

Global and Transnational Sociology Summer School

University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany

June 10 – July 4, 2024

Block I (June 10 – June 20)

Social Medias and Global Societies

Prof. James Dean, Sonoma State University

This course examines the relationship between society and the communication technologies referred to as “social media,” such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Twitch, and more. In this class we will develop conceptual tools, discuss methods of analysis, and take a global perspective to understanding social media apps and websites. In order to do this, we will read from sociology and the fields of communication and media studies to understand social media today. We will think about social media in terms of being part of the creation of a techno-social life. That is, in general the course develops a perspective that views technology and social life as integrated and overlapping in our everyday lives and our global social institutions and structures. The course advances the perspective that technology as seen through apps and websites creates new sets of social norms for the community of users of that app and/or website. Students will be introduced to key concepts and research in the field of digital phenomena with the aim to have them develop their own critical responses, active engagement in class discussions of readings, and in their writing and presenting of an original research paper on the topics of social media in particular and techno-social existence in global societies in general.

Towards more Sustainability? Promises and Pitfalls of Transnational Standard-Setting

Prof. Sigrid Quack, University of Duisburg-Essen and Max Plank Institute for the Study of Societies

This seminar will explore whether and how transnational standards, such as for example those for fair trade products, fair labour conditions and “green” forest cultivation can contribute to more sustainability. We will also discuss the limitations and downsides of regulation through standard-setting undertaken by a variety of actors, including states, businesses and civil society organizations. We will develop conceptual tools and discuss methods to study the links between standard-setting and sustainability. Students can choose case study examples to explore specific initiatives more in depths. The sessions will deal with trends in economic globalization; actors, forms and processes of transnational institution building and development and their intersections with national institutions; normative and empirical issues of their accountability and legitimacy; and conceptual frameworks to compare and make sense of them.

Block II (June 24 – July 4)

Global Social Policy

Prof. Tao Liu, Zhejiang University

Modern social policy emerges within the constitutional framework of nation-states to protect the well-being and basic living standards of citizens within a nation's territory. As the trade and circulation of goods around the world and the process of economic globalization deepen, concepts about social solidarity, justice and redistribution have gradually spread to all parts of the world. This block seminar is based on the basic conceptual framework of modern social policy and welfare state, focusing on how international governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations have influenced the reform of pension insurance and the establishment of medical protection systems around the world. At the same time, this block seminar also focuses on the issues of global income inequality and social inequality, discussing the economic and social gap between the global North and the South. In particular, it will focus on various welfare programs that shorten the North-South divide in the world society.

Urban sociology – Theoretical approaches and empirical research

Prof. Helen Baykara-Krumme, University of Duisburg-Essen

How are individual experiences shaped by urban areas, and how do cities change in contexts of larger societal changes? These questions are addressed in the research field of “urban sociology” which is among the earliest and richest areas of sociological inquiry. This seminar offers a basic introduction to classical and contemporary urban sociological theories and an insight into current urban issues and problem areas, with a specific focus on issues related to international migration and the city of Duisburg. The seminar is divided into three parts: After an introduction to theoretical perspectives, specific urban issues (e.g. gentrification, segregation, housing, arrival infrastructures) will be addressed in student working groups and subsequently researched and analysed for the case of Duisburg. The seminar combines in-person teaching, independent work in working groups and topic-related fieldtrips and field work, respectively, in the city of Duisburg. The aim of the seminar is to enable students to develop a basic understanding of urban sociological research both with regard to theoretical approaches and empirical analyses.