

Invitation to the

# 2019 LECTURES IN NORMATIVE THEORY

7, 8 & 9 MAY 2018 | 18:00–20:00

ALLENDEPLATZ 1 | ROOM 250

ALL WELCOME — NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED



Universität Hamburg

DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

**FAKULTÄT**

FÜR WIRTSCHAFTS- UND  
SOZIALWISSENSCHAFTEN

**FAKULTÄT**

FÜR GEISTESWISSENSCHAFTEN

# PROFESSOR CRISTINA LAFONT

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

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Cristina Lafont is a professor of philosophy at Northwestern University. Her current research focuses on normative questions in political philosophy concerning democracy and citizen participation, global governance, human rights, religion and politics. She works in a framework of deliberative democratic theory, where she defends a participatory construal of the democratic ideal against proposals to insulate political decision making from the influence of the citizenry.

Lafont is the author of *Democracy without Shortcuts* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming), *Global Governance and Human Rights* (Spinoza Lecture Series, van Gorcum, 2012), *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy* (MIT Press, 1999), *Heidegger, Language, and World-disclosure* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), and co-editor of *Critical Theory in Critical Times: Transforming the Global Political and Economic Order* (Columbia University Press, 2017) and *The Habermas Handbook* (Columbia University Press, 2017). She has also published numerous articles in contemporary moral and political philosophy. In 2011 she was named to the Spinoza Chair at the University of Amsterdam, and in 2012/13 she was a Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg Berlin. She is the director of the Program in Critical Theory and co-director of the Research Group on Global Capitalism and Law funded by a “Big Ideas” grant of the Buffett Institute at Northwestern University.



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# DEMOCRACY WITHOUT SHORTCUTS

The lectures focus on the participatory conception of deliberative democracy that I articulate in my book *Democracy without Shortcuts* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming). This conception aims to improve citizens' democratic control and vindicate the value of citizens' participation against conceptions that threaten to undermine it. First, I critically analyze deep pluralist, epistocratic, and lottocratic conceptions of democracy. Their defenders propose various institutional "shortcuts" to help solve problems of democratic governance such as overcoming disagreements, citizens' political ignorance, or poor-quality deliberation. However, it turns out that these shortcut proposals all require citizens to blindly defer to actors over whose decisions they cannot exercise control. Implementing such proposals would therefore undermine democracy. Moreover, it seems naive to assume that a community can reach better outcomes 'faster' if it bypasses the beliefs and attitudes of its citizens. Unfortunately, there are no 'shortcuts' to make a community better than its members. The only road to better outcomes is the long, participatory road that is taken when citizens forge a collective will by changing one another's hearts and minds. However difficult the process of justifying political decisions to one another may be, skipping it cannot get us any closer to the democratic ideal. Starting from this conviction, I defend a conception of democracy 'without shortcuts.' This conception sheds new light on long-standing debates about the proper scope of public reason, the role of religion in politics, and the democratic legitimacy of judicial review. It also proposes new ways to unleash the democratic potential of institutional innovations such as deliberative minipublics.

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# THE LECTURE SERIES

The Lectures in Normative Theory is an annual inter-departmental lecture series organized by professors in Political Theory and Practical Philosophy.

The idea of the series is to introduce new work in all aspects of normative theory in the social and economic sciences, philosophy, and law to a broader audience. Each year we will invite a leading international scholar to present a forthcoming book manuscript.

## THE SPEAKERS

- 2019: Cristina Lafont (Northwestern University)  
*Democracy Without Shortcuts: A Participatory Interpretation of Deliberative Democracy*