

Call for Applications

Terms and Turns of Empire. Interconnecting Concepts and Methods.

7-12 September 2026, Freiburg im Breisgau (Germany)

**Confirmed Guests: Peter Bang (Copenhagen),
Julian Go (Chicago), Louis Nana (Tübingen),
Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll (Vienna)**

The Summer School “Terms and Turns of Empire. Interconnecting Concepts and Methods” will offer an intensive interdisciplinary methodological forum for critical engagement with the relationship between methods and concepts of ‘empire’ across academic fields and historical periods.

Empires have historically and globally been the most enduring form of political, economic, and cultural domination, to which researchers responded with a multitude of heterogeneous approaches. Regrettably, research on empire often remains divided by disciplinary, temporal and spatial boundaries. This Summer School offers a platform for bringing postgraduate students and established scholars from a variety of backgrounds into dialogue. We will explore how empires – from ancient formations and colonial expansions to contemporary global structures of power and influence – have been conceptualised, differentiated, and examined.

Through a combination of presentations, thematic panels, interactive workshops, poster work and group discussions, the six-day programme will move progressively from conceptual foundations to methodological applications. The sessions are in part led by invited scholars, while others rely on the discussion between participants in a safe space.

The Summer School is structured in three building blocks:

In the first part, we will collectively develop a broad overview of conceptualisations of ‘empire’. Subsequently, we will discuss the following questions: How do these analytical lenses shape our enquiries? What are their chances and limitations? How can we think these lenses differently?

In the second part, we will turn to methods of empire studies. We will begin by mapping out the various methods employed by the participants. Which dimensions of empire can these epistemological frameworks bring to our attention? Which do they obscure? The following workshops will be concerned with specific methods, such as archival work, textual interpretation and ethnography.

In the third part, we will discuss the interdependence of concepts and methods. Participants will apply insights from the previous days to their own research. There will be space to share the results with the group through a poster presentation. We will end with a discussion reflecting on the results of the Summer School.

Participants will also join us in a day trip and film night alongside the academic workshops. In sum, we hope to interconnect multiple methodologies, spark interdisciplinary conversation and facilitate changes in perspective.



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We expect intensive engagement from all participants and aim to foster a collaborative research community where questions are shared openly and answered collectively. To make the most of the Summer School, participants will be asked to complete select readings and reflect on guiding questions in advance.

Application

We are looking for applications from doctoral students who deal with empires from all periods and regions in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. We expect an open mind for interdisciplinary dialogue, ideally already indicated by the current research project.

The Summer School will accommodate a maximum of 10 external participants.

The Summer School will be held in English.

The Research Training Group 2571 “Empires” will cover the cost of accommodation (single rooms) at Studienhaus Wiesneck in the Black Forest. Travel costs will be covered up to 200€ with exceptions in special circumstances (e.g. travel from outside of Europe).

Please send your application with the following documents to kontakt@grk2571.uni-freiburg.de until **31 May 2026**.

- 1 page motivation letter
- 1 page summary of your current research project with a focus on your conceptualisation of empire and the methods employed
- CV (ca. 2 pages)

Participants will be notified at the beginning of June.



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