

invité par l'assemblée du Collège de France
sur proposition de la Pr Samantha BESSON

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More than Just Peace

Jeudi 21 mai 2026

More than Just Peace

Conférence en anglais

Amphithéâtre Mireille Delmas-Marty — de 11h à 12h

John Rawls's publication of *The Law of Peoples* was a profound attempt to design a just peace. Beyond the simple cessation of armed hostilities, the Law of Peoples offered more than (just) peace. It committed its peoples to honor human rights, tolerate other decent political regimes and accept a «duty of assistance» owed by all decent societies to all those in dire need.

Importantly, for Rawls, the project he outlined in *The Law of Peoples* is a constructed peace, one that needs to be established among liberal peoples and then extended to other decent societies. The construction raises the questions of why it is that Rawls thought the peace (1) needed to be constructed and could be constructed in a world otherwise divided by insecurity and strife among states. In doing this, he directly addressed the Realist challenges described by Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan* and revived by Thomas Nagel. It also raises the question of (2) why Rawls thought it was necessary to go beyond *Perpetual Peace*, a Liberal model of international peace constructed by Immanuel Kant (Rawls's inspiration and answer to the first question), and (3) why Rawls might have thought that the extension beyond the Kantian peace among liberal republics to a wider «just peace» that incorporated a duty of assistance was possible, and indeed «realistic.»