

RESEARCH CLINIC

General information

Supervisor:	Otto Spijkers
Title of clinic:	Research Clinic on Climate Litigation for Future Generations
Number of students:	Around 8 students
Major (<i>if applicable and approved by the Major Convener</i>):	
(Pre)requisites (<i>if applicable</i>):	Knowledge of (inter)national law

Research context

Across the globe - and especially in the Netherlands - courts are increasingly shaping the future of climate action. Groundbreaking cases such as *Urgenda v. The Netherlands* have shown how international human rights law can drive ambitious climate policy. Since then, Dutch courts have continued to play a leading role: Milieudefensie's landmark case against Shell, the greenwashing challenge brought by Fossil Free against KLM, the action urging ING to cut its emissions footprint, and the case initiated by Greenpeace Netherlands together with residents of Bonaire, seeking better climate protection for this Caribbean Island of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. These initiatives, all led by public-interest organizations, raise fascinating questions about how the law can safeguard both present and future generations.

Climate litigation is also rapidly evolving at the international level. In 2025, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a historic Advisory Opinion on the climate emergency and human rights, and the International Court of Justice followed with its own long-awaited Opinion confirming that States have binding duties to protect the climate system. These developments reflect years of advocacy from actors such as the State of Vanuatu and show how international law is becoming central to the climate movement.

If you are interested in climate justice, public interest litigation, human rights, and international law - and if you would like to be part of one of the most innovative legal conversations of our time - this clinic is a wonderful opportunity to dive in and make your own contribution.

Students' tasks and activities

This Research Clinic gives students the opportunity to explore these emerging trends in depth. You will choose a jurisdiction you know well — your home country, a state you are studying, a region that fascinates you, or a global jurisdiction such as the ICJ — and investigate how climate litigation is unfolding there. You will look for cases, strategies, and possibilities for legal action aimed at protecting future generations, and you will develop your own research contribution to this dynamic field. The Clinic meets weekly during Block 3 of the 2025–2026 academic year. Students will work collaboratively, receive individual guidance, and use leading resources such as the Sabin Center's Climate Litigation Database as a starting point for their research.