

## Reimagining International Economic Law: CCCL Seminar Explores the Discipline's Future in a Changing Global Order

On September 8, 2025, the School of Law Research Centre for Chinese and Comparative Law (CCCL) hosted an engaging academic seminar titled *Reimagining International Economic Law*. The event brought together scholars and students to explore the transformative challenges confronting international economic law (IEL) and to debate how the field might evolve in response to shifting geopolitical, technological, and institutional dynamics.

The keynote speaker, **Professor Du Ming**, a leading scholar from Durham University Law School, delivered the central lecture. Professor Du, who currently serves as Professor of Transnational Law and Deputy Dean for Research, has made significant contributions to scholarship on international economic law and Chinese law. He was recently awarded the prestigious British Academy Senior Research Fellowship (2024) for his work on the intersection of transnational governance and economic regulation.

Moderated by **Professor Wang Jiangyu**, Director of the CCCL, the seminar opened with reflections on the “crisis” currently facing international economic law. Professor Wang observed that the global economic order built around post-war institutions and liberal trade principles is being reassessed amid rising protectionism, digital trade complexities, and geopolitical fragmentation. He emphasized that reimagining IEL requires both critical theoretical inquiry and pragmatic policy dialogue.

In his lecture, Professor Du Ming argued that the foundational pillars of international economic law—such as trade liberalization, investment protection, and dispute settlement—are increasingly under strain. He noted that the “rules of the game” governing international trade and investment are being rewritten by technological change, climate imperatives, and national security concerns. While there is general agreement that IEL needs to be re-envisioned, he cautioned that scholars and policymakers remain divided over what form that revision should take.

Professor Du outlined several major debates shaping the reimagination of IEL today:

1. **The shift from universalism to pluralism**, as regionalism and localized trade governance increasingly replace multilateral systems.
2. **The emergence of digital and green trade frameworks**, reflecting new priorities such as data sovereignty, sustainability, and supply chain resilience.
3. **The reassertion of state intervention**, which challenges the liberal assumption of market primacy and forces reconsideration of how economic sovereignty fits into global law.

Following the lecture, an insightful discussion was led by **Professor Fang Meng** and **Professor Yu Chen** of CityUHK School of Law. Professor Fang focused on the methodological implications of “reimagining” IEL, calling for a more inclusive global dialogue that integrates perspectives from the Global South. Professor Yu highlighted the potential for comparative legal research to bridge doctrinal divides and to illuminate alternative governance models beyond Western-centric paradigms.

The lively Q&A session reflected the participants’ strong engagement, with questions touching on trade security, digital economies, and the evolving role of international institutions like the

WTO. Both speakers and students emphasized the need for adaptability and critical reflection as the legal foundations of the international economic system continue to evolve.

In his closing remarks, Professor Wang Jiangyu summarized the significance of the dialogue, noting that such interdisciplinary conversations are vital to understanding how law can both respond to and shape global economic transformation. He reaffirmed CCCL's mission to advance comparative legal scholarship and to foster meaningful engagement with emerging international legal challenges.

The event was part of CCCL's ongoing efforts to promote high-level discourse on global legal developments. By hosting leading international scholars and facilitating vibrant academic exchange, CCCL continues to strengthen its role as a regional and international hub for the study of law, governance, and global economic order.