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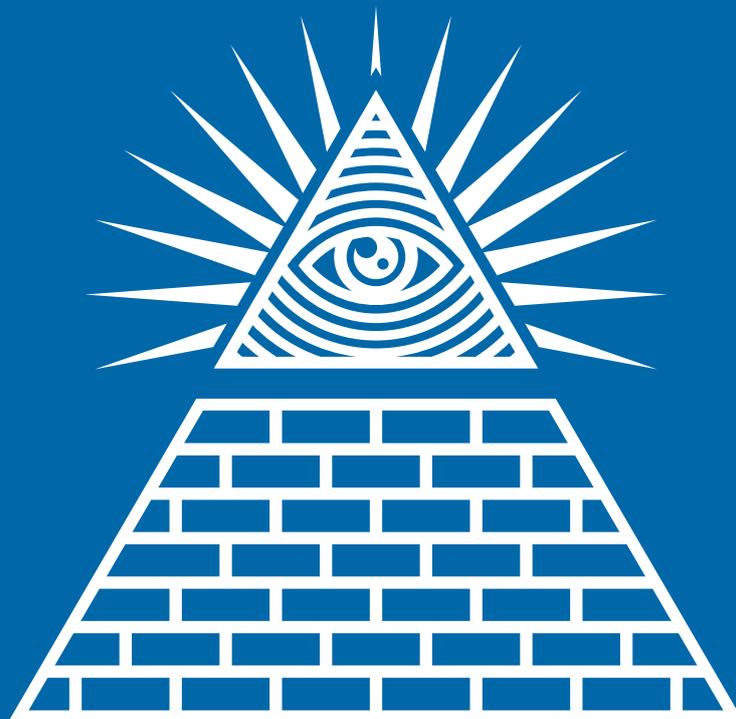
Department of Social
and Cultural Anthropology



Didier Fassin: Of Plots and Men. The Heuristics of Conspiracy Theories.

24 October 2019, 18:00

Small Ceremonial Hall, University of Vienna, 1010 Vienna



13th
Eric Wolf
Lecture

Didier Fassin is the James D. Wolfensohn Professor of Social Science, Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton, and Director of Studies, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris.

PROGRAMME

Conspiracy theories have flourished across the world in the modern era. Not that they did not exist in earlier periods, but the notion that emancipation from religion and superstition promised by the Enlightenment would prevent them has definitely fizzled out. Whether they derive from explicitly malignant intentions or find their origin in diffuse rumors, the remarkable fact is that such paranoid representations of the world are embraced by many from multiple cultural backgrounds and across all social classes. They therefore signal a dual crisis of veridiction, with a distrust towards the official truth, and of authority, with a distrust towards those in power. While there is a general condemnation of these alternative approaches to facts, a distinct perspective consists in considering them as revealing certain little-known dimensions of the functioning of the mind and of society. Based on several cases, the lecture will explore these dimensions arguing, against univocal theories, that various mechanisms and logics are at work.

DIDIER FASSIN

is Professor of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and a Director of Studies at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. Anthropologist, sociologist and physician, he conducted extensive research in Senegal, South Africa, Ecuador, and France. Laureate of an Advanced Grant from the European Research Council, he elaborated a political and moral anthropology which he put to work through a ten-year ethnography of police, justice and prison. He recently presented a critical reflection on punishment for his Tanner Lectures at Berkeley and on life for his Adorno Lectures in Frankfurt. He was the recipient of the Gold Medal in anthropology at the Swedish Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences and the first social scientist to be granted the Nomis Distinguished Scientist Award. He has been elected at the Annual Chair for Public Health of the Collège de France. He created a Summer Program in Social Science for early-career scholars from the Global South. Former Vice-President of Médecins Sans Frontières, he is President of the French Medical Committee for Exiles. He authored fifteen books translated in seven languages, including *The Will to Punish* (Oxford UP) and *Life. A Critical User's Manual* (Polity) and edited more than twenty collective volumes.



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