

UNIVERSITY OF
LUCERNE

INSTITUTE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY
LEGAL STUDIES – LUCERNAIURIS
ANNUAL REVIEW 2025

Lucernaiuris
Institut für Juristische Grundlagen

Hanses
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Annual Review 2025

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I: INSTITUTE

PROFILE

The Institute for Interdisciplinary Legal Studies – lucernaiuris is a hub for leading-edge teaching and research that crosses traditional boundaries between law, the humanities and the social sciences. It holds a distinctive position nationally and internationally as a vibrant site for critical and creative thinking.

The institute's main priorities are to:

- provide a rallying point for inter- and transdisciplinary work on the foundations of law and justice
- foster intellectual and methodological innovation in teaching and research
- promote the training of postgraduate and early career researchers in interdisciplinary legal studies
- stimulate collaborative activities with national and international partners

To borrow a distinction from the late legal historian Marie Theres Fögen, the institute has long seen its role as more that of 'troublemaker' than 'troubleshooter'. A consistent priority has been to undertake work that critiques and unsettles accepted categories and concepts, norms and discourses, practices and methods. This impulse continues to shape the identity of the institute today. Faced with the urgency of our present moment, however, we also turn our attention increasingly to the future – to pursuing new forms of future-oriented critical thinking; to imagining future alternatives or alternative futures; to asking not just what is happening now, but what happens next.

A NOTE ON OUR NAME

During the Middle Ages, "lucerna iuris" was a term applied to the most significant Bolognese jurists. In taking the name for our institute, we of course lay no claim to it – we are but mere dwarves on the shoulders of giants. Rather, the title serves to acknowledge a connection to one of the mythical 'origins' of legal studies (Bologna), and to underline our commitment to a critical engagement with the modern 'Bologna Process' and its implications for teaching and research in law.

MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD



I am delighted to present this annual review of activities at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Legal Studies – *lucernauris* at the University of Lucerne. Following on from last year's anniversary celebrations, 2025 was again busy and vibrant, and you will find in these pages a snapshot of some of the many events and conversations that took place over the past twelve months.

Looking back, we see that much of our work this year was in the sign of cooperation – local, national and international. In October, we organised, together with the Swiss Association for Legal and Social Philosophy (SVRSP) and the Institut für Justizforschung in Lucerne, the 2025 edition of the 'Rousseau Lectures', the SVRSP's flagship event that takes place biennially at host institutions across Switzerland. This year's iteration, on the theme of 'Constitutional Law in Action', featured a keynote public talk and a follow-up masterclass for students, both delivered with aplomb by former constitutional judge Susanne Baer. The public part of the event was further enhanced by interventions from our colleagues in Lucerne, Martin Hartmann and Bernhard Rüttsche,

and we thank them again for their shrewd contributions. In September, leading anthropologist of law, money and finance Bill Maurer gave a talk on "Elite Fragility and the Money Question", which featured critical responses by Adam Hayes and Patrik Hummel, both from the University's new Zug Institute for Blockchain Research, and both of whom we likewise thank for giving kindly of their time and expertise. Early July, meanwhile, brought another highly successful run of the Critical Times summer school, this time on the theme of 'Disruptions'. Here, we were fortunate to be able to call again on the generosity of colleagues and friends who constitute the core summer school 'team' – Shane Chalmers, Julen Etxabe, Mónica López Lerma, Desmond Manderson, Greta Olson, Laura Petersen and Valeria Vázquez Guevara – all of whom continue to show remarkable levels of commitment and care for the summer school as a collaborative undertaking.

Alongside Bill Maurer's talk, our *laboratorium lucernauris* series featured further stimulating contributions from Lara Montesinos Coleman, Başak Ertür and Alessandro Volpi. In the autumn, the online series *Cultures of Legality in Weimar Germany* returned with three seminars led by Xiaojue Michelle Zhu, Hannes Charen and Steven Howe. Earlier in the year, our law and theory workshop took a deep dive into Silvia Federici's book *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* – here, biweekly readings of individual chapters gave rise to lively discussions that included repeatedly astute interventions from our students.

Casting our gaze forwards, 2026 is shaping up to be another full and exciting year. The Critical Times summer school will return, this time centred on the theme of 'Bodies'. We have several impressive speakers lined up for the *laboratorium lucernauris* series, and are looking forward to welcoming two promising young scholars as visiting fellows – Lidia Celli and Andréas-Benjamin Seyfert. 2026 will also see the start of a new collaborative project, the Swiss Law and Humanities Hub, which we will be co-coordinating with the Art-Law Centre at the University of Geneva. This we hope will provide a new kind of intellectual meeting ground for Swiss-based scholars working interdisciplinarily around law and the humanities, and I look forward to reporting back on its activities in twelve months' time.

In the meantime, and on behalf of all at the institute, I thank everyone reading this review for their interest in our work, and wish you all a happy and productive 2026.

Vagias Karavas
Head of Institute

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Professor of Law, Sciences Po, Paris

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Emeritus Professor of Private Law and Legal
Sociology, University of Frankfurt

II: TEACHING

TEACHING PROFILE

At the core of our teaching philosophy lies a firm conviction of the importance of what in German are usually referred to as the 'foundational subjects' (*juristische Grundlagenfächer*) for the discipline of legal studies. Our courses encourage students to engage with the historical, philosophical, social, cultural, economic and technological contexts of law, in the belief that such an approach is vital in:

- strengthening contextual and foundational knowledge
- enhancing methodological competence in understanding structural and systemic connections
- promoting critical reflection on the meaning and validity of positive law
- boosting key skills needed for practice as a lawyer, including analysis, evaluation and communication

Two further principles are also central to our teaching programme. The first is the view that legal education in Switzerland should strive for a more intensive exchange with neighbouring disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Thus, alongside lectures in legal history, legal philosophy and legal sociology, we also offer a range of seminars and workshops that pursue new interdisciplinary directions. The second is the belief that the study of law should also become more international in content and outlook. To this end, we aim to help familiarise students with other legal cultures and orders by opening up teaching to international guest lecturers, developing collaborative projects with partner universities, and nurturing student exchange relationships.

COURSES AND SEMINARS 2025

BACHELOR

Grundlagen des Rechts

Anna Coninx, Vagias Karavas, Michele Luminati, Klaus Mathis

Wehrhafte Demokratie – wie kann und soll sich der demokratische Verfassungsstaat gegen seine Feinde wehren? (Bachelorseminar)

Vagias Karavas, Michele Luminati

Einführung in das juristische Arbeiten

Michele Luminati

Introduzione alla scienza giuridica

Michele Luminati, Christian Bignasca

MASTER

Die Hexenverfolgung und die Entstehung des Kapitalismus (Workshop)

Vagias Karavas, Michele Luminati

Immaterialgüterrecht

Vagias Karavas, Gregor Wild

Verfassungsrecht in Aktion: Workshop zu den aktuellen Herausforderungen für Demokratie und Recht im Werk von Susanne Baer (Workshop)

Michele Luminati, Susanne Baer, Julia Hänni

Law and Justice in Literature and Film

Steven Howe

Law of Sustainable Development

Klaus Mathis

Recht der digitalen Medien

Vagias Karavas

Geschichte des Strafrechts und des Strafvollzugs: Schlagen, Verstümmeln, Einsperren

Michele Luminati

Law and Economics of Organisations (Workshop)

Klaus Mathis

Law and Society in a Global Context

Vagias Karavas

Biomedizinrecht

Vagias Karavas

Restorative Justice: Konfliktbewältigung jenseits staatlicher Gerichte (Integrationsseminar Recht und Politikwissenschaft)

Michele Luminati, Stefan Rieder

LAW AND THEORY WORKSHOP

The law and theory workshop is a fortnightly gathering of students, PhDs, postdocs and staff, who meet to discuss select essays and book chapters on key legal and theoretical issues.

The workshop provides a relaxed space for open discussion and exchange. As much as it is an intellectual exercise for members of the institute, it is also designed as an opportunity for students to gain exposure to advanced critical reading and thinking in law and theory.

2025 WORKSHOP



This year's workshop took the form of an extended reading of Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (2004). Over the course of several weeks, members of the institute met with students to discuss some of Federici's ideas in a series of lively and thought-provoking conversations.

Convenors: Vagias Karavas and Michele Luminati

LLM IN LEGAL THEORY



The European Academy of Legal Theory's LLM is a one-year programme, hosted by the Goethe-University in Frankfurt am Main. It was relaunched in 2014, led by a consortium of European partner universities including Lucerne, Vienna, Frankfurt, Brussels, Cracow and Stockholm.

As the only course of its kind in Europe, the LLM in Legal Theory offers a unique perspective on the study and practice of law. Based around a series of subject-specific modules, taught by specialists from the partner universities, the programme is designed to equip students with the conceptual tools and skills required for a thorough understanding of the workings of law in a modern, globalised world. Strongly interdisciplinary in orientation, the modules promote a productive synthesis of the study of the intellectual heritage of law's traditions and institutions with deep methodological and theoretical reflection, allowing participants to not only gain expertise in a wide range of domestic, European and international subject areas, but to also develop advanced, transferable analytical and critical skills.

Since 2014, the institute has contributed several modules to the LLM programme, particularly in the fields of Law and Economics and Law and Literature.

III: RESEARCH

RESEARCH PROFILE

The institute is committed to advancing pioneering research and projects. We pride ourselves on being a hub of contact and exchange – an open laboratory for the discussion of issues and ideas, methods and theories. This openness is reflected in the work of our members, much of which is based on innovative, often cross-disciplinary, collaborations with colleagues in Lucerne or at other institutions at home and abroad.

The research undertaken at the institute spans local, national and international concerns in areas as diverse as law and technology, law and economics, legal history, and law and humanities studies. Our core interest lies in exploring the conceptual foundations of law, its assumptions and aspirations, and its workings and effects in diverse social and cultural contexts, both historical and contemporary.

Each year, we run a varied schedule of lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences, together with a visiting fellow programme for young scholars. These activities enable us not only to foster a vibrant research community that brings together established and emerging academics, but to also consolidate existing national and international networks, and support new collaborations.

LABORATORIUM LUCERNAIURIS

Launched in 2009, the laboratorium lucernaiuris lecture series provides a platform for critical thinking and discussion around key issues of law, justice and jurisprudence. Speakers from a range of disciplinary, methodological and theoretical orientations are invited to present their latest work and to share their insights with our community of students, faculty and researchers.

The series aims to strike a balance between convention and innovation. While open to talks on traditional legal subject matter, it also strives to nurture a space for showcasing original work that moves outside established disciplinary frames. Speakers are, moreover, actively encouraged to think outside the box and to take the opportunity to test new ideas and approaches.

2025 LECTURES



The 2025 lecture series kicked off with Lara Montesinos Coleman, Professor of International Law, Ethics and Political Economy at the University of Sussex, speaking on 'Violent Legality and the Politics of Rights: Struggles for the Human at the End of the Liberal Order?' A lead point of the talk was to ask whether, in the face of escalating climate breakdown and fascist resurgence, human rights retain any liberatory or disruptive potential. And if so, how? Shifting away from arguments that either cling uncritically to liberal discourses of rights or that focus only on the historical complicity between liberalism, colonialism and fascism, Lara suggested we look instead to the work of anti-colonial movements and grassroots organisations in the global south that have used the notion of human rights disruptively to expose the violence of law and capital. At stake here is what Lara terms an 'insurgent humanism' that rests on a more radical concept of the human developed in the context of political struggle, and which not only challenges our understanding of human rights in the context of neoliberal economics but also offers a sense of 'radical hope' for intervening in larger structures of injustice.



The second event in the series featured a screening of Marleen Gorris's feminist classic *A Question of Silence* (1982), alongside a talk by Başak Ertür, Reader at the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London. The film is famous for one scene in particular, in which wild, contagious laughter engulfs all women present in the courtroom during a murder trial. Thinking this through with the work of Bonnie Honig, Başak placed the scene within an arc of feminist refusal – as both a rejection of the here and now and an emergent intervention that unfolds the elsewhere in the present. By juxtaposing this sequence with other scenes of feminist refusal – a fifteenth century image of Calefurnia baring her backside to the judge, the Bacchae tearing apart Pentheus, Nancy Spero's works based on Sheela-na-Gigs – Başak claimed ground for a 'minor jurisprudence' of refusal that asks after the role and workings of the uncontainable, the unruly, and the inadmissible within the forum of law's authority.



The first talk of the autumn term was given by Bill Maurer, Professor of Anthropology and Law and Director of the Institute for Money, Technology, and Financial Inclusion at the University of California, Irvine. Referencing the recent GENIUS Act, passed by US Congress in July 2025, Bill began by suggesting that the new regulatory framework for stablecoin issuance represents a modern iteration of recurring historical patterns, whereby elites adopt new money forms to assert authority, attract followers, and consolidate political power. Support for this was drawn from the writings of German ethnologist and historian Heinrich Schurtz who, in the late nineteenth century, presented a theoretical framework for understanding how monetary systems reflect and sustain political hierarchies – by managing the tension between ‘inside-money’ (that emerges from the internal forces of social life) and ‘outside-money’ (that enters society through external trade and animates individual profit-making as a cultural value). The new US legislation creates conditions for an elite-dominated stablecoin market that undermines crypto’s original democratizing ethos. Yet Schurtz’s framework also offers a glimmer of hope: his analysis of historical patterns suggests that the elite capture of outside-money and its transformation into a tool of power usually gives way, eventually, to more democratic alternatives. The challenge, in Bill’s view, is to consider how this might be precipitated, and to think through the forms such alternatives might take. The talk was followed by insightful responses from Adam Hayes and Patrik Hummel, colleagues from the new Zug Institute for Blockchain Research at the University of Lucerne.



The final talk of the year was delivered by Alessandro Volpi, a 2025 Visiting Fellow at the Institute. This too started from a parallel between the historical and the contemporary – namely, Dieter Grimm’s recent linking of the Weimar-era Schmitt-Kelsen debate over who should safeguard the constitution to current discussions about popular and populist constitutionalism. From here, Alessandro explored how enduring concerns about constitutional guardianship continue to shape modern constitutional democracies, even as legal and political contexts shift, and new cultural forces come into play. Bringing together a range of theoretical positionings in legal and political philosophy, the talk highlighted, in an acute way, the ongoing tensions between constitutionalism and democracy, as well as the limits and constraints on majoritarian power, and the relevance of popular sovereignty for the legitimacy of constitutional orders. These tensions are, Alessandro suggested, largely irreducible and allow at most for partial settlement. As such, they are best thought of as something to inhabit and remain conscious of, not as something to deny or to resolve.

CRITICAL TIMES 2025: DISRUPTIONS

Convenors: Steven Howe, Vagias Karavas
30 June to 4 July 2025



Ours is a time of disruption; a “disruptive age” as Bernard Stiegler terms it. Rapid technological change, the accelerating scarcity of biospheric resources, heightened political and economic volatility, social unrest and discontent – these are just some of the pressures that are radically (re-)shaping the modern condition, and which are making the experience of disruptiveness an “epochal signature” (Erich Hörl) of the twenty-first century.

The language of disruption is pervasive. At root, the term derives from the Latin *disrumpere*, meaning to break apart or to shatter; it refers to the action of “rending or bursting asunder”. But it also carries the sense of interrupting or jamming; of “breaking between” and “preventing something [...] from continuing as usual or as expected”. To disrupt is to unsettle conventional frames and norms, flows and continuities – it is, in essence, a destructive act. And yet equally, it holds force as a generative move – one that not only calls into question what is entrenched and naturalized but which conjures the possibility of thinking and making things anew.

The 2025 Critical Times summer school invited postdocs, ECRs and graduate students to assemble for a week of interdisciplinary exploration into the meanings, forms and effects of disruption – as event, as process, as mode, as gesture. The aim was to open a space for thinking – deeply, critically and creatively – about how disruptive forces upset existing notions of law and justice, tradition and community, and about the possibilities they open for transforming our legal, political and cultural imaginaries.

In line with the established practice of previous editions, the programme was organised around a series of inter- and cross-disciplinary morning seminars facilitated by leading scholars from across law and the humanities. In the afternoons, participants had the chance to present their own work and to share thoughts and feedback in a relaxed and supportive setting. These core sessions were enriched by a variety of evening talks, seminars, conversations, screenings, and social gatherings.

As is now the custom, the school attracted a cohort of outstanding young scholars from different disciplines and geographical backgrounds. Together, the sessions were a showcase of forward-thinking interdisciplinary work being done all over the world at the intersections between legal, critical and cultural theory. As importantly, the events were infused with a spirit of openness and camaraderie that remains a hallmark of the school.

PROGRAMME

Morning Seminars

- **Strategies of Resignification: Making Strange, Repair, Prefiguration, Judgment**
Julen Etxabe (University of British Columbia)
- **Disrupting Law Through Documentary Film**
Mónica López Lerma (Reed College)
- **Juris-Geography: The Made Up and the Made Real**
Shane Chalmers (University of Hong Kong) and Desmond Manderson (The Australian National University)
- **Introduction to Post-Apocalyptic Law**
Malte-Christian Gruber (University of Giessen)
- **Disrupting the Affective Work of Anti-Immigration Narratives and Images**
Greta Olson (University of Giessen)

Special Events

- **Violent Legalities and the Politics of Rights: Struggles for the Human at the End of the Liberal Order?**
Evening talk by Lara Montesinos Coleman (University of Sussex)
- **Law and Space: Disrupting the Universal**
Evening seminar with Sabarish Suresh (National University of Singapore)
- **A Minor Jurisprudence of Refusal: A Question of Silence (Marleen Gorris, 1982)**
Film screening and talk with Başak Ertür (Goldsmiths, University of London)
- **Working with Disruptions: Life Happens**
Discussion session with Laura Petersen (University of Lucerne) and Valeria Vázquez Guevara (University of Hong Kong)

SVRSP ROUSSEAU LECTURES 2025

Organisation: Julia Hänni, Vagias Karavas, Michele Luminati
23. & 24. Oktober 2025



Im Oktober 2025 organisierte das Institut in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Obwaldner Institut für Justizforschung und der Schweizerischen Vereinigung für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie (SVRSP) die vierte Ausgabe der SVRSP Rousseau Lectures – eine der grössten und renommiertesten akademischen Veranstaltungen im Bereich der Rechtsphilosophie und Rechtstheorie in der Schweiz.

Im Mittelpunkt der diesjährigen Lectures stand das Spannungsverhältnis zwischen verfassungsrechtlichen Normen und ihrer Umsetzung in politischen und gesellschaftlichen Prozessen. Unter dem Titel „Verfassungsrecht in Aktion: Von der Freiheit und der Gleichheit in der Arbeit am Konsens“ wurde untersucht, wie Verfassungsrecht in der Praxis Demokratie und Gerechtigkeit gestaltet und auf drängende Herausforderungen der Gegenwart reagiert. Dabei stand die Frage im Zentrum, wie rechtliche Rahmenbedingungen Freiheit und Gleichheit in einer pluralistischen Gesellschaft sichern und gleichzeitig den gesellschaftlichen Konsens stärken können.

Keynote-Speaker war Susanne Baer, Professorin für Öffentliches Recht und Geschlechterstudien an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin und ehemalige Richterin des Bundesverfassungsgerichts. Ihr Vortrag widmete sich den aktuellen Herausforderungen für Demokratie und Rechtsstaatlichkeit, insbesondere in den Bereichen Klima- und soziale Gerechtigkeit, Gleichheit und Meinungsfreiheit. Aus einer rechtskritischen Perspektive wurde das Spannungsfeld von Recht als lebendige Praxis analysiert. Dabei wurde beleuchtet, wie Verfassungsrecht nicht nur als normativer Rahmen, sondern auch als dynamisches Instrument gesellschaftlicher Aushandlungsprozesse fungiert. Besonderes Augenmerk lag dabei auf der Frage, wie durch rechtliche Mechanismen ein inklusiver Konsens in einer zunehmend polarisierten Welt erreicht werden kann.

Der Vortrag war gefolgt von Kommentaren von Martin Hartmann und Bernhard Rüttsche (beide Universität Luzern) sowie einer offenen Diskussionsrunde. Moderiert wurde die Veranstaltung von Bundesrichterin Julia Hänni und Vagias Karavas. Eine vertiefende Auseinandersetzung mit den im Vortrag angesprochenen Themen fand in einer anschliessenden Masterclass statt, welche von Michele Luminati organisiert wurde.

Ein Podcast des Vortrags ist [hier](#) abrufbar.

Photos: © Lorena Gisler.

CULTURES OF LEGALITY IN WEIMAR GERMANY

Convenors: Steven Howe, Laura Petersen, Nicole Schraner

Cultures of Legality in Weimar Germany is an online seminar series, run as part of the SNSF project *Imagining Justice: Law, Politics and Popular Visual Culture in Weimar Germany*. The series is an informal setting, where speakers working from different disciplinary and methodological perspectives are invited to present their ongoing research on the relations between law, politics and culture during the Weimar era.

Following a brief hiatus in the first part of the year, the series returned in the autumn with three seminars. We began with Xiaojue Michelle Zhu, PhD candidate at The Courtauld Institute of Art in London, discussing the visual activism of the Institute for Sexual Science, founded by Magnus Hirschfeld in 1919. Through a deft, comparative exploration of sexological and criminal photographs – in terms of epistemology, visibility, display, and reception – Michelle’s contribution shed light on the complex and ambivalent work of the institute’s use of images, which offered greater visibility to ‘sex-gender non-conformities’, but which also, in part at least, perpetuated the queer body’s criminal association. The second session featured Hannes Charen, Adjunct Associate Professor at the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, speaking on the visualisation of legal subjectivity in Weimar cinema. The first part of Hannes’s talk offered a sweeping cross-view of how the popular films of the period contribute to shaping the legitimation of law vis-à-vis the concept of criminality, as figured in terms of delinquency, genius or madness. Zooming in on Fritz Lang’s *M*, the second part traced how popular film also opened more critical lines on the ambivalences of law and its attendant political culture, before gesturing towards a larger claim – namely, that such popular representations situated the terms of public discussion on criminality, responsibility, law and justice within the sphere of cinema itself. Rounding off this run of the series, project lead Steven Howe presented on the ‘paragraph films’ of the Weimar era as a distinct genre of legal cinema. Introducing several examples, he offered a ‘thick’ contextualisation of the films in relation to circulating legal, political and aesthetic discourses, before moving to a consideration of the cultural work that they perform as instances of popular legality. Here, the talk highlighted how, through their content and form, the films signify a storied critique of injustice that encourages viewers to connect emotionally with the situation presented. In this way the films are, on Steven’s reading, bound up with the processes of emotional mobilization associated with the contemporary ‘struggle for law’ in Weimar.

PROGRAMME

12 November 2025

Visualising ‘Through Science to Justice’? Sexological Photographs in the Weimar Republic
Xiaojue Michelle Zhu (The Courtauld Institute of Art, London)

25 November 2025

Visualising the Legal Subject in Weimar Film
Hannes Charen (Pratt Institute, Brooklyn)

10 December 2025

The Paragraph Film: Genre, Emotions and the Struggle for Law
Steven Howe (University of Lucerne)

VISITING FELLOWS

The visiting fellows programme is designed to facilitate intellectual exchange between our members and the wider academic community. The scheme accommodates emerging scholars who wish to spend time in Lucerne pursuing work that overlaps with or otherwise complements scholarly activities currently being pursued at the institute. During their stay, fellows enjoy access to our specialist resources, and are invited to share and develop their ideas under the supervision of one or more of our faculty.

Tailored to PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers, the programme is open to all working critically, theoretically and innovatively at the intersections between law, the humanities and the social sciences. A leading aim of the scheme is to foster conversations that cut across borders both geographic and disciplinary. We strongly believe that the academic and international diversity of our fellows greatly enriches the intellectual life of the institute.

2025 FELLOWS



Sabarish Suresh is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Legal Studies at the New York University Abu Dhabi. He researches in the fields of law and humanities, legal history, constitutional law, and criminal law.

Sabarish earned his JSD at the Benjamin N Cardozo School of Law, New York, with a thesis that was awarded the 2023 Julien Mezey Dissertation Prize by the Association for the Study of Law, Culture, and the Humanities (LCH). He has held visiting positions at the Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory in Frankfurt and the National Law School of India University, Bangalore.

During his fellowship at the institute, Sabarish worked on the project *Trigonometrical Juridism in British India: Unificatory Images and Jurisdictional Rationality*. He also delivered an evening seminar as part of the Critical Times summer school on Disruptions.



Alessandro Volpi is a researcher in legal and political philosophy, whose current work focuses on the relations between constitutionalism and populism in contemporary democracies. While at the institute, Alessandro worked on a project that looked particularly at the relevance of Carl Schmitt's political theology and constitutional theory in understanding the foundational elements of the constitutional vision of populism. He also gave a talk on contemporary resonances of the Schmitt-Kelsen debate on constitutional guardianship as part of the *laboratorium lucernauris* series.

Alessandro earned his Bachelor and Masters degrees in Philosophy from the University of Bologna, during which time he also spent a semester at the Complutense University of Madrid. He completed his PhD in Philosophy of Law at the University of Salerno and was a Visiting PhD Student at the University of Freiburg (Germany). In 2024, he held a postdoctoral research fellowship at the Italian Institute for Philosophical Studies in Naples.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Spazidentità: Spazialità materiale e immateriale dell'italianità dalla Repubblica Cisalpina al Fascismo: territori, città, architetture, musei

Michele Luminati (mit Catherine Brice und Letizia Tedeschi)

Das Projekt konzentriert sich auf die räumliche Dimension der italienischen nationalen Identität, sowohl im materiellen als auch im immateriellen Sinne, in einem chronologischen Bogen, der von der Geburt der Cisalpinen Republik bis zum Ende des Faschismus reicht, wobei der Restaurationszeit besondere Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet wird. Die folgenden Fallstudien wurden ausgewählt: Florenz, Mailand, Palermo, Rom, Turin und Triest. Das Projekt ist als interdisziplinäres und transnationales Laboratorium konzipiert, das darauf abzielt, 1) eine materielle Räumlichkeit, zu der städtische Räume, Architektur, Denkmäler, Museen, öffentlich zugängliche Privatsammlungen und Ausstellungen gehören; 2) eine immaterielle Räumlichkeit, die aus Erzählungen, kulturellen und politischen Debatten, rechtlichen und sozialen Praxen besteht, zu untersuchen.

Imagining Justice: Law, Politics and Popular Visual Culture in Weimar Germany (SNSF Project)

Steven Howe, Laura Petersen, Nicole Schraner

This project proposes a first extended investigation of the relations between law, justice and popular visual culture during the era of the Weimar Republic. Its leading premise is that the interwar period in Germany witnessed a remarkable confluence of law, politics and cultural representations that radically altered the shape and texture of the legal imagination. Historical scholarship has not been blind to this, and there is a substantial body of work that considers how traditional journalistic and literary forms contributed to the development of a new popular legal culture. What has been almost entirely overlooked, however, is the impact of the 'new' visual media of the era – cinema, photography and mass image-reproduction techniques – that literally changed how legal subjects and the legal system were seen, and which engendered new spaces of conversation, contestation, dissent and critique.

The project seeks to excavate this neglected archive of visual material as a way of opening new lines of enquiry on how perceptions and understanding of law and justice were experienced, constructed, conditioned or challenged through the new image regimes of the Weimar period. Working across three distinct media forms – cinema, visual art, photography – the aim is to develop a set of new and innovative critical perspectives on (i) the *forms* of legal image-making engendered by the visual media of the Weimar era; (ii) the *meanings* these images generate in the context(s) of their production, circulation and reception; and (iii) the *cultural work* these images perform in fostering and shaping a popular legal imagination outside the formal spaces of law and politics.

Justizgeschichte des schweizerischen Bundesstaates: Justizelite zwischen Recht und Politik, 1848-2020

Michele Luminati

Die zunehmende Bedeutung der Justiz in der globalisierten Welt hat zu einem beträchtlichen Aufschwung der Justizforschung und Justizgeschichte geführt. Eine markante Lücke besteht allerdings in Bezug auf die Schweiz. Mit diesem langfristigen Forschungsprojekt (teilfinanziert durch den SNF, den Fonds zur Förderung des Akademischen Nachwuchses der UZH und die Stiftung Ecoscientia) sollen die Grundlagen für eine methodisch abgesicherte und international vernetzte Beschäftigung mit der Geschichte der Justiz im schweizerischen Bundesstaat geschaffen werden.

Ein erster Schwerpunkt liegt bei der rechts- und sozialgeschichtlichen Untersuchung des Schweizerischen Bundesgerichts. Auf der Grundlage einer prosopographischen Datenbank entsteht ein biographisches Lexikon der Bundesrichterninnen und Bundesrichter für die Periode 1848 – 2020. Parallel dazu werden laufend multifaktorielle Analysen der gesammelten Daten publiziert, die

Aufschluss über die Dynamik von Richterwahlen, Richterkarrieren und Richterprofilen liefern und über die Entwicklung der schweizerischen Justizelite Auskunft geben.

Ein zweiter Schwerpunkt bildet die Frage nach den Wechselwirkungen zwischen Rechtsprechung und Gesetzgebung in der Schweiz. Insbesondere wird der Umgang des Schweizerischen Bundesgerichts mit den grossen Kodifikationen (OR, ZGB und StGB) untersucht. In diesem Zusammenhang stellen sich etwa folgende Fragen: Was bedeutet Gesetzesbindung und Umsetzung des gesetzgeberischen Willens? Wie werden Konflikte zwischen unterschiedlichen (kantonalen) Rechtsprechungstraditionen gelöst?

Symbiotic Associations of Humans and Social Robots: Tracing the Effects of Human-Robot Interaction, Collaboration and Physical Coupling on the Legal Subject
Rüya Tuna Toparlak

This research project inspects human-robot social interactions and their effects on the legal subject. Due to our emotional and physical entanglement, collaboration, and joint decision-making, a symbiotic association of humans and social robots emerges, which holds the potential of restructuring private law.

This research introduces a novel perspective to the legal subjectivity debate that concentrates on our interaction with robots, rather than the existing view of closing the liability gaps arising from the robot's autonomy. To understand the characteristics of the emerging symbiosis, the project takes a cross-disciplinary view and borrows methods from other social sciences as they pertain to the post-humanist discourse towards which this research moves.

To inspect the meaning of robots for humans, and our ability to connect and interact with them, the project conceptualises case studies about sex robots. Legal tensions arise as these robots hold a different value for users, they elicit a sense of reciprocity and are considered more than mere property. Capturing this social reality means assigning certain rights to social robots, not to protect them 'as such' but to protect the interaction and the emerging symbiotic association. This research illustrates that the human-social robot symbiosis makes it a futile act to try to disentangle the responsibility of human and robot from each other. Thus, it suggests new liability spheres to address the symbiotic association. Through these suggestions, the research inspects a new ontological category for social robots, between an object and a subject.

In 2025-2026, Rüya consulted on a UKRI-funded project titled 'AI Chatbots and Violence Against Women and Girls: New Frontiers, New Harms'. This project outlined the gender-based harms caused by both general-purpose AI chatbots and companion AI apps. The project output is a report that was launched at the House of Lords in the UK Parliament. The report is accessible [here](#).

AI Authorship, AI Inventorship, and the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights in the Age of Innovation
Teona Kvirikashvili

Amongst the many areas in which Artificial Intelligence (AI), in its many forms, has caused confusion and raised questions, of course stands the law as the leading mechanism for social regulation. Law at large is naturally challenged by the emergence of this new powerful actor in almost all areas of its application. How does one regulate something which is often too complicated, if not impossible, to understand equally for lawmakers and average humans? What we are facing currently has been described as "the wisdom gap" – the gap between the rising interconnected complexity of our problems and our ability to make sense of it all. From both governments and various organizations, efforts and suggestions are being made to ensure ethical and legal norms are respected in areas of heavy AI involvement. There is a continued need of further analysis and perhaps creation of new, clearer, and ethically balanced legal norms to adequately respond to the challenges caused by AI.

This PhD project concerns itself with exploring the Intellectual Property (IP) law – specifically copyright and patent implications of so-called generative AI. In the light of ever-increasing AI emergence, the author will analyze how the classical concepts of authorship and inventorship are challenged by AI activities in creative and innovative industries. From the copyright side, it needs to be decided how, if at all, the works produced by generative AI machines & software should or could be protected by IP law. Concept of creativity and authorship will be looked at to understand whether machines have become truly creative or if despite their increased autonomy they still remain to be simply another kind of a tool, some version of which humans have always used in their creative process. On the other hand, when it comes to patents, the concept of an inventor has already been challenged by a specific case commonly known as the DABUS with many more to surely follow. Here again, the question is whether inventions of high AI involvement or supposedly fully AI generated can be patented, considering that the laws in virtually all jurisdictions have so far required a human inventor. The thesis shall look at the consequences of both AI inventorship recognition and denial.

Ultimately the project will showcase what it means for current copyright and patent law frameworks to operate in this new world, where machines also produce or at least take a major role in producing creative pieces as well as technical innovations.

Die Genese des Rechts auf Wahrheit als neues Menschenrecht im internationalen Recht
Emiliano Chiera

Neuere Entwicklungen in der Menschenrechtstheorie und -praxis haben ein bedeutendes rechtswissenschaftliches Paradigma hervorgebracht, das als "Recht auf Wahrheit" bekannt ist. Die Frage, ob ein derart komplexes und abstraktes Konzept wie die Wahrheit tatsächlich als Gegenstand oder Objekt des Rechts betrachtet werden kann oder ob es sich lediglich um eine bloße Utopie handelt, steht im Zentrum dieser wissenschaftlichen Diskussion. Diese Dissertation zielt darauf ab, eine umfassende Analyse der Entstehung und Entwicklung des Rechts auf Wahrheit als neues Menschenrecht im internationalen Recht durchzuführen, beginnend von seinen historischen Anfängen bis zur gegenwärtigen Zeit. Der Schwerpunkt liegt darauf, die noch weitgehend unklaren Ursprünge dieses Rechts und seine Evolution hin zu einer rechtsverbindlichen Norm des internationalen Menschenrechts zu untersuchen. Insbesondere wird analysiert, wie aus einem ursprünglichen ethisch-moralischen Bedürfnis bzw. Verlangen, die Wahrheit über Kriegsverbrechen, schwere Menschenrechtsverletzungen und das Schicksal vermisster Angehöriger zu erfahren, ein fest etabliertes Recht im internationalen Rechtssystem entstehen konnte. Das Hauptziel besteht darin, die rechtshistorischen Ereignisse zu rekonstruieren und zu ermitteln, die diesen Verrechtlichungs- und Transformationsprozess ermöglichten und vorantrieben sowie die Existenz und Notwendigkeit dieses Rechts als autonomes Menschenrecht zu bewerten, indem die Bedürfnisse und Interessen der Betroffenen identifiziert und berücksichtigt werden. Ferner soll die transformative Kraft dieses Rechts für individuelle Opfer abscheulicher Gräueltaten und deren Angehörige sowie für die betroffene Gesellschaft und die Menschheit als Ganzes beleuchtet werden. Diese Forschungsarbeit trägt zum Verständnis der rechtshistorischen, politischen und gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhänge bei, die zu seiner Anerkennung und Verrechtlichung geführt haben, und betont die Bedeutung dieses Rechts für die Förderung von Gerechtigkeit, Wahrheit und Versöhnung auf globaler Ebene.

Das Eigentum in Recht und Politik und der Einfluss der Universität in Basel in der Zeit um die Helvetik
Lukas Romer

Die Ausgestaltung des Rechtsinstituts Eigentum hat einen bedeutenden Einfluss auf die ökonomischen Verhältnisse einer Gesellschaft und damit auch auf ihre soziale Struktur. Die Eigentumskonzepte sind gleichzeitig immer wieder Reformen unterworfen, die entsprechende Veränderungen in der Gesellschaft mit sich bringen.

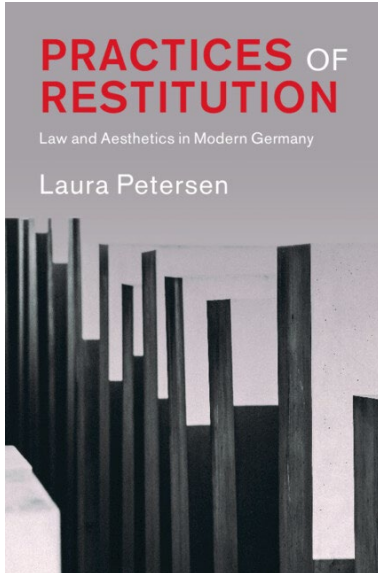
Am Wendepunkt von der Frühen Neuzeit zur Moderne erfährt das Recht als Ganzes und mit ihm folglich das Eigentumsinstitut eine starke Veränderung: von feudalen und teilweise kollektiven

Strukturen hin zum bis heute vorherrschenden Privateigentum. Diese Veränderung zu untersuchen und anhand des rechtswissenschaftlichen Diskurses und der Rechtsanwendung darzustellen, ist Ziel dieses Dissertationsprojekts. Denn auch vor der Alten Eidgenossenschaft machten die revolutionären Ideen während der Helvetik nicht halt, wenn sie sich auch nur am Rande in Umstürzen wie im benachbarten Frankreich manifestierten.

Mit Basel als Untersuchungsort wurde dabei einerseits der Ort der Alten Eidgenossenschaft ausgewählt, an dem es während der Helvetik zu einem politischen Umsturz und später auch zur Kantonsteilung kam. Andererseits war Basel seit 1460 Universitätsstadt – bis dato die einzige der Eidgenossenschaft. Wie weit sich nun der Einfluss der juristischen Fakultät der Universität auf die Gesellschaft und das vorherrschende gemeine Recht wie auch auf das Rechtsinstitut Eigentum auswirkte und wie weit sich dieser Einfluss auch in den politischen Umwälzungen zeigte und zu entsprechenden Veränderungen des Rechtsinstituts führte, soll anhand der Archivbestände aus Stadt und Landschaft Basel untersucht werden.

NEW BOOKS

Laura Petersen, *Practices of Restitution: Law and Aesthetics in Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025)



Since the end of the Second World War, restitution in Germany – *Wiedergutmachung* – has been mainly understood as part of state or private law. This book offers a different approach, arguing that authors and artists have also taken up a responsibility for restitution. Deploying the literal translation 'making-good-again', this book focuses on the 'making' of law, literature and visual art to argue that restitution is a practice which is found in different genres, sites and temporalities. The practices of restitution identified are dynamic, iterative and incomplete: they are practices of failure. Nevertheless, in this book, the question of how to conduct restitution emerges as a material question of responsibility asked through the making of texts and objects in different genres, including law. The resulting text is a unique expansion and re-conceptualisation of the practices of jurisprudence, restitution and responsibility in the context of the aftermath in Germany.

FURTHER PUBLICATIONS

STEVEN HOWE

- Legal Cinema in a Time of Crisis: Notes on the Weimar-Era Tendenzfilm. In: Klaus Stierstorfer et al. (eds.), *Constitutivity. Literatur und Recht* (Berlin: Metzler, 2026) [in print]

KLAUS MATHIS

- Kulturförderung aus rechtsökonomischer Sicht. In: Klaus Mathis et al. (Hrsg.), *Schutz von Mensch und Umwelt im europäischen Kontext. Festschrift für Sebastian Heselhaus zum 65. Geburtstag* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2025), S. 29-54
- Nachhaltigkeit und Demokratie. Am Beispiel der halbdirekten Demokratie in der Schweiz. In: Carsten Becker et al. (Hrsg.), *Grundlagen der demokratischen Verfassung. Festschrift für Robert Alexy zum 80. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2025), S. 179-192

LAURA PETERSEN

- Feet Notes: Walking as a Technique of Law and Humanities Education. In: Greta Olson et al. (eds), *Law and Critique / Recht und Kritik* (Baden-Baden: Verlag Karl Alber, 2025), pp. 333-337

RÜYA TUNA TOPARLAK

- The New Voyeurism: Criminalising the Creation of 'Deepfake Porn'. In: *Journal of Law and Society* 52 (2) 2025, 204-228 [with Clare McGlynn]
- Not Born But Made: Feminist Perspectives on Sex Robot Regulation. In: *Digital Society* 4 (3) (2025), 67

PRESENTATIONS

STEVEN HOWE

- Moving Pictures: Law, Politics and Film in Germany, 1919-1933
- Guest seminar "Stop Reading! Look!" Law, Politics and Popular Visual Culture in Weimar Germany, organised by the Association for the Study of Law, Culture and the Humanities (with Laura Petersen and Nicole Schraner)
- The Paragraph Film: Genre, Emotions and the Struggle for Law
Seminar Series Cultures of Legality in Weimar Germany, University of Lucerne
- Close-Up: Visibilities of (In)Justice in Weimar Cinema
AIDEL Conference In/Visibilities in Law and Culture, University of Verona

LAURA PETERSEN

- Outsider / Insider Art in the Weimar Republic
German Studies Association of Australia Conference on Community / Gemeinschaft, University of Melbourne and Monash University
- Being and Doing Law and the Humanities Roundtable
Being and Doing Law and the Humanities Workshop, University of Melbourne
- Challenging the Carceral Gaze: Re-Viewing Hans Prinzhorn's Artistry of the Prisoners (1926)
Guest lecture at the Center for Diversity, Media and Law, University of Giessen
- Anonymous Avant-Gardes? Hans Prinzhorn's Artistry of the Prisoners
Guest seminar "Stop Reading! Look!" Law, Politics and Popular Visual Culture in Weimar Germany, organised by the Association for the Study of Law, Culture and the Humanities (with Steven Howe and Nicole Schraner)
- Working with Disruptions: Life Happens
Critical Times Summer School Disruptions, University of Lucerne (with Valeria Vázquez Guevara)

NICOLE SCHRANER

- Visuelle Justizkritik: Die Gerichtsphotografie als strategisches Mittel der KPD in politischen Prozessen zwischen 1928 und 1933
27. Jahrestagung, Geschichte strategischer Prozessführung, Forum Justizgeschichte, Richterakademie Wustrau
- Bilder des Rechts. Gerichtsphotografie und Justizkritik in der Weimarer Republik (1919-1933)
7. schweizerische Geschichtstage (Un)sichtbarkeit als Spannungsfeld historiographischer Praktiken, Universität Luzern
- Visualising Justice: Photographic Representations of Law and Justice in the Weimer Republic (1919-1933)
Guest seminar "Stop Reading! Look!" Law, Politics and Popular Visual Culture in Weimar Germany, organised by the Association for the Study of Law, Culture and the Humanities (with Steven Howe and Laura Petersen)

IV: COVER IMAGE

HAMSINI MARADA, RISE AND FALL



Rise and Fall comments on political decay and democratic backsliding by portraying crumbling institutions – both legal and social. Yet the artwork is also imbued with the hope of rebuilding structures that welcome critique and meaningful dissent.

See further: Hamsini Marada, On Law, Aesthetics and the Camera. In: *Amicus Curiae*, Series 2, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2025), 433-446



Hamsini Marada is an Assistant Professor at Jindal Global Law School, India. She works in the intersection of aesthetics, ethics and law. Her goal as a teacher and lawyer is to increase access to law through art in India and South Asia.

V: 2026 – A PREVIEW

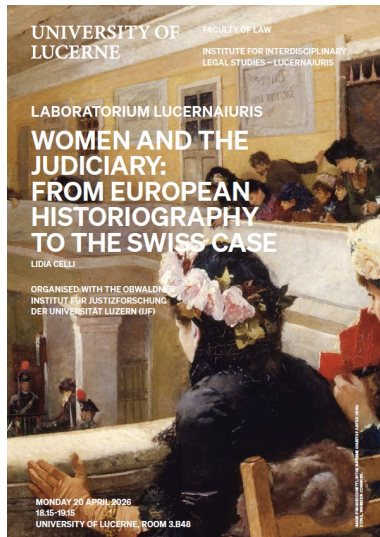
CRITICAL TIMES SUMMER SCHOOL: BODIES



The Critical Times summer school will return in 2026 with a session on Bodies. Extending the recent ‘bodily turn’ in critical and legal theory, the school aims to be an interdisciplinary space for reflecting anew on the “matter of bodies” and “bodies that matter” (Judith Butler). Together, students and facilitators from across law and the humanities will consider bodies that assemble and disassemble, that appear and disappear, that are protected, punished, cared for and ignored. From the vulnerable to the resistant, the human to the more-than-human, we will ask how legal and cultural frameworks make some bodies visible and others invisible – and how embodiment, performance and affect shape and unsettle our legal imaginaries.

Confirmed speakers: Christine Abbt (University of St. Gallen), Shane Chalmers (University of Hong Kong), Julen Etxabe (University of British Columbia), Mónica López Lerma (Reed College), Greta Olson (University of Giessen), Laura Petersen (University of Lucerne), Sabarish Suresh (NYU Abu Dhabi), Valeria Vázquez Guevara (University of Hong Kong) and Illan Wall (University of Galway).

LABORATORIUM LUCERNAIURIS



The laboratorium lucernaiuris series will recommence in April with a talk by Lidia Celli on Women and the Judiciary: From European Historiography to the Swiss Case. Other speakers lined up for 2026 include Illan Wall (University of Galway) and Mónica López Lerma (Reed College).

SWISS LAW AND HUMANITIES HUB



The Swiss Law and Humanities Hub (SLHH) is a new initiative co-developed by the Institute and the Art-Law Centre at the University of Geneva. Its aim is to enable better connection and exchange of ideas between Swiss-based scholars with shared critical and theoretical interests around the intersections of law and the humanities, broadly defined. The Hub will begin its activities in March 2026 with an online research showcase. A second event featuring a screening of the film *Elephants and Squirrels* is scheduled for early June.

VISITING FELLOWS 2026

We are delighted to announce the following two fellowships for 2026:



Lidia Celli
Dates: April 2026
Project: Judicial Power and Gender Boundaries: The Case of Swiss Women Magistrates



Andréas-Benjamin Seyfert
Dates: June to July 2026
Project: Queer Helvetia: Swiss Law, Visual Culture, and Subjectivity, circa 1942

