

Joel Niklaus

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EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF BERN

PHD IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

Jul. 2020 - Jan. 2024 | Switzerland
summa cum laude (Grade average: 6/6)
Advisors: Matthias Stürmer & Ilias Chalkidis

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH VISIT

Oct. 2022 - Mar. 2023 | Switzerland
Advisors: Daniel E. Ho & Percy Liang
Collaboration with the CRFM

UNIVERSITIES OF BERN, NEUCHÂTEL, AND FRIBOURG

MSc IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

Sep. 2018 - Dec. 2019 | Switzerland
Grade average: 5.50/6 | Thesis: 6/6
Exchange: NTU, Singapore

UNIVERSITY OF BERN

BSC IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

Sep. 2013 - Aug. 2018 | Switzerland
Grade average: 5.41/6 | Thesis: 6/6
Exchange: University of Exeter, England

LINKS

Google Scholar

LinkedIn:// [joelniklaus](#)

Twitter:// [@joelniklaus](#)

Github:// [joelniklaus](#)

HuggingFace:// [joelniklaus](#)

SKILLS & INTERESTS

LANGUAGES

English • German • Spanish • French

PROGRAMMING

used regularly:

Python • Java • PHP • TypeScript

can get things done:

Kotlin • Sass • SQL • \LaTeX

FRAMEWORKS

transformers & datasets • PyTorch • JAX • PAX • T5X • SeqIO • SpaCy • Keras

TOOLS

Docker • Git • Cursor • AWS • GCP

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Legal NLP • Data Centric ML •

Benchmarking • Multilingual Language Model Pretraining • Instruction Tuning

EXPERIENCE

HUGGING FACE | DATA LEAD

Aug. 2025 - present | Bern, Switzerland
I create synthetic pretraining datasets.

HARVEY | RESEARCH SCIENTIST

Sep. 2024 - Jul. 2025 | San Francisco, United States
I ran large scale model evaluations on internal and external legal benchmarks.

(GOOGLE) X | PHD RESIDENT

Jul. 2023 - Nov. 2023 | Mountain View, United States
I pretrained and instruction tuned multi-billion parameter multilingual LLMs in the Legal Domain on hundreds of TPU cores achieving state-of-the-art on LegalBench.

BERN UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES | LECTURER

Aug. 2021 - present | Bern, Switzerland
I lecture about LLMs in three applied modules on AI.
I planned and conducted the technical part of the module Software Engineering.

UNIVERSITY OF BERN | LECTURER AND TEACHING ASSISTANT

Sep. 2015 - Dec. 2024 | Bern, Switzerland
I co-teach about transformers (CAS), planned and led the “NLP Seminar” (BSc/MSc), and was a TA for “Programming Languages” (MSc), “Software Engineering” (BSc) and “Computer Networks” (BSc).

AWARDS

2024	Winner	Outstanding Paper Award @ ACL for MultiLegalPile
2021	Research Grant	60'000 CHF from Swiss Federal Supreme Court
2019	Nominee	Best MSc Thesis, University of Fribourg, Department of Computer Science
2017	Winner	Excellent Work in Computer Science (BSc Thesis), Joint Alumni Assoc., Universities Bern, Neuchâtel & Fribourg

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Y. Fan, J. Ni, J. Merane, Y. Tian, Y. Hermstrüwer, Y. Huang, M. Akhtar, E. Salimbeni, F. Geering, O. Dreyer, D. Brunner, M. Leippold, M. Sachan, A. Stremitzer, C. Engel, E. Ash, J. Niklaus

LEXam : Benchmarking Legal Reasoning on 340 Law Exams
ICLR 2026, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

J. Niklaus, J. Merane, L. Nenadic, S. Ahmadi, Y. Gao, C. A. H. Chevalley, C. Humbel, C. Götsken, L. Tanzi, T. Lüthi, S. Palombo, S. Poff, B. Yang, N. Wu, M. Guillod, R. Mamié, D. Brunner, J. Pereyra, N. Grupen

SwILTra-Bench : The Swiss Legal Translation Benchmark
ACL Main 2025, Vienna, Austria

J. Niklaus, L. Zheng, AD. McCarthy, C. Hahn, BM. Rosen, P. Henderson, DE. Ho, G. Honke, P. Liang, C. Manning

LawInstruct : A Resource for Studying Language Model Adaptation to the Legal Domain

NAACL Findings 2025, Albuquerque, United States

J. Niklaus, V. Matoshi, M. Stürmer, I. Chalkidis, D. Ho

MultiLegalPile : A 689GB Multilingual Legal Corpus

ACL Main 2024, Bangkok, Thailand