

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

INVITATION TO THE INAUGURAL LECTURE OF

Prof. Dr. Gabriel Abend

Professor of Sociology

What Makes a Sandwich a Sandwich?



TUESDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2019 AT 6.15 P.M.

UNIVERSITY OF LUCERNE, FROHBURGSTRASSE 3, LUCERNE, HS 5

On behalf of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Lucerne I have the honor to announce the inaugural lecture of Prof. Dr. Gabriel Abend entitled:

What Makes a Sandwich a Sandwich?

Social scientists do research on many different things: religion, terrorism, populism, art, culture, the state, development, democratization, and capitalism. They make descriptive and explanatory claims about altruism, empathy, happiness, intelligence, health, social class, social movements, institutions, gender, and diversity. However, they can't agree on what these things are. Social science literatures are rife with definitional conflicts. They've always been. Why is that? What, if anything, can be done about it? Socrates believed you could establish what X really is. Can you? Humpty Dumpty believed you were free to define "X" however you wished. Are you? Some social scientists believe you shouldn't get bogged down with this kind of stuff: it's irrelevant to your empirical research. Is it? While these are old problems, they remain a thorn in social science's side. There's a wide variety of answers to what X is (or how to define "X," conceptualize X, or what "counts" as X), but no agreement on how to adjudicate these disagreements. Even more, there's no agreement on whether these disagreements can and should be adjudicated. Can there be one? And while we're at it, is a burrito a sandwich? How about a hotdog, pia-dina, and veggie burger?

Gabriel Abend got his undergraduate degree at Universidad de la República (Uruguay) and his PhD at Northwestern University (United States). Seeing as capitalism wasn't going to go away any time soon, he decided to sell his labor-power to New York University, first as an Assistant Professor of Sociology, eventually as a tenured Associate Professor of Sociology. He's also been a fellow of Institut d'études avancées (Paris), Max-Weber-Kolleg (Erfurt), Lichtenberg-Kolleg (Göttingen), and Max-Planck-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung (Köln), and a guest professor at École des hautes études en sciences sociales (Paris). Abend is the recipient of the American Sociological Association's 2017 Lewis A. Coser Award for "Theoretical" Agenda Setting. His publications include "Thick concepts and sociological research," "The limits of decision and choice," "Once preguntas sobre la teoría social en América Latina," and "What are neural correlates neural correlates of?," as well as the book, "The Moral Background: An Inquiry into the History of Business Ethics" (Princeton University Press). They're all real page-turners – satisfaction guaranteed or your money back.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this inaugural lecture as well as to the reception afterwards.

Please register on our website until Sunday, 10 November 2019:
www.unilu.ch/abend

Kind regards,



Prof. Dr. Christoph Hoffmann
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