


# Kluwer Arbitration Blog

## David J. Bederman (1961-2011)

Roger Alford (General Editor) (Notre Dame Law School) · Wednesday, December 7th, 2011

 My friend [David Bederman](#), the K.H. Gyr Professor in Private International Law at Emory Law School, has passed away. Emory Law School has offered kind remarks of his passing [here](#), and [here](#), and others offer their reflections on his life [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Bederman was a prince of a guy, and a great international law scholar who loved the life of the law. I've known him for over twenty years and always appreciated his thoughtful analysis and kind words.

When I asked him several years ago what sustained him as he was battling cancer, he said that, in addition to his family, he loved to wake up every morning and think about his latest writing project. He wrote until his dying days, finishing his last great book, [Custom as a Source of Law](#), just last year. Among his passions was international arbitration, especially the history of international adjudication.

Just to give you a taste of his work, here's a choice excerpt from a [book chapter](#) he wrote:

What made international claims tribunals the preferred method of claims settlement until the end of the Second World War? One factor not to be underrated is the psychology of international arbitration. It makes for a superb face-saving device in the conduct of international relations. Contentious disputes are submitted to what appear to be a neutral authority which adjudicates them on the basis of a respect for law. The highly-charged political circumstances which gave rise to the claims—whether wars or political upheavals—are neutralized with (usually) years of dispassionate legal analysis and adjustment. If nothing else, international claims settlement is a superb political soporific.

David Bederman gave a “[Final Lecture](#)” in September 2011, but it was not a self-reflective journey on the meaning of life. Rather it was the Inaugural David J. Bederman Lecture.

Interim Dean Robert Schapiro introduced David by stating “Please join me in welcoming ... our friend and colleague, and a hero of mine, Professor David J. Bederman.” After a standing ovation, David said, “I’m glad to be here, in so many respects. I look out in the audience and see so many friends and I’m going to try and spend a few minutes with each of you after the lecture. I am deeply touched that you would spend your afternoon with me. It means a lot to me.” Then he spent

the next hour discussing his latest work on the role of custom in law.

That was David Bederman. Always thinking, always excited about the life of the law, always looking to his next great project. A scholar and friend to the very end.

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This entry was posted on Wednesday, December 7th, 2011 at 6:03 pm and is filed under [International Legal Theory and Teaching](#)

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