



University of St.Gallen

St.Gallen Collegium

Re-interpreting Freedom

Call for Applications:

The newly founded St.Gallen Collegium seeks eight fellows for the academic year 2025-2026.

<http://collegium.unisg.ch>

collegium@unisg.ch

Deadline: September 30, 2024



Call for Applications

The University of St.Gallen is the first business university in the world to establish an institute of advanced study: St.Gallen Collegium. Starting in fall 2025, the Collegium will host researchers from different disciplines and generations, i.e., ranging from advanced doctoral students to emeriti and independent scholars. Fellows will pursue their own research and a joint project focusing on a theme related to one of the Grand Challenges of our time.

For the academic year 2025/2026 (September 22, 2025-May 31, 2026), St.Gallen Collegium will award eight residential fellowships to scholars whose work addresses the Collegium's first annual theme:

Re-interpreting Freedom

About the Theme

The quest for freedom, for an understanding of what it entails and what it should amount to is as old as social thought. Despite the term's ubiquity in political discourse, its meaning has always been contested and further complicated by discussions of the limits to different kinds of freedom, ranging from artistic to academic, from religious to reproductive freedom. While some would argue that freedom can only be understood negatively as "freedom from," adherents of a positive conception of the term consider it impossible for people to be free unless they are empowered to use their freedom. It is similarly controversial how much freedom humans need to flourish. Do Western societies overestimate the importance of personal freedom? And how do we reconcile our individual freedom with the demands of the common good?

St.Gallen Collegium invites researchers to revisit and rekindle ideas and debates about freedom. Potential avenues for further inquiry include:

- **Economic freedom.** – The post-World War II international economic order was built on the belief that the free flow of goods and people is advantageous for all. However, voters and governments in many states from East to West question and, in some cases, downright reject the principles that have underpinned institutions such as the World Trade Organization and consider some detrimental to developing countries. Former advocates of economic freedom and free trade have become advocates of industrial policy and protectionism. How can the benefits of economic liberalism be salvaged? What should and could a new economic order look like?
- **Capitalism and freedom.** – The power that international corporations wield today has unsettled conventional ideas of the implicit social contract between business and society. Rather than seeing capitalism as a liberating force and at the root cause of our prosperity, critics highlight

how it is not only undermining the autonomy of states, but also reducing citizens to consumers and human resources. Moreover, corporate malfeasance and bailouts have increased Western voters' readiness to push for a less business-friendly environment or more interventionist regulatory states. How can we re-think capitalism to be conducive to both collective and individual freedom and prosperity? What role can entrepreneurs and corporations play in such a process, what responsibilities do managers have?

- **Political freedom.** – According to Freedom House, only twenty percent of the world's population live in states considered "free." Is something amiss with the way we interpret and measure political freedom? Even in liberal democracies, an increasing share of voters back political actors who challenge democratic institutions, arguing that those very institutions established to protect freedom have become overly restrictive. Others fear that the open society is based on conditions that will lead to its (auto-)destruction. How do we account for such perceptions? Do we need to re-think political freedom in basic, fundamental ways? How can we reconcile different perceptions of the value that should be attributed to political freedom?
- **National autonomy.** – Many challenges of our time truly come without a passport. They require collaboration across national, sectorial, and organizational borders. Yet the COVID-19 pandemic or the climate crisis demonstrate that the world continues to fail the "alien invasion test." Just when transnational and intergovernmental organizations would be most beneficial, they are crippled by centrifugal forces that favor a national logic and reclaim autonomy over various policy areas. Just how free can or should states and societies be today? Does the need to overcome fragmentation and national self-centeredness entail a need to curtail collective autonomy? What role can civil society and intercultural dialogue play?
- **Climate change as a challenge to individual and collective freedom.** – Mitigating the effects of global warming requires changes in individual and collective behavior. These changes can be restrictive and at odds with our conception of individual and collective freedom, not least in the economic realm. Yet climatologists, among others, claim that we may lose it all unless we forego some freedom. How can we rethink freedom to reconcile human flourishing with respect for planetary boundaries? How can we – people, states, corporations – be made to understand our freedom as dependent on our responsibility for the future of our planet?
- **AI as a challenge and an opportunity.** – Artificial intelligence is bound to revolutionize every aspect of life, from business and education through creative and intellectual labor down to the very way we interact with each other. Only now do we begin to grasp many of its implications as AI challenges our very sense of what it means to be human and an autonomous actor. What does freedom mean in the age of AI? What needs to be done so that AI can become an agent for freedom rather than a challenge to it? How can business be part of the solution rather than part of the problem?

Research Fellowships

1 Expectations

Fellows are expected to be in residence in St.Gallen or in its environs during the academic year 2025/2026 and spend their work days on the campus of the University of St.Gallen. They will be provided shared office space and access to all campus amenities. During their Collegium year, fellows must be free from any obligations at their home institutions so that they can focus on their research in St.Gallen.

Fellows will be able to dedicate two-thirds of their Collegium time to their own research projects related to the annual theme. The Collegium will also make sure to introduce the fellows to St.Gallen faculty who share their interests and whose research endeavors might be relevant to them.

In addition, the seven research fellows will establish and develop a joint project with the support of a St.Gallen faculty member who acts as convenor and moderator. Fellows are thus expected to interact regularly, to be willing and keen on learning from each other, to collaborate across disciplinary boundaries, and to engage with invited faculty and guests who can contribute to the joint project.

St.Gallen Collegium will organize events throughout the academic year to engage with the University community and the public. Fellows are expected to join select events, to present and discuss their own work as well as aspects of the joint project.

The working language at St.Gallen Collegium is English.

2 Types of Research Fellowships

St.Gallen Collegium is awarding the following research fellowships:

- **3-4 Senior Fellowships:** senior fellows are established scholars of any field; Associate Professors/Readers, Full Professors, emeriti/emerae, as well as independent scholars are welcome to apply. They receive a stipend of CHF 150,000 (gross) for the academic year (September-May). Three fellowships are named in honor of our donors: the Ria und Arthur Dietschweiler Fellowship, Michael Hilti Fellowship as well as the SENN Fellowship.
- **1-2 Early Career Fellowships:** early career fellows are post-doctoral scholars of any field. They receive a stipend of CHF 80,000 (gross) for the academic year (September-May). The Hans Christoph Binswanger Fellowship is awarded to the winner of the Hans Christoph Binswanger Prize. For details, [please refer to the specific call](#).



- **2 Junior Fellowships for young scholars from the global south:** two fellowships are designated for advanced doctoral students or early postdoctoral scholars who are currently working at a university in the global south, preferably at an African university. They receive a stipend of CHF 80,000 (gross) for the academic year (September-May).

3 Application

Please note that the **Hans Christoph Binswanger Fellowship** requires different documents. [Please see consult the specific call for application.](#)

For all other research fellowships, please include the following documents in your application:

- CV; please highlight any experience you may have in interdisciplinary collaborative projects.
- List of publications; please highlight three key publications pertaining to the annual theme.
- Letter of motivation (max. 2 pages).
- Short outline (max. 2 pages) of the research you plan to pursue during your Collegium year.
- If you are an advanced doctoral student or postdoctoral scholar, please include two letters of recommendation as well.

Please combine all documents in one PDF file and submit it **by September 30, 2024 via e-mail to collegium@unisg.ch**. Short-listed candidates will be invited for an interview via Zoom in October. Fellows will be notified after the final selection by the Advisory Board at the end of November.

Should you have any questions regarding the application process or the Collegium as such, please contact Prof. Claudia F. Brühwiler, the academic director: claudiafranziska.bruehwiler@unisg.ch.



Outreach Fellowship

1 Profile & Expectations

Each year, an outreach fellow joins St.Gallen Collegium and works with the research fellows in the context of the joint project. The outreach fellow is part of the collaborative process and simultaneously a bridgebuilder who makes the work and findings of the Collegium more accessible to a broader audience.

Outreach fellows can come from various fields and work with a wide range of media or other means and tools to let the public partake in the results of the Collegium's collective effort. St.Gallen Collegium welcomes applications by science journalists, writers, independent scholars, artists, and other creative minds. In contrast to the research fellows who reside throughout the year, St.Gallen Collegium is open to establishing a residency schedule with the outreach fellow. Should the outreach fellow be in residence during the entire academic year, they will receive a stipend of CHF 150,000 (gross); for shorter stays, the stipend will be adapted accordingly.

2 Application

Please include the following documents in your application as an outreach fellow:

- CV; please highlight any experience you may have working alongside researchers.
- Letter of motivation (max. 2 pages)
- Short outline (max. 2 pages) of your interest in the annual theme and of your vision how to make the Collegium's work and findings accessible to a broader audience.

Please combine all documents in one PDF file and submit it **by September 30, 2024 via e-mail to collegium@unisg.ch**. Short-listed candidates will be invited for an interview via Zoom in October. The fellow will be notified after the final selection by the Advisory Board at the end of November.

Should you have any questions regarding the application process or the Collegium as such, please contact Prof. Claudia F. Brühwiler, the academic director: claudiafranziska.bruehwiler@unisg.ch.