



COLLEGE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES | UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE RUHR

# Press Release

Essen | 01/12/2025

University Alliance Ruhr opens College for Social Sciences and Humanities

## Research College Connects Humanities and Social Sciences at the UA Ruhr Internationally

Today's opening event with the Minister of Culture and Science of North-Rhine Westphalia, Ina Brandes, celebrated the successful establishment of the College for Social Sciences and Humanities of the University Alliance Ruhr in Essen. The joint research institution of the University of Duisburg-Essen, Ruhr University Bochum, and TU Dortmund University ties together outstanding cutting-edge research across a broad spectrum of the humanities and the social sciences, connecting it with excellent scholars worldwide. Around 100 guests from Germany and abroad attended the ceremonial opening in Essen's Lindenallee.

Director Prof. Dr. Julika Griem explains the extraordinary profile: "The College for Social Sciences and Humanities brings together research professorships, early-career research groups, and renowned international top scholars as fellows. This structure, which is unique in Germany, makes it possible to explore innovative fields of research in an interdisciplinary way and to build networks."

Since its founding in 2021 as part of the Research Alliance Ruhr, the College for Social Sciences and Humanities was able to fill most of its professorships with outstanding scholars in the humanities and the social sciences. Through its Fellowship Programme, the College has already brought 36 distinguished researchers from all over the world to Essen for six months. The tandem projects with members of the UA Ruhr often result in long-term research cooperation.

### Cutting-Edge Research with a Focus on Culture, Society, and Politics

At the ceremonial opening on 1 December, the professors of the College provided insights into their research fields. For instance, Prof. Dr. Tahani Nadim – in dialogue with civil society and archives – investigates how memory culture and curatorial practices are changing through digital technologies. Another focus is on environmental humanities, which examine the social and cultural aspects of environmental transformation. In three research groups, the junior professors Dr. Elena Beregow, Dr. Florian Fastenrath and Dr. Matthias Kranke are exploring, among other aspects, how we culturally deal with (increasing) sweating in times of climate

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change, whether sustainability can be governed globally, and how politics addresses social inequality.

The Minister of Culture and Science of the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, Ina Brandes MdL, highlighted the College's role in science and society: "The Ruhr area demonstrates how the transformation from a centre of coal mining to a knowledge region can be successfully achieved. Today, research and science are the resources that ensure good jobs, prosperity and social security. I am therefore delighted to open the College for Social Sciences and Humanities of the Research Alliance Ruhr. Enormous strength is generated when the three major universities in the Ruhr region pool their expertise in the humanities and social sciences. Especially in uncertain times, we need such strong alliances that expertly analyse and explain social developments."

The rector of the University of Duisburg-Essen, Prof. Dr Barbara Albert, as well as the rector of Ruhr University Bochum, Prof. Dr Martin Paul, and the rector of TU Dortmund University, Prof. Dr Manfred Bayer, pointed out the key part that the College plays within the University Alliance Ruhr: "The College initiates and strengthens international relations of our universities to prestigious research institutions worldwide, particularly through the Fellowship Programme. By cooperating in the Research Alliance Ruhr, we are further improving the position of cutting-edge research in the humanities and the social sciences in the Ruhr region, making it more visible internationally."

## The Role of Academia in Technological and Political Transformation

How are universities addressing current challenges and opportunities in international academia? In a keynote lecture, Prof. Dr Rajani Naidoo, UNESCO Professor of Higher Education and Social Change and Vice-President of the University of Exeter (UK), showed how universities can constructively contribute to shaping technological change in the tension between society, politics and economy. The concluding panel discussion focussed on the role of research institutions in the face of threatened democracies. Prof. Dr Stephen Brown, political scientist at the University of Ottawa (Canada) and former fellow at the College, Prof. Dr Daniel Feierstein, sociologist at the National University of Tres de Febrero (Argentina) and current fellow, Prof. Dr Eva Geulen, Director of the Leibniz Center for Literary and Cultural Research in Berlin, and Prof. Dr Dorota Sajewska, theatre studies scholar at Ruhr University Bochum, discussed how academic institutions can respond when academic freedom comes under pressure in the global political arena.

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## COLLEGE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

*The College for Social Sciences and Humanities promotes high-profile research in the social sciences and humanities within the University Alliance Ruhr and advances international cooperation and visibility. As an Institute for Advanced Study, the College provides a cross-university forum for exploring and developing innovative fields of research and stimulates interdisciplinary collaboration in the social sciences and humanities.*

*The cornerstones of the College are three research professorships, three research groups, and an international Senior Fellowship Programme that invites up to 20 excellent scholars per year for a research stay. The College also supports early-career researchers through formats such as the PostdocLab.*

[www.college-uaruhr.de](http://www.college-uaruhr.de)

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