

# Science and Democracy in Political Crises, 1900–2024

Conference at the German Historical Institute Washington,  
jointly convened by the GHI and the Leopoldina,

September 5/6, 2024

Supported by the German Research Foundation (DFG)



Conveners: Axel Jansen (GHI Washington), Alexander Bogner (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna), Carsten Reinhardt (University of Bielefeld & Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina – German National Academy of Sciences, Halle), Heidi Tworek (University of British Columbia, Vancouver)



Leopoldina  
Nationale Akademie  
der Wissenschaften



# Program

## **Wednesday, September 4, 2024**

7:00 pm Informal get-together

## **Thursday, September 5, 2024**

9:30 am **Welcome remarks**  
Axel Jansen  
(German Historical Institute Washington)

Carsten Reinhardt  
(Univ. Bielefeld/Leopoldina)

**Opening remarks by conveners**  
Alexander Bogner  
(Austrian Acad. of Sciences, Vienna)

Heidi Tworek  
(Univ. of British Columbia)

10:00 -11:30 am **Panel 1: Science in Democracies**  
*Chair: Carsten Reinhardt (Univ. Bielefeld/Leopoldina)*

Martin Tschiggerl (Austrian Acad. of Sciences): Science Denial, Conspiracy Theories, and Smallpox. The German Anti-Vaccination Movement since the late 19th Century

Claire Votava (Univ. of California, Los Angeles / UCLA): Echoes of Luddism: Resistance and the British Society for the Social Responsibility of Science

11:30-11:45 m **Coffee Break**

11:45 am-1:15 pm **Panel 2: Experts and the Crises of Democracies**  
*Chair: Alexander Bogner (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna)*

Nora Binder (Univ. Konstanz): "Toward a Closer Contact with Reality": Kurt Lewin's Social Psychology and the Quest for Democratic Re-education

Harm Kaal (Radboud University): Political Scientists as Public Intellectuals in the Long 1960s "Crisis of Democracy"

- 1:15 – 2:00 pm      **Lunch at the GHI**
- 2:00 – 4:15 pm      **Panel 3: Nuclear Pasts and Futures—The Case of Germany**  
*Chair: Anna von der Goltz (Georgetown University)*
- Lukas Alex (Universität Bayreuth): Crisis without Experts? Human Genetics and the Atomic Age in West Germany, 1955–1965
- Nicholas Misukanis (Univ. of Maryland, College Park): The Nuclear Option: Politics of the Past, and West German Energy Policy to Secure the Future, 1973–1986
- Thomas Irmer (Berlin School of Economics): The Search for a Nuclear Waste Disposal Site: The Role of Science in the Political Phase-in and Phase-out of Nuclear Energy in Germany
- 4:15 pm              **End of Conference Day 1**
- 5:30 pm              Doors open to the public for small reception and panel discussion
- 6:00 pm              [Democracy in Crisis? Science and Political Decision-making during the Covid-19 Pandemic](#)  
*Public Panel Discussion with John Barry (Tulane University), Peter J. Hotez (Baylor College of Medicine), Joanna Spear (The George Washington University)*

**Friday, September 6, 2024**

- 10:00 – 11:45 am      **Panel 4: Public Health and Public Trust**  
*Chair: John Barry (Tulane University)*
- Taiwo Olatunde (University of Ghana, Accra): Interlocutors, Contestation, Debates and Production of Public Health in British-Nigeria, 1920–1959
- Wiebke Liesner (Leibniz Univ. Hannover): “The Pandemic of the Experts?” Planning for Pandemic Crises: Envisaged Communication Strategies meet Practice during the Swine Flu
- Jonathan Voges (Leibniz Univ. Hannover): “Build Trust, Announce Early, Be Transparent, Respect Public Concerns, Plan in Advance”: The World Health Organization, Anticipated Emergencies, and the Attributed Role of Science
- 11:45 – 12:15 pm      **Coffee Break**

- 12:15 – 1:45 pm      **Panel 5: Expanding Expertise in Twentieth-century Democracies**  
*Chair: Heidi Tworek (University of British Columbia)*
- Caspar Hirschi (University of St. Gallen): To Expertocracy and Back? An Entangled History of Scientific Expertise in Public Health and Financial Crises, ca. 1930–2024
- Greg Eghigian (Penn State University): Science vs. the Flying Saucers: Politics, the Public, and the Rise and Fall of the First Scientific Study of UFOs
- 1:45 – 2:30 pm      **Lunch at the GHI**
- 2:30 – 3:30 pm      **Roundtable**  
*Chair: Joanna Spear (The George Washington University)*
- General Commentators:* Emily Kern (University of Chicago), Heidi Tworek (Univ. of British Columbia)
- 3:30 pm              **End of Conference Day 2**
- 6:30 pm              Conference dinner at a restaurant nearby

**Workshop Location:**

**German Historical Institute Washington**  
1607 New Hampshire Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20009

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