



Graduation Ceremony of the Faculties of Philosophy, Modern Languages and Behavioural and Cultural Studies

The Heidelberg Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences has grown! In the Summer Semester 2025 we welcomed several new members from Germany and from many other countries and world regions, including our new South-South-North Scholars. Thanks to the cooperation with the six member faculties, we were also able to open a larger academic programme with access to expert-taught courses in the Humanities, Law, and the Social Sciences.

This year, doctoral members of the HGGS also took the initiative to organize their own lecture series under the topic of “Us and Them”. It was highly successful and prepared participants for the annual Summer Forum, details of which you find inside this newsletter.

Newsletter Summer Semester 2025

Summer Forum 2025

Graduation Ceremony

Research News

Publications

Call for papers

Podcast

HGGS

HEIDELBERGER
GRADUIERTENSCHULE
FÜR GEISTES- UND
SOZIALWISSENSCHAFTEN



UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

It was a most exciting Summer Semester thanks to all the doctoral candidates and other members of the six faculties who contributed to and participated in the HGGS programme. We now wish you a good break, successful research trips and/or holidays, and we look forward to welcoming you back in the Winter Semester.

Prof. Dr. Andrea Albrecht, Faculty of Modern Languages

Prof. Dr. Matthias Becker, Theology Faculty

Prof. Dr. Harald Fuess, Faculty of Philosophy

Prof. Dr. Markus Pohlmann, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Ekkehart Reimer, Law Faculty

Prof. Dr. Anne Sliwka, Faculty of Behavioural and Cultural Studies

Dr. Astrid Wind, Heidelberg Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences



HEIDELBERGER
GRADUIERTENSCHULE
FÜR GEISTES- UND
SOZIALWISSENSCHAFT



UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

JOIN THE HGGS DOCTORAL RESEARCH COMMUNITY!



Doctoral candidates in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Law are invited to apply for Graduate Membership.

The HGGS offers doctoral members a dynamic, collaborative research environment within an excellent national and international network that crosses disciplinary boundaries and fosters new research projects in a range of strategic areas.

Further details and application deadlines:
www.hggs.uni-heidelberg.de

Contact: Dr. Astrid Wind
astrid.wind@hggs.uni-heidelberg.de

HGGS Summer Forum 2025

“Us and Them” was the theme of the annual Summer Forum on 27th June 2025. It generated so much interest that the Forum organizers received over 90 submissions from different world regions. In the selection process, they managed to narrow down a field of outstanding PhD researchers and other experts who were invited to present their projects in Heidelberg. The DAI kindly hosted the HGGS Forum this year and gave both the grand lecture hall and the handsome library to the HGGS team that had organized parallel sessions this year.

The high caliber programme in all sessions was so well planned that the presentations by doctoral scholars and postdocs complemented each other and generated much discussion and food for further reflection. It was a brilliant academic programme and we only got the most positive feedback from all presenters and other participants.



SUMMER FORUM



The “Us and Them” topic certainly struck a chord with the audience and it has already inspired participants to collaborate on new academic projects, including a fanzine, a podcast series and a collection of essays that will be forthcoming in 2026.

Congratulations to our Forum organizers, Laura Herges, Sinan Barış Yaşar, Sigit S. Nugroho, Vilma Vaskelaitė, Nadja Fraenkel, Carlos Fabris, Alfredo Tosques, Jiacheng Mo, Martin Mercado, Alicia Mariné, and the support team with Alberto Carballo, Luca-Marie Carstens and Leonie Riegraf for a such a perfect Forum!



Forum Organisation Team

“Us and Them” was also the theme of the HGGs lecture series organized by Sinan Barış Yaşar and colleagues. It featured ten specialists from Heidelberg University, who approached the topic from different fields of expertise, generating a stimulating weekly exchange with PhD candidates at the Käthe Leichter Forum, Graduate Academy. Complementing the series, the group organized guided tours to current exhibitions at Kurpfälzisches Museum, Sammlung Prinzhorn, Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma and Völkermuseum, which were always followed by social gathering of all participants.



Prof. Dr. Richard Caplan

Thank you for putting in so much thought into this central academic HGGs event! Thank you for all the work each of you took out from your PhD projects to come together as a group to organize this inspiring international conference. Speaking for all HGGs Board Members: You can be very proud of your success! It'll be an important experience that hopefully nourishes future academic endeavors.

Dr. Astrid Wind

HGGs SUMMER FORUM

Thank you!



Museum Tour

<div><div>HGGs</div><div>HEIDELBERGER GRADUIERTENSCHULE FÜR GEISTES- UND SOZIALWISSENSCHAFTEN</div><div></div><div>UNIVERSITÄT HEIDELBERG ZUKUNFT SEIT 1386</div></div>		
'Us and Them' - Lecture and Discussion Series		
16.04.2025	Prof. Dr. Harald Fuess	Japan: The West and the Rest
23.04.2025	Dr. Michael Schiffmann	'Their' Violence vs 'Ours'
30.04.2025	Dr. Martin Hofmann	Strange Creatures - Imaging and Imagining Other Peoples
07.05.2025	PD Dr. Johannes Gerwien	Thinking for Speaking Yourself?
14.05.2025	Prof. Dr. Andreas Mielke	Living in Complex Systems
19.05.2025	Prof. Dr. Dr. Thomas Fuchs	Empathy, Group Identity and the Mechanisms of Exclusions
28.05.2025	Prof. Dr. Thomas Maissen	The Aggressor is Always the Other. Historical Images of the Enemy and Their After-Effects
04.06.2025	PD Dr. Marlon Barbehön	The Being Together of Strangers: Us and Them in Modern City Life
11.06.2025	Dr. Radmila Mladenova	Us and Them: The Dangers of Juxtaposing Colour-Coded Narrative Worlds
18.06.2025	Dr. Philipp Zehmisch	Ambivalent Enmity in Bordering Processes



Graduation Ceremony

Graduation Ceremony of the Faculties of Philosophy, Modern Languages and Behavioural and Cultural Studies was held on 20th June 2025 at the Alte Aula of Heidelberg University.

Congratulations to our HGGS members, Isabel Gaviria, Camilo Cuervo, Martina Marzullo, Ruth Quante and Maren Wittek, who recently graduated!

GRADUATION CEREMONY



Ruth Quante and Martina Marzullo



Isabel Gaviria and Camilo Cuervo



Maren Wittek

How Our Summer Forum Turned into a Lecture Series, a Podcast and a Book Project

It's been a long time since we started planning the HGGG Summer Forum in October last year, and on June 27, the day had finally come: 23 scholars from various universities and disciplines attended our conference at the German-American Institute in Heidelberg, as well as many guests who listened to and engaged with the presentations. From war posters in Ukraine to literary cyborgs and intercultural communication – the wide range of topics covered made this an unforgettable experience.

We were especially happy that so many of the presenters – including our keynote speaker Professor Richard Caplan (University of Oxford) – agreed to also be guests on our podcast, which we recorded on the next day.

Leading up to the Forum, we had an extensive program consisting of several excursions to different museums as well as an “Us and Them” lecture and discussion series. In the latter, scholars gave a lecture on their research connected to the Forum's theme each week, followed by a discussion and an informal get-together afterwards.

Although we are all glad that the Forum went well and our hard work paid off, we're also a little sad that the time leading up to it is now over.

However, it's never really over: we still have our podcast series “Us and Them,” in which we release a new episode each week on our YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@HGGG.Heidelberg>) as well as on Spotify, Apple Music, Deezer and Amazon Music.

HGGG SUMMER FORUM

Laura Herges
Faculty of Modern Languages



And there's more exciting news: We are going to publish a book on the theme "Us and Them" and everyone can write a paper for it. If you want to be part of it, please let us know by sending an email to our new email address x0unme1@uni-heidelberg.de.

An official call for papers is published on the HGGs website.

On behalf of the whole organizing team, thanks again to everyone who attended the Forum, the lecture and discussion series, our excursions and to everyone who listens to the podcast!

"Us and Them"
Collection of Essays

Michael Fix

Upcoming Conference Presentation: “Mood as Music’s First Meaning” at ENPM Conference 2025

In September, I will give a presentation titled “Mood as Music’s First Meaning” at the 2nd Conference of the European Network for the Philosophy of Music (ENPM), taking place from 25–27 September 2025 in Strasbourg, France (in tandem with the contemporary music festival “Festival Musica Strasbourg”).

My contribution explores the idea that mood, rather than emotion alone, is the foundational form of expressive meaning in music. Drawing on work from contemporary analytical aesthetics and phenomenology, especially Stephen Davies and Thomas Fuchs, as well as the philosophy of Georg Simmel, I argue that music expresses pervasive, affective qualities we might call moods, which are not reducible to listeners’ actual responses or to musicians’ intentions. These moods emerge from the structured unity of a piece (among other things, its harmony, instrumentation, tempo, and performance choices) and are recognized by listeners through our shared human embodiment and our specific cultural attunement.

This framework allows us to understand musical mood as a kind of semantic bottom layer, which I call music’s “first meaning” and that may ground its further interpretation. Whether in Romantic orchestral works, in more “formalist” pieces like a Bach invention or a Schönberg quartet, in Japanese gagaku compositions or in a rock song, mood plays a crucial role in how music conveys meaning and invites aesthetic engagement.

The presentation builds on my doctoral research, which examines the philosophical significance of mood (Stimmung) as the fundamental aesthetic category, with music as a central case study for non-discursive forms of artistic meaning.

RESEARCH NEWS

Michael Fix
Faculty of Philosophy



Mariia Korneeva

Mariia Korneeva has given a talk at Art&Place Conference in Saarbrücken, which took place on May 2nd-4th. The conference covered all kinds of public artworks and its impact on contemporary cityscape and society. It also included a milestone museum exhibition 'ILLEGAL: Street Art Graffiti 1960-1995' curated by the street art expert Ulrich Blanche who is currently leading his postdoc project on the street art history of stencils at Heidelberg.

In her talk "Female (Street) Gaze: How Women Shape the Cityscapes in Russia" Mariia focused on how women actively participate in street and public art life of major Russian cities. She dwelled upon both legal artworks and partisan artistic interventions: from impressionist replicas in the XIX-th century yards of Saint Petersburg to mourning grannies made of paper on the wooden houses of deserted villages. Mariia also highlighted feminist initiatives in street art community, such as Go Girls! festival and a recently published Femstreet album.

RESEARCH NEWS

Mariia Korneeva
Faculty of Modern Languages



Vanessa Marquez

On 24th June, I had the opportunity to experience one of those moments that confirm why I dedicate my doctoral research to creative writing from the perspective of the sciences of meaning. In the spaces of the Theater lecture hall at the Triplixmensa of Heidelberg University, sixteen people from Germany, Colombia, Bolivia, Mexico, Venezuela, Chile, and Cuba gathered with me to explore together that fascinating territory where emotions transform into words and words come alive.

I am Vanessa Alejandra Márquez Vargas, a doctoral candidate in Human Sciences at the University of Los Andes in Mérida, Venezuela, where I also teach, and I am in Heidelberg during the summer semester 2025 as part of the South-South-North programme of the HGGS, Heidelberg University, with the support of the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung. I designed this workshop as a practical extension of my research on "Creative writing: pedagogical construction from the sciences of meaning", but what happened that day exceeded all my academic expectations to become something profoundly human and transformative.

From the moment we began, I could perceive how Spanish functioned as an emotional bridge connecting stories, memories, and sensations scattered across geography. I saw faces light up when the tools I had prepared began to liberate voices that had remained silenced. I observed how the process of free writing suspends immediate judgement, creating a space in which each participant could experience that "freedom to be through writing" that I have theorised in my research.

The tools derived from the sciences of meaning that I implemented functioned as keys that opened inner doors: automatic writing exercises that connected with the unconscious flow of language, semiotic explorations with ideas and everyday objects that unleashed chains of signification embodied in small narratives whose words are textures, scents, and flavours.

RESEARCH NEWS

Vanessa Marquez
South-South-North Visiting
Scholar



What moved me most was seeing how participants gradually immersed themselves in a process where creativity emerged naturally when barriers of critical judgement were removed. This affirms the purpose of my theoretical research and confirms my personal motivations as a reader regarding the existence and permanence of the passionate dimension of language that requires and can manifest fully in specific pedagogical spaces.

The experience was so significant and the texts produced so revealing and beautiful that we immediately thought of publishing them, thanks to the support of Dr. Astrid Wind, Camilo Cuervo, and Kornelia Roth, and the willingness of participants to share their experience. From that intercultural encounter, from those voices that came together at the threshold between languages and cultures, a project has been born that is already in development: the publication of these texts in a book that will bear the title "Voices at the Threshold: A Creative Writing Encounter".

This editorial project not only constitutes a natural extension of the lived experience, but represents a way of honouring the generosity and courage of those who dared to share their inner worlds through writing. The book will be a tangible testimony to how creative writing can function as a space for intercultural encounter and collective construction of meaning, where geographical and cultural differences become expressive richness and where each voice contributes a unique tonality to this symphony of words born in the spaces of Heidelberg University but which transcends any physical or symbolic boundary.



Creative Writing Workshop

Forthcoming Publication
**"Voices at the Threshold: A
Creative Writing Encounter"**

Other academic activities within the framework of the exchange programme:

Collective presentation, together with Debby Avendaño and Adrian Navia Segovia, of the paper "Where Are the Feet? Narratives of Belonging and Alterity: The Shoe as a Semiotic Object; The Absence of Feet: The Uninhabited Space; 'Walking in Someone Else's Shoes': The Architect and the Community". Summer Forum 2025.

Participation in the course "Spanish as a Heritage Language in Europe: Migration Narratives and Learning Biographies", taught by Dr. María Pilar Valero Fernández, Heidelberg Centre for Ibero-American Studies (HCIAS); in the course we are collectively preparing a publishable working paper on "Spanish as a Heritage Language in Switzerland". Active participation as an attendee at conferences, workshops, and in the preparation of articles.



Group Photo from Creative Writing Workshop

Alberto Carballo Soca

Cold, distance, silence, darkness—these are some of the words that come to mind after arriving in Germany for the first time on the night of March 3. It's a radical change when you consider that I've spent almost my entire life in a country like Cuba: warm, tropical, noisy, and sunny. Even more so considering that, just four days later, it will be my birthday—my first time celebrating away from my country, family, and friends, in an environment with so much to discover and learn.

However, I have met people who have made this academic, cultural, and social journey more pleasant and bearable—people from many corners of the planet. The cold has become warm, the darkness light, the silence complicity, and the distance closeness. To my new friends from Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, and the people at Heidelberg University—especially the Heidelberg Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences and the Office of International Relations, who have accompanied me on this experience—thank you.

During the month of March, I had the opportunity to participate in a German language course at the Max-Weber-Haus—an intensive course in which I learned the basics of the language. For this, I am immensely grateful to the teachers who taught us day after day, as well as to my classmates. To this day, I remember that course as a warm welcome to Germany, in which we also embraced diversity as a strength.

In the coming months (until June, as I write these words), I have had the opportunity to present my progress in my PhD in the academic exchange program at the Heidelberg Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences, in which I am immersed; to debate science and interdisciplinarity; to write a chapter of a book on artificial intelligence; and to attend the Us and Them Forum lecture series. Regarding the latter, I have great respect and admiration for its organizers—for giving us spaces that are as diverse as they are warm, and which will surely give us a forum that lives up to all their efforts.

RESEARCH NEWS

Alberto Carballo Soca South-South-North Visiting Scholar



I had the pleasure of presenting my research at the 1st DSI Community Education Conference of the Digital Society Initiative at the University of Zurich. I remember that day warmly, because the organizers were very generous and encouraging—both from an academic and human point of view. Also, because doors were opened for future collaborations in digital education studies between Cuba and Switzerland.

Last but not least, I had the pleasure of bringing one of my passions to Heidelberg when I ran the half marathon in that iconic city. I admit it wasn't an easy race, but the joy and encouragement of the people in the city made it the most enjoyable of all.

I still have some time left in Germany, and with it, surely more goals to achieve and experiences to share.



Alberto at the DSI Community Education Conference of the Digital Society Initiative at the University of Zurich



Alberto at the Heidelberg Half Marathon

Julian Tobias Klar

Engaged Political Science in Times of Democratic Backlash

Very recently, that is to say this March, I travelled to Baltimore (Maryland/MD) and Washington D.C. in the USA for presenting at two conferences and for a brief research stay at the Library of Congress (LoC) for the purpose of already preparing future research projects post-PhD.

My first presentation in Baltimore (MD) as part of the conference: “John Dewey in Baltimore: Past, Present and Future”, (from March 6th to 10th) was entitled: “Educating for Social Renewal: Insights from John Dewey and Hannah Arendt for Addressing Educational and Social Challenges in Baltimore and beyond”, treating how Arendt’s and Dewey’s educational theories can be conducive for mitigating the social and educational problems in the city of Baltimore (MD). This gathering was the annual meeting of the John Dewey Society (JDS). Before travelling on to Washington D.C., as a touristic side-program, I visited the birthplace of author Edgar Allan Poe, the art-historical and archeological collections of Johns Hopkins University, as well as the historic site of Fort McHenry, place of origin of the US-anthem: “The Star-Spangled Banner”.



Julian with his colleagues during the conference visit in the US

Then, my second talk happened as part of the conference “American Philosophy: Lacunas, Derelictions and Evasions”, held from March 13th to 15th, by the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy (SAAP) at Howard University in Washington D.C., entitled: “The Unfulfilled Promise: Arendt, Dewey, and the Evaded Potentials of American Democracy - Addressing the lacunas, derelictions, and evasions in American political philosophy”, treating how the blind spots and omissions in Western political thought were tackled by Arendt and Dewey.

RESEARCH NEWS

Julian Tobias Klar
Faculty of Economics and
Social Sciences



Before returning to Europe, I took the liberty to visit a number of D.C.'s historic landmarks, focusing on the national monuments, political institutions, as well as visiting the LoC for one week, probing directions for future research-projects post-PhD.



Library of Congress

Publications

Dr. Junlai Zhang recently published the following two research articles:

Luo, S., Zhang, J., & Heffernan, M. (2024). Forecast of total health expenditure on China's ageing population: a system dynamics model. BMC Health Services Research, 24(1), 1655.

Zhang, J., Chen, S., & Prettner, K. (2025). Measuring High-Quality Development and Progress toward "Common Prosperity" in China. Social Indicators Research

1. Measuring "High-Quality Development" and Progress Toward "Common Prosperity" in China

This paper introduces four well-being indicators, Lifetime Income (LI), Inequality-Adjusted Lifetime Income (ILI), Healthy Lifetime Income (HLI), and Inequality-Adjusted Healthy Lifetime Income (IHLI), to evaluate China's development from 1990 to 2020. The findings demonstrate notable national progress toward "common prosperity," while highlighting persistent regional disparities. These indicators offer a transparent, interpretable, and data-efficient alternative to conventional metrics such as the Human Development Index.

Link: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11205-025-03577-y> <https://>

2. Forecast of Total Health Expenditure on China's Ageing Population: A System Dynamics Model

This study develops system dynamics models to project China's Total Health Expenditure (THE) from 2000 to 2060 under different total fertility rate scenarios. The results reveal a strong upward trend in THE driven by population ageing, but also show that efficiency improvements can significantly reduce future expenditure. This work provides practical policy insights for addressing the fiscal and demographic challenges posed by an ageing population.

Link: bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12913-024-12113-6

PUBLICATIONS

Dr. Junlai Zhang
HGGS Guest Scholar
Heidelberg Institute of Global Health



Publications

Carolyn Fröschle

I won an honorable mention at the Essay-Contest from the Journal Nuncius and the paper was recently published: <https://doi.org/10.1163/18253911-bja10151>

This was my first peer-review and manuscript-revision experience and I learned a lot. It also nitro-powered my writing-process.

I am teaching a course on AI-Tools for Humanities at the Institute for Art History for the second semester in a row. There is immense demand for the topic, as most courses offered focus on use-cases situated in natural or life-sciences. The topic of the course resulted from a personal interest of mine, not from my PhD, but it confirms my long-held intuition that I would enjoy teaching, feeding me with even more motivation to finish my degree.

PUBLICATIONS

Carolyn Fröschle
Faculty of Philosophy



Publications

New Publications and Initiatives on Applied Complexity Sciences in the field of Leadership Coaching:

In 2025, Marcus B. Hausner, MA, contributed to two significant publications at the intersection of complexity science, leadership, and coaching. Together with Chikoo Oosawa, he co-authored "A Method for Exploring High-Dimensional Data Using the Kuramoto Model", which will be presented at NOLTA 2025 in Okinawa, Japan (October 28, 2025). The paper explores novel ways of visualizing and understanding complex data structures using synchronization dynamics inspired by the Kuramoto model. The full paper will be available online at <http://nolta2025.org>.

In a second contribution, co-authored with Günter Schiepek, Hausner presents a real-world coaching case in "Coaching einer Führungskraft im Management", featured in the newly published volume "Systemische Fallkonzeption" (Hogrefe Verlag, 2025). The chapter illustrates how idiographic system modeling can support personalized and dynamic leadership development within complex organizational settings. <https://www.hggs.uni-heidelberg.de/de/ueber-uns/publikationen>

Complementing these scholarly works, two pilot workshops were recently held using a new web-based adaptation of the 'Beer Game' – a simulation originally developed at MIT by Jay Forrester. Participants experienced first-hand how non-linear dynamic systems function and how decision-making under complexity can be improved. These pilots are part of his dissertation on „complexity competence for leaders“. <https://zensimu.com/beer-game/>

Looking ahead, the newly formed “Forum für Komplexität und Selbstorganisation” will host its second online conference on Friday, November 21, 2025. The event, titled “Synergetics in the Human and Social Sciences – Perspectives”, will bring together practitioners, researchers, and early-career scientists to explore systemic thinking and synergetic approaches in applied contexts. These initiatives reflect a growing commitment to bridging scientific insight with real-world leadership and learning environments.

PUBLICATIONS

Marcus Hausner
Faculty of Behavioural and
Cultural Studies



Call for Papers: Academic Book Project "Us and Them"

The concepts of "Us" and "Them" are deeply embedded in human thought, shaping our perceptions of identity, belonging, and alterity throughout human history. These terms allow us to construct social, cultural, and political boundaries, bringing a sense of order to a chaotic reality.

In today's world, fake news, polarization and the rise of identity politics present pressing global challenges that demand urgent attention. From geopolitical tensions to cultural misunderstandings, the dynamics of "Us and Them" resonate across different disciplines, offering a platform to examine the logic of this dichotomy. Our academic book project aims to encourage discussion about various approaches such as integration, tolerance, mutual understanding, or agonistic pluralism emphasizing the value of conflict.

For this collection of academic papers, we encourage submissions from all fields of study. We invite PhD candidates, researchers, and academics from diverse disciplines as well as experts from society to turn toward the formation of gaps and whether these gaps need to be crossed.

Submissions should include:

- A title and an abstract of no more than 300 words.
- The author's name, affiliation, and a brief biography (max. 150 words).
- The paper (length: 8,000-12,000 words; quotation style: Chicago 18 ed.)

Key Dates:

- Submission Deadline: December 31, 2025
- Notification of Acceptance: January 31, 2026
- Publication Date: 2026

Contact Information:

For submissions or inquiries, please contact directly:
x0unme1@uni-heidelberg.de.

CALL FOR PAPERS

HGGS PODCAST "US AND THEM"
NOW AVAILABLE ON YOUTUBE, SPOTIFY AND
OTHER POPULAR STREAMING PLATFORMS

Us and

Them



**The podcast series by Heidelberg
University's Graduate School for
Humanities and Social Sciences**

Heidelberger Graduiertenschule für Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften (HGGS)
Universität Heidelberg
Voßstr. 2, Geb. 4370
69115 Heidelberg

Website: www.hggs.uni-heidelberg.de

Follow us on Instagram: [hggs.heidelberg](https://www.instagram.com/hggs.heidelberg)