

*The Hong Kong Polytechnic University*  
*Department of Logistics and Maritime Studies*  
*Research Seminar*

**The Role of Commercial Law in Solving Current Problems in Shipping and Transport Logistics**

by

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**Date: 13 January 2020 (Monday)**  
**Time: 2:30pm - 3:30pm**  
**Venue: M714, Li Ka Shing Tower**  
**The Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

**(Conducted in English)**

**Abstract:**

While shipboard fires have been an issue since ancient times, fires on cargo ships were more frequently in the news in 2019. When the year began, the Sincerity Ace fire was still burning. By the end of January, major fires on the Yantian Express and the APL Vancouver had joined the list. In February, fires on the E.R. Kobe in Hong Kong's Western Anchorage made headlines. The Grande America sank on March 12 after a major container fire. The list goes on. In September, an IMO sub-committee established the Correspondence Group on a Review of Maritime Special Provisions in response to the increasing number of fires on cargo ships.

Computer technology presents a completely different type of problem. Although "electronic commerce" is a concept of the late 20th century, in the last few years the possibilities of blockchain have attracted renewed interest in the potential cost savings for the liner shipping industry. Even popular publications such as *The Economist* have published feature stories on the subject. Despite that broad interest, the industry still relies primarily on traditional paper bills of lading.

Each of these issues on its face appears to concern a problem best addressed by technical experts. Engineers and computer scientists seem better equipped than lawyers to prevent fires or implement blockchain technology. But commercial law has the capacity to help solve both of these current problems. This presentation will discuss the issues and explain the important role that commercial law could play in their solution.

**Bio:**

An expert in admiralty law and Supreme Court practice, Professor Sturley clerked for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr., and practiced with Sullivan & Cromwell in New York City before joining the faculty in 1984. He teaches and writes in the areas of admiralty, property, and commercial law, and he co-directs the Supreme Court Clinic. He is a co-author of *The Rotterdam Rules* (Sweet & Maxwell, 2010); the author of *The Legislative History of the Carriage of Goods by Sea Act and the Travaux Préparatoires of the Hague Rules* (Rothman, 1990); a co-author of *Admiralty and Maritime Law in the United States* (Carolina Academic Press, 3d ed. 2015); and the author of many articles on admiralty law.

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**All are welcome!**