



(Un)Disciplined:
Pluralizing Ukrainian
Studies — Understanding
the War in Ukraine



Bundesministerium
für Bildung
und Forschung

CONFERENCE OPEN CALL

(UN)SAFE PLURALITY: UKRAINE AND BEYOND

[UNDIPUS Network](#)

in collaboration with

the [Institute for East European Studies of the Free University Berlin](#)
and the [Leibniz-Center for Literary and Cultural Research](#)

Berlin, September 30 – October 2, 2025

Deadline for submission of abstracts – March 15, 2025.

Russia's war against Ukraine has provoked the most heated debates about the responsibility of politics (e.g., "the West"), but also of academic disciplines, since the WWII. Using the slogans of *decentering* or *decolonization*, it has often been asked whether the entire field of area research – Slavic, Eastern European, and Eurasian studies – can still exist within previous political, cultural, and epistemological paradigms, and what role and direction Ukrainian studies should take? Driven by the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's formula of *Zeitenwende* (a turn of times), these debates initially aimed to reassess the value and relevance of current cultural and theoretical canons by questioning a wide range of (disciplinary) conventions and tropes – from post-coloniality/post-imperiality, Eurocentrism, or (feminist) antimilitarism to the geo-cultural attributions of the area studies and the "epistemic innocence" of theory on the whole.

In the midst of a devastating war and the ongoing debates, our conference seeks to take stock of these developments and their outcomes. Has this wide-ranging discussion – not unlike Scholz's *Zeitenwende* – remained more promise than reality, at least for the time being? How have the traumatic events of the war, as well as the resulting empathy and activism, affected the academic fields and societies involved? Have the demands for epistemic justice and the emphasis on Ukrainian "voices" led to a greater plurality of perspectives and methods, or have they, on the contrary, reduced their diversity?

Focusing on the (un)safe plurality in times of war, our conference works toward pluralization on at least three levels. First, it situates the war in Ukraine in a broader comparative and historical context in order to avoid essentializing it and to identify common patterns. Second, to go beyond seductive simplifications, it seeks to reexamine the methodological standards of our disciplines. The established and emerging critical theories – post-/decolonial, transnational, gender, queer, spatial, and diversity studies, cultural transfer and entangled history (*histoire croisée*), language management, and ecocriticism – have created research agendas to overcome the legacies of

imperialisms, totalitarianisms, and nationalisms. But to what extent do these frameworks retain their subversive power and pluralizing potential during the war? Third, the idea of resilience itself can be pluralized beyond its militarized meanings if we consider critical theories' resistance to manipulation and national or methodological compartmentalization. All in all, we ask what kind of knowledge can provide ethical guidance in turbulent times, promote peace, and help build a better future?

The discussion on these and other topics will be structured around six methodological foci:

- Postcolonial theory and decolonial thinking
- Gender, feminist, and queer studies
- Language diversity and multilingualism
- Memory, trauma, and violence
- Border and borderland studies
- Ecocriticism

We welcome applications from researchers specializing in literary and cultural studies, philosophy, history, political science, sociology, and other related disciplines who could contribute to the topics outlined above. The conference will pay particular attention to the paradoxes that arise in the dramatic context of war. These include (but are not limited to) the polarization of academic and public discourse, (self-)censorship, and the perceptions of pluralism as unsafe or even threatening.

This is the final conference of the BMBF-funded [UNDIPUS network](#). The conference aims to summarize four years of our activities and to explore the interconnections between Ukrainian studies and other fields and disciplines.

Dates and deadlines

The deadline for submission of abstracts is March 15, 2025.

Authors of abstracts will be notified of selection by April 15, 2025.

Conference details

The conference will take place in person; there are no conference fees. The organizers have a limited possibility to cover the travel and accommodation expenses of the participants. The conference language is English (no translation).

Submission of abstracts

To participate in the conference, please submit your proposal via [this form](#), which is also accessible via the QR code on the right. The proposal must include a title, an abstract (300 words), a short bio (max. 100 words), and an indication of the relevant focal area of the conference.



Questions? Please contact the conference organizing team via olga.plakhotnik@uni-greifswald.de