



UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

Call for Papers
“Practicing Trust and Authority”
2023 Conference of the Graduiertenkolleg ‘Authority and Trust’
May 11-13, 2023 | Heidelberg, Germany

Trust and authority

Studies show that American institutions and elites are experiencing a dramatic loss of authority and trust. Economic inequality, social and spatial segregation and a decaying infrastructure have undermined trust in the fairness and efficiency of political processes. Anti-establishment populism and conspiracy theories resonate widely among the general public. Police brutality has reinforced a deep-seated distrust of authorities among minorities. Commentators and scholars agree that the crisis of trust and authority has been developing for decades and reflects the dissolution of social cohesion and consensus. Many Americans lament the end of the American Dream, the prospect of social upward mobility through hard work and educational achievement. The crisis of authority and trust has also affected U.S. leadership in world politics and the global economy. With support from the German Research Foundation (DFG), the Heidelberg Center for American Studies formed the [Graduiertenkolleg ‘Authority and Trust’ \(GKAT\)](#) to address these questions in interdisciplinary research.

Conference Theme: Practicing Trust and Authority

Some questions arise in the crisis of trust and authority. This conference focuses on the *practices* of trust and authority. Grounded in theoretical knowledge, we would like to explore with you the actions, processes and strategies that influence trust and authority on various levels.

Some possible questions and topics include (but are not limited to):

- Which practices or actions help build trust in groups?
- How can authority be legitimized?
- How can trust in institutions decline?
- Which interpersonal, governmental and inter-group actions construct trust or authority?
- How can various forms of authority be maintained?
- Authority of researchers, creators, authors
- Role of art and artists in trust-building
- Trustworthiness in organizations and institutions
- (Charismatic) authority in movement leaders

We invite PhD students and early career researchers in the disciplines of literature, history, politics, sociology, geography, religion, media, the arts (in a broader sense), and adjoining research areas to explore these and more questions. The goal of our conference is to assemble practical knowledge that participants can draw from in their private and professional lives.

Therefore, we are interested in active and participatory formats – audience participation, group works, anything involving the senses, brainstorming, artistic exhibitions or experiments – as well as conventional academic formats like paper presentations and panel discussions. The conference is planned to take place in person and in English at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies.

Heidelberg Center for American Studies
Curt und Heidemarie Engelhorn Palais
Hauptstraße 120
D-69117 Heidelberg





Possible presentation formats

- Traditional Paper & Panel Discussion (90 minutes): At least three presenters and a chair. Papers may be submitted individually or as a fully formed panel. (Chairs may be assigned by the conference committee).
- Performance (30 minutes): Music, theater, game-style, or experimental performances which seek to engage key principles about academic work from various viewpoints and learning objectives.
- Visual Arts Exhibition (assembled on May 12): Museum-style exhibitions, photography, comics, or art pieces to be displayed at the HCA. A great option for those who can't participate in person.

Submitting a proposal

Please submit your proposal (in English) via email to gkat-conference2023@hca.uni-heidelberg.de by **February 5, 2023**.

- For individual paper proposals, please submit an abstract (max. 250 words) and a short CV.
- For panel proposals, please submit a short panel abstract (max. 250 words) for a session of 90 min. The application should also include a list of participants, titles of individual papers, individual paper abstracts (max. 250 words) and short CVs of all participants.
- For performance and visual arts exhibitions proposals, please submit an abstract (max. 400 words) and a short CV. We also encourage you to send us a link to your additional audio/video/image material.

Applicants will be notified by the end of March.

We plan to publish the presented papers and projects in subsequent conference proceedings.

No conference fee or registration fee will be charged. Limited funds for travel and accommodation expenses are available upon request. Please indicate on your submission if you would like to be considered. The conference committee will get in touch.

If you have any questions, please contact us at gkat-conference2023@hca.uni-heidelberg.de.