

# ICS SEMINAR SERIES 2024

## Legal Personhood and Political Subjects in the Digital Age

12 September 2024 | 11:30am - 1:00pm

Room: EA.1.22 Parramatta South Campus

**WESTERN SYDNEY**  
UNIVERSITY



Institute for Culture  
and Society

### Abstract

This joint paper examines how conceptions of legal personhood and political subjects bring critical insights to the developing notion of the data subject and data sovereignty. While current rhetoric around data sovereignty focuses on an individuals' proprietorship, privacy, and control of one's data and its traces, conceptions of legal personhood and political subjectification complicate this understanding. Looking at the concept of legal personhood in recent years, we can already see how traditional categories have shifted beyond the human person and corporations, to rivers and robots, with new possibilities emerging alongside the rise of artificial intelligences. Therefore, in contrast to the idea of a data subject that is located in one physical location or agent, we propose an understanding of the data subject as a relational entity. By further drawing from a brief selective genealogy of the political subject through thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, this paper will consider how modulation and control underpin ideas surrounding the data subject and what the implications for this relational understanding might mean for data sovereignty today.

### Biographies

Norma Lam-Saw is an early career researcher and Associate Lecturer in SHCA (English and Philosophy). Her research has focused on passivity and passive resistance at the nexus of literature and philosophy. Her current research explores interdisciplinary relationships between language, technology and agency.

Jacinta Sassine is an Associate Lecturer in Law at Western Sydney University and admitted lawyer of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. She enjoys teaching and conducting interdisciplinary research across a range of areas, including legal philosophy and political theory. Her doctoral thesis argued for a deeper understanding of rhetorical justice within the practice of law in democratic systems, with a particular focus on Ancient Greek Sophistry. Jacinta has been involved in several projects - including with the Young and Resilient Research Centre – that has reflected her interest in justice and communication-based research. Jacinta continues to experiment with ideas of language and rhetoric, with particular interest in civic education, data privacy & emerging technologies.

**Presenters: Norma Lam-Saw and  
Jacinta Sassine**

**Discussant: Tamara Watson**

**Chair: Isaac Lyne**

Research Alignment:

Automated Worlds

**NEXT SEMINAR:  
19 SEPTEMBER**