



The 16th Annual Workshop of the
[International Society for the History and Theory of Intellectual Property](#) (ISHTIP)
will be hosted by Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain.

Call for Papers

Intellectual Property and Capitalism

25-26 June 2025

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

In recent years, the relationship between intellectual property and capitalism has received growing interest from different disciplines, particularly economic history, law, sociology, politics, and science and technology studies. This workshop aims to bring together interdisciplinary scholarship which explores this relationship historically and across different political economic paradigms.

The workshop invites reflections on the ways in which intellectual property rights have been instrumental to different capitalist strategies and practices, as well as on how various forms of capitalism have shaped the meaning and scope of intellectual property – from early modern times to the present. Beyond the common understanding of patents, trademarks, copyrights, and other intellectual property as techniques of commodification, the workshop welcomes historical and theoretical analyses of intellectual property's effects on trade, colonialism, racial capitalism, surveillance capitalism, globalisation, im/material labour, social reproduction, industrialisation, capitalisation, financialisation, and assetisation. It also welcomes works that situate intellectual property in critical political and cultural economy scholarships.

Topics and questions might include, but are not limited to:

- Dematerialisation, intangibility of IP objects, capitalist speculation: how did digital technologies destabilise the conceptualisation of intangible and of the immaterial and the material in IP? In what ways were these conducive to speculations and financialisation?
- Technology, capitalism and IP: what were the effects of copyright, patents, trademarks and other forms of IP on scientific and technological practices, and vice versa? How did they differ in different periods of capitalism?
- Capitalisation, monopolisation, financialisation: what could a history of IP as capital or financial assets look like? In what ways has IP been implicated in the rise of Big Tech monopolies and of platform capitalism? How exactly do different intellectual properties relate to digital “intellectual” monopolies – if at all?

- IP, capitalism, inequality: what is the role of IP in the growth of extreme inequality in industrialised countries domestically? And its role in growing inequality between nation states? What kind of visions of development and progress do IP theories presume?
- IP in state and private capitalisms: what function did/does the private-public dichotomy in IP scholarship serve, and is it time to question the dichotomy? How does IP feature in different forms of state capitalism? How did IP become mobilised for nationalism and libertarianism?
- IP ideologies and subjectivities: how can the relationship between IP and capitalist subject formations be theorised or analysed historically? How does IP relate to alienation, exploitation, consumerism? In what ways can an examination of IP and capitalism contribute to theoretical and historical studies of how race, class, gender work concomitantly?
- Tensions and resistances: what contestations and resistances to IP have there been in in different economic and political contexts and what was their position in relation to capitalism?
- Material, immaterial and intellectual labour in capitalism: how is intellectual labour conceived throughout different capitalist periods? Do alternative frameworks of IP, such as the Commons, entail different relations between market, capital, and/or (im)material labour?
- Economisation of intellectual property discourses: what is the role of markets and economic ideas in intellectual property scholarship? How did mainstream doctrinal patent law scholarship become dominated by economics?

Guidelines for contributors

Papers that address this call from historical or theoretical perspective are welcome from scholars from all disciplines. Established and junior scholars are encouraged to submit papers. There will be a session devoted to presentations from doctoral students.

Proposers should be aware that authors (except for PhD students) do not present their own papers at ISHTIP workshops. Rather a discussant presents a summary and critique of a paper to facilitate an interdisciplinary discussion. To allow this, complete papers should be submitted by 15 May 2025.

Please submit a paper abstract of no longer than 300 words and a two-page CV to david.pretel@uam.es and j.a.bellido@kent.ac.uk to be considered.

Date for submission of proposals: 20 December 2024

Expected date for notification of acceptance: 31 January 2025

Date for submission of full papers: 15 May 2025

ISHTIP Executive Committee (ishtip.org): Gabriel Galvez-Behar, Université de Lille; Hyo Yoon Kang, University of Warwick; Jessica Silbey, Boston University; Kathy Bowrey, UNSW; David Pretel, UAM; Jose Bellido, University of Kent; Michael Birnhack, Tel Aviv University.

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