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)
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 “Crises 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)*

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**Friday, September 6, 2024**

10:00 - 11:45 am  
**Panel 4: Public Health and Public Trust**  
*Chair: John Barry (Tulane University)*


Wiebke Liesner (Leibniz Univ. Hannover): “The Pandemic of the Experts?” Planning for Pandemic Crises: Envisaged Communication Strategies meet Practice during the Swine Flu


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)*


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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