

Swiss Center for Affective Sciences

LECTURE SERIES

Tuesday,
19th September
2017

12:15 - 13:15

Campus Biotech
Room 144.165
9, chemin des Mines
Geneva

On Extraordinary Claims Requiring Extraordinary Evidence: Basic Emotions Theory and the Doctrine of Facial Expression Universality

Prof. Carlos Crivelli

(De Montfort University)

The idea that humans “express” and “recognize” a set of emotions pan-culturally based on their facial expressions has become canonical in many fields of research. This view—popularized since the late 1960s by Basic Emotions Theory (BET)—has also become “received truth” among lay people, educators, and policy makers. Careful scrutiny reveals that the foundational studies for BET were technically flawed and their conclusions were either overstated or erroneous, yet. In the current state of affective science, evidence challenging BET propositions is severely scrutinized, whereas shaky evidence favoring BET is rarely challenged. BET’s 50-year grip on inquiry into basic issues on emotion and facial expression has suppressed inquiry by imposing important limitations in the diversity of samples, methods and theories being tested. My research to date has focused on overcoming the ideological barriers BET imposes by gathering data out of the Western lab, using a variety of methodological approaches and study designs, and testing alternative explanatory frameworks to BET. This approach has led to instances that support Carl Sagan’s celebrated dictum by supplying “extraordinary evidence” that support “extraordinary claims,” instances of facial expressions and emotions that do not accord with the culture-bound presumptions and proscriptions of BET ■

Swiss Doctoral School in Affective Sciences

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