

Law and the Humanities World

Swiss Law and Humanities Hub Conference

1 & 2 September 2026

University of Lucerne

CALL FOR PAPERS

In *Humanities Theory* (2025, with Amanda Anderson), Simon During offers a suggestive mapping of a “humanities world” – a loosely linked “conglomeration of practices, interests, compartments, personae, offices, moods, purposes and values” that inhabit “various settings, disciplines and institutions”. The “humanities world” is plural and diverse; it has no essence or centre, even as it is threaded by shared – if contested – histories, understandings and commitments. It transcends disciplinary lines and geographical formations. Vitally, it also embraces a flourishing “extramural” humanities – of books, artworks, exhibitions, performances, films, TV shows, and podcasts – that bears only loose relation to the professional humanities ensconced in universities.

For this inaugural conference of the new *Swiss Law and Humanities Hub*, we take the idea of a ‘humanities world’ as a prompt to reflect again on the place(s) of the legal humanities. We call on contributors to give new and further thought to where law and humanities work is performed and pursued, and to the ways in which such work comes to be done in the ‘beyond’ of academia. What happens when we shift our purview away from universities to public spaces, cultural institutions and other locations of collective life? How might this reorientation reshape our understanding of theory, method and practice? More broadly, the conference aims to encourage reflection, collaboration and the sharing of creative approaches that (re-)think legal critique and critique of law through different forms of humanities work – public, popular, and vernacular.

Some possible questions to consider include:

- How do public humanities projects matter to law? What kind of interventions do they perform, what dispositions do they enact? What are their critical and/or transformative possibilities?
- To which audiences do such projects speak? What alternative publics or counterpublics might they produce?
- Can we talk of a global public humanities or a transnational concept of public interest? Or do/should public (legal) humanities activities remain more closely bound to space, place and the cultural specificity of the local?
- What is the role of cultural institutions (theatres, cinemas, libraries, galleries, museums) and other forms of collective life (political collectives, assemblies, movements, crowds, communities) in shaping discourses of law and legal history?
- How do popular representations and cultural practices impact the politics of law and public opinion? What kind of “popular legalities” (Greta Olson) do they mobilize?
- How are digitization and social media use transforming the conditions and possibilities of public humanities? To what extent are they blurring the lines between the professional and the popular, and to what effect for law?
- How can the genres and modes of the vernacular – songs, stories, speech, folklore, rituals – be brought to bear more fully on our understandings of the histories, forms and futures of law, including Indigenous laws? How might they spur new attention to the regional, the minor and the peripheral?
- How do we come to terms with the ‘inhuman’, ‘nonhuman’ and possible ‘post’-humanities world as part of a commitment to continuing work in law and the humanities?
- What are the possible “public futures” (Judith Butler) of the legal humanities?

While providing direction, these suggestions are not meant to be limiting, and we welcome inventive interpretations of the lead theme. The conference is also an opportunity to reflect the current state of law and humanities work and to chart emergent meanings, stakes and implications. We thus broadly invite proposals that explore the cultural, imaginative and aesthetic aspects of law, or which otherwise mobilise the potential of the humanities to address things legal.

Submission Guidelines

We invite proposals for 20-minute papers on any aspect of the conference theme(s) and warmly encourage artists, practitioners and scholars of all backgrounds and career stages to apply.

We also welcome proposals for fully formed panels, roundtable sessions, workshops or other innovative formats. These will be allocated a 90-minute slot within the conference programme. Double sessions may be possible, but only at the discretion of the conference organisers. We encourage those interested in coordinating a session to get in touch as early as possible with any questions or queries.

For fully formed panels, roundtables or workshops, please submit an abstract of the proposed theme and format (ca. 250 words), with short biographies (ca. 150 words) of the contributors.

For individual papers, please send an abstract of ca. 250 words and a short biography (ca. 150 words).

All submissions should be sent to lucernaiuris@unilu.ch by Friday 12 June 2026.

Language

The main language of the conference is English. Proposals for fully formed panels and other dedicated sessions can be submitted in English, French, German or Italian.

Registration

We are pleased to be able to offer free registration to all participants.

Organisers

Steven Howe (steven.howe@unilu.ch)

Antoinette Maget Dominicé (antoinette.maget@unige.ch)

Laura Petersen (laura.petersen@unilu.ch)

Host

The conference will be hosted by the Institute for Interdisciplinary Legal Studies at the University of Lucerne.

Venue

The conference will be held at the lakeside campus of the University of Lucerne. The campus lies directly behind the main train station, which is well connected to the European rail network and within easy reach of the international airports at Zurich and Basel.