

# 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. Gösen, L. Tanzi, T. Lüthi, S. Palombo, S. Poff, B. Yang, N. Wu, M. Guilloid, 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