Humanities and Social Sciences

Peter-André Alt, President of Freie Universität Berlin
Societal Impacts of Humanities

• Humanities provide basic knowledge: they are not empiric
• Humanities allow to understand traditions: they help to recall and to memorize
• Humanities enable to differentiate: they help to structure and to prioritize information in order to create hierarchies of knowledge
• Humanities offer literacy: they provide us with the skills to concentrate on, to understand, and to repeat reading
Importance of Humanities and Social Sciences

• There is no reflection of knowledge, of history, and of our social roles without the humanities.

• A country that neglects the humanities and social sciences damages its culture, its history, and its identity.

• Training in the humanities and social sciences conveys the ability to think innovatively and to work scientifically, and is the foundation of scientific research.

• Innovation in the humanities consists in the development of reflective knowledge.
Support for Humanities and Social Sciences

- Humanities and Social Sciences do not require much funding.
- Public and private funding is needed for fundamental resources and provide scholars in the humanities and social sciences with time.
- Humanities scholars and social scientists need new forms of cooperation.
- Support measures:
  Research groups funded by German Research Foundation (DFG),
  Programs of Volkswagen Foundation or Thyssen Foundation,
  Horizon 2020 on EU level
Strengths of Freie Universität Berlin

- among the 5 top universities in Germany and among the 100 best worldwide\(^1\)
- FUB’s Humanities and Social Sciences departments listed as the best in Germany\(^2\)
- Numerous subjects that are not widely studied in Germany, such as Arabic Studies, Byzantine Studies or Dutch Philology
- innovative and high-performance natural sciences
- frequent spin-offs from university projects

\(^1\) Times Higher Education Ranking 2014; \(^2\) DFG Funding Atlas
Facts and Figures

- 35,500 students and 4,300 doctoral candidates at Freie Universität Berlin
- 33% of students and 28% of doctoral candidates in Humanities and Social Sciences
- 54% of all degree programs offered by Freie Universität Berlin are programs in Humanities and Social Sciences
Humanities at Freie Universität Berlin

Platforms for large-scale projects and their coordination

since 2001
Interdisciplinary Centers

Since 2005
Focus Area: Dahlem Humanities Center
Initial funding for Projects, Competitions of Ideas, Hegel Lectures, Workshops

since 2007
Center for International Cooperation
Center for Research Strategy (formerly CCD)
Dahlem Research School
Dahlem Humanities Center

- The Focus Area Dahlem Humanities Center is the hub of the rich expertise in the humanities found at Freie Universität Berlin.
- Its mission is to investigate new questions and research trends by fostering regional and international interdisciplinary research cooperation with leading institutions from all over the world.
- Activities: lectures, conferences, workshops, panel discussions
- different international postdoc programs (funded by Volkswagen Foundation and Mellon Foundation, Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung, Thyssen Foundation)
- forums of ideas for launching new research projects
- thematic network “Principles of Cultural Dynamics“