

Theoretical and Normative Foundations

Research in the Department focuses on welfare states and social inequalities from a perspective of sociological and political theories.

Research

Core research questions of the department are:

- What kind of social theory do we need today to address the manifold causes of inequality as well as the institutional forms of welfare societies?
- To which extent can social policies still contribute to the integration of modern societies? Which forms of action and decision-making are needed to satisfy the rising expectations for all social actors?
- How does the legitimacy of the welfare state change, and which consequences has the worldwide expansion of welfare policies on the global discourse about the welfare state?
- And, from the perspective of a normative political theory: How can the principles of the welfare state be justified based on theories of justice and the concepts of social and human rights?

Working Groups

The department is subdivided into five working groups:

- [Political Theory of the Welfare State \(2001-2024\)](#)
Head of working group: Prof. Dr. Frank Nullmeier
- [Political System of the Federal Republic of Germany](#)
Head of working group: Prof. Dr. Markus Tepe
- [Sociological Theory](#)
Head of working group: Prof. Dr. Thomas Kern
- [Social Conflicts](#)
Head of working group: Prof. Dr. Sebastian Haunss
- [Collective Decision-Making](#)
Head of working group: Dr. Tanja Pritzlaff-Scheele

Study and Teaching

Fields of activity are presented by the members of the department in training and in the advisory boards of the following courses of study:

- Political science (Bachelor, Master)
- Sociology (Bachelor, Master)
- Social politics (Master)

The particular courses that are offered in the MA in Social Policy are as follows: Governance and organization, social management and public administration, theories of justice, theories of the welfare state, legitimization of the welfare state, international comparison of pension policies, the role of firms and markets in social policy, and introduction to German social politics.

Cooperations

We have close cooperations with national researchers from the following universities and institutes:

- [Max-Planck-Institute for the Study of Societies](#), Cologne
[Prof. Beckert](#);
- [Max Planck Institute for Social Law and Social Policy](#), Munich
[Prof. Becker](#);
- University of Jena, Hannover, Lüneburg, Darmstadt, Greifswald, Hamburg, Münster, Frankfurt a. M., Potsdam, Stuttgart, Berlin, Bochum, and Oldenburg;
- [Social Science Research Center Berlin](#);
- [Institute for Protest Research](#);
- [Forschungsverbund für Sozialrecht und Sozialpolitik \(FoSS\) University Kassel and University Fulda](#)
- [Social Sciences Institute of the Protestant Church in Germany](#).
- [Institute for Employment and Research \(IAB\)](#)
- [weizenbaum-institut](#)

On an international level there are intensive cooperations with researchers in Social Science from the following universities and institutes:

- University of Zurich, Vienna, Yale, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Pittsburgh, Toronto (University of Toronto, York University), Ottawa (Carleton University), Oxford, Bath, Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, Université de Fribourg;
- [Norwegian Social Research \(NOVA\)](#), Oslo;
- [Centre national de la Recherche scientifique \(CNRS\)](#), Paris;

- [Centre de Recherches Politiques de Sciences Po \(CEVIPOF\)](#), Paris.