Course Description

Technological innovations are core drivers of economic and social dynamics in modern societies. The seminar introduces social science perspectives on the origins, forms, and effects of innovations. Key questions discussed are where inventions and innovations come from, how regional divides in innovative activity emerge, how states influence and direct innovation, and how technological change effects societies. Besides delving into empirical material, we will work through exemplary debates on the forms and functions of innovation since World War II, especially concerning the issues of industrial policy and international competitiveness. Corresponding to the field of innovation research, the seminar covers literatures from a wealth of theoretical and methodological perspectives, among them history and historical sociology, economics, quantitative political science, comparative political sociology, and social network analysis.

Participation in the seminar

All participants will be expected to read all of the texts on the syllabus, take an active part in class discussions, give a brief presentation and prepare a term paper of 15–20 pages due on 15 February 2019, 12:00 pm. Term papers have to be sent in in two versions: an electronic version goes to te@mpifg.de; for a printed version has to be handed in according to the regulations of the ISS. The printout has to include a signed declaration. For the term paper original research on literature, data, or material is required. Term papers have to be written in English. All texts are made available on the ILIAS-website of the course.

1 To be found at: http://www.iss-wiso.uni-koeln.de/studium/studierende/soziologie-und-empirische-sozial-und-wirtschaftsforschung/hausarbeiten/.
For organizational matters please contact Timur Ergen (te@mpifg.de).

Readings

Part 1: Where do innovations come from?


Joseph Schumpeter, 1912: Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung. Duncker & Humblot, pp. 124–164. (English translation provided, German original preferred.)

Part 2: Regional structures of innovation


Part 3: Innovation and the state


Part 4: Societal reactions to innovation


