Human Rights and Wrongs', in: J. Sumption, *Trials of the State. Law and the Decline of Politics*, London: Profile Books 2019, p. 45-71.

14:45 – 15:00

**Coffee/Tea break**

15:00 – 17:00

**Workshop: ‘The Happy Academic’**

Dr. Joeri Tjeldink, MD, author of the book *The Happy Academic: How to Succeed and Stay Healthy in Academia* (2023) and Assistant Professor at the Philosophy Department (Faculty of Humanities) and the Ethics, Law and Humanities Department (Amsterdam UMC, location VUmc)

*PhD-candidates are sometimes considered the rockstars in academia. They conduct most of the research and have other important academic tasks such as teaching. However, this may also come with a high workload and some experience mental health problems. It is therefore important to learn how to navigate the academic ocean and take care of your mental health. It may enrich your academic life and will hopefully lead to being a happy academic.*

17:00 – 20:30

**Drinks at the VU followed by dinner at restaurant Orontes,**

<https://restaurantorontes.nl/>