

# Collegium generale

## Activism and Engagement – How Far Can the Academy Go?

Münchenwiler Seminar | Spring 2026 | Schloss Münchenwiler

### Friday, May 8, 2026

13.30	Departure by bus from the University of Bern, Hochschulstrasse 4, to Schloss Münchenwiler
14.30 – 14.45	<b>Introduction</b>
14.45 – 15.30	<b>Activism, Academic Freedom and Politicising Science: a Historical Perspective</b> Prof. Dr. Caspar Hirschi, History, University of St.Gallen
15.30 – 16.15	<b>Overshooting Paris Agreement Limits: Rethinking the Academy's Role in a Planetary Emergency</b> Prof. Dr. Thomas Frölicher, Climate and Environmental Physics, University of Bern
16.15 – 16.45	Coffee Break
16.45 – 17.30	<b>Situated Knowledge as Key Concept: Participatory Research on Gender and Diversity in the Arts</b> Dr. Andrea Zimmermann, Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies, University of Bern
17.30 – 18.15	<b>Holding the Line, But How? Reflections on the (Political) Scientist's Role in Times of Endangered Democracy</b> Prof. Dr. Rahel Freiburghaus, Political Science, University of Lausanne
18.15 – 19.00	<b>Informal Discussion with Apéro</b>
19.00	Dinner

### Saturday, May 9, 2026

8.00	Breakfast
9.00 – 9.45	<b>Public Anthropology as Critical Post-colonial Practice. Or: How to Relate Academic Knowledge to Social Change</b> Prof. Dr. Rohit Jain, Design, Film and Art, Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts
9.45 – 10.30	<b>The Research-to-Advocacy Feedback Loop: Migrant Women Workers Finding a Strategy between Family, Immigration Authorities and the Courts</b> PD Dr. Marion Panizzon, World Trade Institute, University of Bern
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee Break
11.00 – 11.45	<b>Models and Data, Not Activism: Normativity and Restraint in Economics</b> Prof. Dr. Dirk Niepelt, Economics, University of Bern
11.45 – 12.30	<b>How to Deal with Personal Biases in (Animal Welfare) Science</b> Prof. Dr. Hanno Würbel, Veterinary Public Health, University of Bern
12.30 – 13.15	<b>Concluding Discussion</b>
13.15	Lunch
14.30	Departure

### Registration

The seminar is open to all members of the teaching, research and intermediate staff at the University of Bern. Participation is free of charge. Please register by April 20, 2026: [www.collegiumgenerale.unibe.ch](http://www.collegiumgenerale.unibe.ch)

## Activism and Engagement

### How Far Can the Academy Go?

When we talk about climate change, pandemics, or the distribution of wealth, many scholars find that their research is relevant to policy and public discourse. While some scholars argue that the scientific community must promote impartiality and objectivity and discourage activism, other scholars advocate specific policies, engage as scientists in political action, and understand their role to include persuading others to believe and act accordingly.

But how far can scholars go without compromising the rigorous standards of science? Can they be advocates of political interests, or should they keep to delivering objective information? How critical can they be without sacrificing science's aspirations to neutrality? What is objectivity precisely, and how does it relate to broader values? At the Münchenwiler seminar 2026 we aim to discuss the confines within which scientists' engagement with wider society can be fruitful and legitimate. We have invited speakers from a variety of academic disciplines to reflect on their experience and their self-perception, and the seminar is open to all members of the academic staff.

## Program committee

### Prof. Dr. Dr. Claus Beisbart

Institute of Philosophy

### Prof. Dr. Heike Mayer

Vice-Rectorate Quality and Sustainable Development

### Prof. Dr. Olivia Romppainen-Martius

Institute of Geography

### Prof. Dr. Jens Schlieter

Unit for the Science of Religion

### Sara Bloch

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## Registration

The seminar is open to all members of the teaching and research staff including doctoral and post-doctoral researchers at the University of Bern.

Participation is free of charge.

**Please register by April 20, 2026:**

