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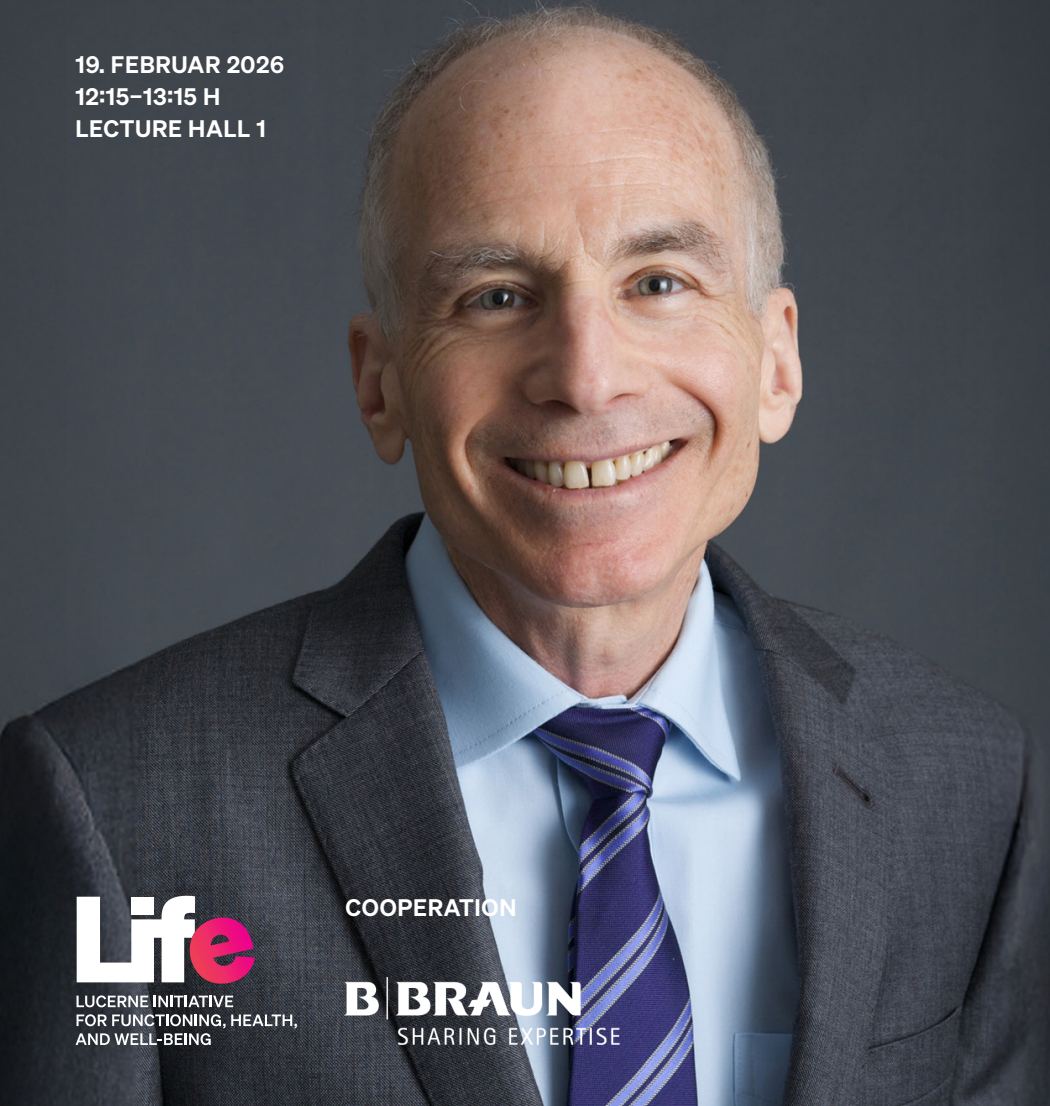
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES
AND MEDICINE

LIFE B.BRAUN LECTURESHIP 2026
**SCIENCE, PUBLIC HEALTH,
AND DEMOCRACY**
LAWRENCE O. GOSTIN

19. FEBRUAR 2026

12:15–13:15 H

LECTURE HALL 1



Life

LUCERNE INITIATIVE
FOR FUNCTIONING, HEALTH,
AND WELL-BEING

COOPERATION

B | BRAUN
SHARING EXPERTISE

Science, Public Health, and Democracy

Abstract

Science and public health are under sustained attack. Mis- and disinformation about health is rampant, amplified by artificial intelligence. Populist governments perpetuate false health information, fueling anti-science beliefs. When truth is debatable and science is undermined, democracy is weakened. We have also witnessed withering attacks on free expression, academic institutions, and free and fair elections. Venerable scientific institutions are crumbling under the strain of a populist assault. In this troubling era, it is vital to stand up for science, public health, and democracy itself.

In this lecture, I will explain why the scientific method is misunderstood and why it is a singularly important way to advance human health and democratic values. I will explain why advancing the right to health is necessary for human flourishing and civic virtue. Liberal democracies are moving rapidly toward rigid individual autonomy and national sovereignty. We need to ask ourselves, “What can I do for my family, my neighbors, my community, and my world”. A world built on equity, justice, and solidarity based on shared democratic values is a future worth fighting for. Perhaps another way to say all this is we must reject selfishness, indecency and dishonesty, and embrace mutual obligations, compassion, and love for one another.

Biography

Lawrence O. Gostin is Distinguished University Professor at Georgetown University, Faculty Director of the O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law, and the Founding O'Neill Chair in Global Health Law. He directs the WHO Center on Global Health Law, supports WHO and the Intergovernmental Negotiation Body in drafting the Pandemic Treaty, and serves on WHO's Review Committee for amendments to the International Health Regulations.

At the forefront of global health policy and law, Professor Gostin has guided responses to major epidemics, including AIDS, SARS, H1N1, Ebola, MERS, Zika, mpox, and COVID-19. He holds international academic appointments at Oxford University, the University of Witwatersrand, Melbourne University, and Sydney University.

Professor Gostin is an elected lifetime Member of the National Academy of Medicine/National Academy of Sciences, a Member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and Fellow of the Hastings Center. President Obama appointed him to the National Cancer Advisory Board. Commissioned by the White House, Professor Gostin currently chairs the National Academies Committee on Current State of Research, Development, and Stockpiling of Smallpox Medical Countermeasures.

His acclaimed books with Harvard University Press include *Global Health Security: A Blueprint for the Future* (2021), which won the Association of American Publishers' PROSE Award, and *Global Health Law* (2014), translated into several languages.

Professor Gostin has been internationally recognized for his contributions to human rights and public welfare, receiving honors from both Japan's Tohoku University and the UK's National Consumer Council.

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