

PUBLIC LECTURE

As part of the Lucerne Master Class 2019

# What Is Capitalist Subjectivity?

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UNIVERSITY OF LUCERNE, ROOM HS 9

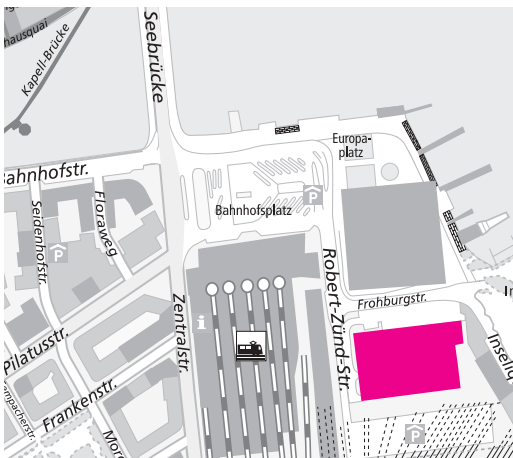
## About

Eva Illouz was born in Morocco, educated in France, and received her higher degrees from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. She is Rose Isaac Chair of Sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a member of the Center for the Study of Rationality, and holds a Chair of Excellence at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris. Her groundbreaking oeuvre on capitalism and emotions includes her monograph *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation* (2012), a book she edited titled *Emotions as Commodities: Capitalism, Consumption and Authenticity* (2018) and her forthcoming monograph *Unloving: A Sociology of Negative Relations* [first published in German under the title *Warum Liebe endet – Eine Soziologie negativer Beziehungen* (2018)].

## What Is Capitalist Subjectivity?

Who and what is the modern subject constitutes the central question of post-World War II philosophy and sociology and has been given a treatment that is almost as large as the discipline of sociology itself. It is undoubtedly Michel Foucault who has most contributed to the inquiry about the constitution of subjectivity, yet he has done so by curiously sapping the very notion of the subject, drawing a large fresco of the genealogy and archeology of the modern sciences which according to him constitute the subject, notably, medicine, the science of sexuality, psychiatry and disciplinary techniques that assisted in governmentality, statistics and demography. This talk takes distance from Foucault's approach in at least two ways: Foucault neglected the economy because discursivity had to make a clean break with materialism and because the will to power was exercised through knowledge and not through ordinary economic self-interests. More exactly, for Foucault, capitalism was yet another site for the deployment of disciplining processes and techniques. He thus vastly under-evaluated the ways in which forms of knowledge and techniques of bio-power could derive directly from and be directly instrumental to the market. Moreover, Foucault's method was on the whole rather uninterested in the self as the locus of desires, volition and emotions.

Based on the recent science of happiness, this talk shows how scientific paradigms become quickly incorporated in capitalist markets and modes of thinking and reshape the toolbox of subjectivity.



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