GNLU Centre for Law and Economics
Workshop on Law and Economics

Date	Batch	Name of the topic covered	Duration	Venue (Hall No.)
19 January, 2026	BA. LLB (2023- 2028 Batch)	Constitutional and Institutional Economics	3:10 PM – 5:25 PM	3.10
20 January, 2026	BA. LLB (2023- 2028 Batch)	Constitutional and Institutional Economics	3:10 PM – 5:25 PM	3.10
22 January, 2026	PhD Research Scholars	Constitutional Compliance – and Beyond	9:30 AM- 10:30 AM	0.6
22 January, 2026	BALLB (2025- 2030 Batch)	Introduction to Institutional Economics	10:30 AM -11:15 AM	2.10
22 January, 2026	BCom.LLB, BBA.LLB (2024- 2029 Batch)	Constitutional and Institutional Economics	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	2.8

Prof. Stefan Voigt | GNLU lectures (19–20 Jan 2026)

Over two sessions, Prof. Stefan Voigt examined how **constitutional design** and **social norms** jointly shape political incentives, institutional behaviour, and policy outcomes, using empirical evidence, indices, and comparative insights.

The first lecture focused on **emergency constitutions**. Nearly 90% of constitutions contain emergency provisions, many of which grant wide discretion to the executive. Prof. Voigt introduced the **Index of Emergency Powers (INEP)** to measure how much authority constitutions give governments during crises. Empirical findings show that **political turmoil** predicts States of Emergency (SOE) more than natural disasters, and that **lower procedural costs** increase the likelihood of declaration. Systems with weak constitutional compliance are more prone to **unlawful SOEs**. Evidence on effectiveness is mixed: in some cases, greater emergency powers correlate with worse disaster outcomes. The key takeaway was that safeguards—such as sunset clauses and legislative oversight—are essential because emergency rules shape government incentives.

The second lecture explored **informal institutions and social norms**. Prof. Voigt emphasized that norms, enforced through social sanctioning, often determine how well formal laws function. Historical factors such as agriculture patterns, irrigation, and geography influence enduring traits like collectivism, individualism, and gender roles. Because these norms persist over centuries, reforms that ignore them may fail. He suggested measuring norms through experiments (PD/PGG), surveys, and historical-cultural sources.

Overall, the sessions highlighted that **formal legal design and informal norms must be studied together**. Tools like INEP help compare institutional power, while understanding social norms explains why legal reforms succeed or underperform.

Prof. Stefan Voigt | GNLU lectures (22 Jan 2026)

Professor Stefan Voigt's lecture focused on the relationship between law, institutions, and economic development within the framework of institutional economics. He began by explaining institutions as the "rules of the game" that govern interactions between two or more individuals. These rules shape outcomes in social, political, and economic interactions, particularly in situations where individuals' decisions are interdependent.

The lecture introduced different types of games, including zero-sum, positive-sum, and mixed-motive games, to explain how institutional rules influence behaviour and outcomes. While zero-sum games involve gains for one party at the expense of another, economic transactions were described as positive-sum games where both parties expect to be better off. Mixed-motive games were used to illustrate situations where individuals share a common objective but have differing preferences regarding outcomes.

Professor Voigt distinguished between institutions and organisations, explaining that organisations consist of actors, whereas institutions are the rules under which these actors operate. Law was presented as a formal institution created through parliamentary processes, while conventions and social norms were discussed as informal institutions enforced through social sanctions rather than the state.

The lecture examined why countries with similar formal constitutions often experience different economic and political outcomes. The role of informal institutions, cultural norms, and enforcement mechanisms was highlighted as a key explanatory factor. Professor Voigt also discussed the New Institutional Economics hypothesis that economic growth and development depend on the quality of institutions, including informal ones.

The importance of low-cost contract enforcement was emphasised, drawing on the work of Douglass North. High enforcement costs reduce trust, limit contractual relationships, and restrict specialisation, thereby hindering economic growth. The lecture concluded with a discussion on the structure of institutions, including rules, sanctions, and enforcement mechanisms, and the interaction between formal and informal institutional frameworks.

Session by Prof. Stefan Voigt on Introduction to Institutional Economics (22 Jan 2026)

A workshop on *Introduction to Institutional Economics* was conducted by Prof. Stefan Voigt for the first-year B.A. LL.B. students. The session aimed to familiarize students with the foundational concepts of Institutional Economics and its relevance to law, governance, and economic development.

Prof. Voigt explained how institutions—both formal (constitutions, laws, regulations) and informal (customs, traditions, social norms)—shape economic behaviour and outcomes. He emphasized that institutions play a crucial role in reducing uncertainty, structuring incentives, and influencing the performance of economies and societies.

The lecture highlighted the connection between legal systems and economic efficiency, illustrating how well-designed institutions promote stability, protect property rights, and foster development. Prof. Voigt also discussed real-world examples to demonstrate how institutional frameworks vary across countries and how these differences impact governance and economic progress.

The interactive session encouraged students to think critically about the role of law as an institution and its long-term effects on societal welfare. The workshop provided students with a foundational understanding of how economic analysis can be applied to legal and constitutional structures.

Overall, the workshop was highly informative and engaging, offering valuable insights into the interdisciplinary field of Institutional Economics and its importance for future legal professionals.

Session by Prof. Stefan Voigt for PhD Scholars (22 Jan 2026)

The workshop for PhD students, conducted by Prof. Stefan Voigt from the Institute of Law and Economics, University of Hamburg, focused on a central question in constitutional studies: why many constitutions promise ideal governance but fail to deliver in practice. The session explored the gap between constitutional text (de jure rules) and constitutional reality (de facto implementation), a theme Prof. Voigt has extensively researched.

Prof. Voigt began by structuring the problem of constitutional compliance through two dimensions: institutions and actors. Institutional factors include constitutional design, procedural rules, judicial independence, and emergency provisions. Actor-based factors include political leaders, citizens, civil society, foreign actors, and constitutional veto players who can either violate or defend constitutional rules. He presented a simple analytical framework showing that non-compliance depends on expected benefits, probability of detection, and the size of sanctions.

A major challenge discussed was how to measure constitutional compliance empirically. Prof. Voigt introduced the Comparative Constitutional Compliance Database, which combines data from the Comparative Constitutions Project (de jure rules) with V-Dem data (de facto practices). This allows researchers to systematically identify where governments fail to adhere to explicit constitutional provisions across four areas: rule of law, political rights, civil liberties, and basic rights.

The session then reviewed findings from several empirical studies. Design factors such as judicial independence, clarity of constitutional rules, and state of emergency provisions influence compliance. Democracies and systems with stronger checks, such as bicameral approval during emergencies, are less likely to witness unconstitutional actions. Environmental factors such as culture and civil society strength also matter: societies with higher individualism and active civil societies tend to exhibit better constitutional compliance, whereas high acceptance of hierarchy ("power distance") reduces it.

Prof. Voigt also highlighted the role of leaders and events. Leaders with legal education and more political experience are associated with higher compliance, while military backgrounds or extremist affiliations correlate negatively. Major events such as disasters, foreign interventions, and the COVID-19 pandemic were examined to understand how crises affect constitutional behaviour.

A particularly interesting part of the lecture discussed constitutional loyalty during COVID-19. Survey evidence from multiple countries showed that citizens' support for restrictive policies declined significantly when informed that courts considered those measures unconstitutional. This demonstrated that public trust in courts and concern for rights influence how citizens react to constitutional violations.

The workshop concluded by emphasizing that constitutional compliance is shaped not only by legal design but also by cultural traits, institutional checks, citizen behaviour, and leadership characteristics. Prof. Voigt encouraged PhD scholars to explore this rich research field further, including studies on executive-legislative relations, amendment procedures, and the economics of constitution-making.