



Università
degli Studi
di Palermo



DO
Dottorato in
diritti umani
evoluzione, tutela e limiti

Human Rights' Theory and Practice (T&P) Course 2026
PhD Students' Workshop – Call for Abstracts

THE RIGHTS OF NATURE

Palermo, 2 – 6 March 2026

University of Palermo – Department of Law
Via Maqueda, 172 – 90134, Palermo

ART. 1 – GENERAL INFORMATION

I – INTRODUCTION

On Friday 6 March 2026, the Department of Law, University of Palermo, will host a Workshop on “*The Rights of Nature*”, aimed at PhD candidates.

The Workshop, organised by the PhD Programme in “*Human Rights: Evolution, Protection and Limits*”, is the final event of the Human Rights' Theory and Practice (T&P) Course, which will take place from 2 to 6 March 2026 at the University of Palermo.

II – TOPICS AND OBJECTIVES

In recent years, the debate on the rights of nature has gained increasing relevance in the international legal landscape, prompting deep reflections on the relationship between human communities, ecosystems, and models of environmental governance. The emergence of legal systems that recognize legal personality for natural elements—such as rivers, forests, or lakes—marks a paradigmatic shift capable of redefining traditional legal categories. This shift is part of a broader doctrinal, philosophical, and political movement aimed at overcoming the dominant anthropocentric approach and recognizing the intrinsic value of nature, along with a set of interests worthy of autonomous protection.

On the other hand, there is no shortage of legal cases – even at constitutional level – that have now been consolidated at a global level, paving the way for further experimentation, most often accompanied by complex issues concerning the exact framework of the legal positions, the legitimacy of the actors representing nature's interests, the characteristics of the

institutions responsible for nature's protection, and the compatibility with the regulatory frameworks in which they operate.

This call for abstracts aims to stimulate contributions that critically explore the theoretical foundations, legal instruments, and practical implications of recognising the rights of nature. Proposals addressing topics such as the following are particularly encouraged:

- the justiciability of ecological rights;
- the construction of new forms of legal representation for natural entities (e.g.: animals, oceans, plants, ecosystems, etc.);
- the analysis of normative and constitutional models for the recognition of the rights of nature;
- mechanisms of multi-level environmental representation and governance;
- socio-environmental impacts and practical implications, with particular attention, for example, to justiciability, environmental disputes, territorial conflicts, and participatory processes;
- the interaction between the rights of nature, human rights and the rights of Indigenous communities;
- the potential of the ecocentric approach in the context of the climate crisis and biodiversity loss.

The objective is to create an interdisciplinary space that fosters dialogue among legal scholars, philosophers, political scientists, social scientists, and environmental scholars, helping to outline innovative scenarios for the evolution of environmental law in the 21st century.

III – METHODOLOGY

The workshop will be divided into two separate sessions, one to be held in the morning and one in the afternoon of Friday 6 March 2026.

Each session will be coordinated by a moderator, who will guide the discussion and encourage dialogue among participants.

During the sessions, selected PhD candidates will have the opportunity to present the results of their research, engage directly with fellow scholars, and contribute to the development of an open and interdisciplinary scientific debate.



IV – WORKING LANGUAGES

The workshop's activities will be conducted in Italian and English.

ART. 2 – ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

To participate in the *workshop*, students enrolled in a PhD program at an Italian or foreign University must send the following documents in “.pdf” format to the e-mail address giulia.torta@unipa.it **no later than 30 January 2026**:

- a) **an abstract** not exceeding 500 words, in Italian or English, presenting their proposed contribution and addressing topics consistent with the themes of the workshop;
- b) a short, up-to-date *curriculum vitae*.

ART. 3 – SELECTION OF PROPOSALS AND WORKSHOP PARTICIPATION

Proposals will be evaluated by the Scientific Committee according to the following criteria:

- originality of the research topic;
- clarity and coherence of the analysis;
- knowledge of relevant national and international scientific literature;
- variety of topics and scientific-disciplinary fields to be included in the public discussion.

A maximum of **sixteen** proposals will be accepted.

The list of selected proposals will be communicated by e-mail to the applicants by 6 February 2026. Participants must check whether or not they have received this notification.

PhD candidates whose proposals are selected must confirm their participation in the workshop by 10 February 2026, by sending an e-mail to giulia.torta@unipa.it.

Each participant will have 15 minutes to present their paper, followed by a brief discussion. Speakers may use a slideshow in “.ppt” format (Microsoft Office PowerPoint).

| Summary of deadlines | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Submission of abstract | by 30 January 2026 |
| Notification of selected proposals | by 6 February 2026 |
| Confirmation of participation | by 10 February 2026 |



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Workshop

6 March 2026

FURTHER INFORMATION

For any additional information, please send an e-mail to: giulia.torta@unipa.it.

SCIENTIFIC DIRECTION

Nicola Gullo, Elena Consiglio.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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