

Osgoode Speaker Series

# LEGITIMACY AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE

WITH DR. THOMAS ADAMS

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It is commonly believed that justified authority is a condition of the legitimacy of the state. If political authority does not withstand the test of justification, then it cannot be legitimate.



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In this talk Dr. Adams seeks to problematise this claim. He begins by distinguishing two senses of justified authority. When we use this term we may either be referring to the justification for the existence of authoritative institutions, or the justification for the use of authoritative power. Political legitimacy is wrongly identified with the former, He argues, because the question of legitimacy presupposes the existence of authority. It is wrongly identified with the latter because the central concern of political legitimacy is who may exercise authority, whereas an account of the justified use of authority concerns how it is exercised.