



## September 27, 2018

### Global Leadership and Public Policy Speaker Series with President Berset of Switzerland

Time: 3:30pm

Location: Silverman Hall 245, 3501 Sansom Street

Democracy and Distrust: Threats to Democracy in the 21st Century

*"Direct democracy is a debate that never ends. Each argument is passed under review with a critical eye, people in Switzerland suspect a hidden agenda behind each claim. It is therefore rather difficult to spread fake news in the political arena."*

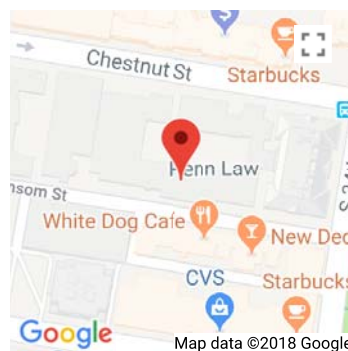
-President Alain Berset

Distinguished by its singular form of direct representation, Switzerland's political and social history reveals its humanistic roots of direct democracy. Presiding Switzerland's seven-member government, the Federal Council, President Alain Berset is uniquely positioned to share insights on the democratic process - and its threats. Potentially the greatest of these hazards to democracy is disinformation, which is mainly propagated through incipient channels of social media. Combating both homegrown and foreign-sourced disinformation has become the primary concern of many policymakers around the world. President Berset has vocally championed the Swiss political system as an antidote to information manipulation, putting forward the Swiss culture of dialogue, political inclusion, and compromise.

Democracy in the United States is also being tested within the current political climate. What is the future of American democracy in an era of heightened partisan politics and Congressional disagreement? *Shelby County* (2013) reignited new debate over the state of disenfranchisement, and a new uncertain chapter has been opened in *Husted v. Randolph Institute* (2017). Many fear the changes in campaign finance law, as described by Justice Stevens' dissent in *Citizens United* (2010): "A democracy cannot function effectively when its constituent members believe laws are being bought and sold." In this context of a major restructuring of the relationship between society and democracy, the name of this event draws from the seminal work of John Hart Ely. President Berset's arguments for robust and inclusive democratic institutions in contrast to short-term salves compliment the proceduralism of Ely, presenting a much needed alternative solution for democracy under siege.

In an age of rampant populism and nativism, how can politics embrace the ideals of international cooperation and equity at the heart of democratic idealism? When the liberal world order and a rules-based international system is being questioned, how can respect for international law and mutualism be restored? At this extraordinary event with President Berset, the President of the Swiss Confederation will address ways in which the Swiss democratic system affords some answers to these urgent questions.

He became the youngest Minister in history when he was elected to the Federal Council in 2011 at the age of 39 as a member of the



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Feedback

Social Democratic Party.

Welcome by Dean Theodore W. Ruger

Introduction by Associate Dean of International Affairs Rangita de Silva de Alwis

Keynote followed by a Fireside Chat with President Alain Berset and Nicholas Thome L'20

Moderated by Professor Bill Burke-White, Richard Perry Professor and Inaugural Director of Perry World House

**To learn more about attending the Global Leadership and Public Policy Speaker Series with President Berset of Switzerland, please contact the Office of International Programs at [international@law.upenn.edu](mailto:international@law.upenn.edu).**

Feedback