

Social inequalities, ocean models and medieval chivalric romances

Every year, the Universitätsgesellschaft Oldenburg e.V. (UGO) gives an Award for Outstanding Doctoral Thesis in memory of Gerhard Wachsmann, as well as an Award for Excellent Research. The sociologist Gundula Zoch is the recipient of this year's research award in the humanities, social sciences and cultural studies category, which comes with 5,000 euros in prize money. Geoecologist Sinikka Lennartz received the same award in the natural sciences, mathematics and medicine category. The outstanding doctoral thesis award, which is endowed with 2,000 euros, went to German Studies scholar Martin Sebastian Hammer.



Award for Excellent Research

Prof. Dr Gundula Zoch has been serving as Junior Professor of Sociology with a focus on Social Inequalities at the Institute of Social Sciences since 2021. Her research centres on social inequalities in work, family, and education, with an emphasis on analysing inequalities over the life course. She employs empirical methods to study large-scale longitudinal survey data, such as the National Education Panel Study (NEPS). Zoch receives the UGO research award in recognition of the social relevance of her research, addressing issues like the effects of the Covid pandemic and disparities between East and West Germany. Zoch studied in Leipzig and London and earned her doctorate in Bamberg. Prior to joining the University of Oldenburg, she conducted research at the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin), the University of Bamberg, the Leibniz Institute for Educational Research (LifBi) and the University of Oxford.



Award for Excellent Research

Prof. Dr Sinikka Lennartz has been serving as Junior Professor of Biogeochemical Ocean Modelling at the Institute for Chemistry and Biology of the Marine Environment since 2022. Her work focuses on analysing the global carbon cycle, in particular on organic substances dissolved in seawater and their role in carbon sequestration. She translates chemical and biological processes into mathematical equations that are incorporated into global biogeochemical ocean models. Lennartz receives the prize in recognition of her innovative research, which has challenged decades-old assumptions about the organic carbon dissolved in the ocean and provided evidence that this natural carbon reservoir reacts more sensitively to environmental changes than previously thought. Lennartz studied in Tübingen and Braunschweig, completed her doctorate at the GEOMAR – Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel and continued her research in Oldenburg and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



Award for Outstanding Doctoral Thesis

In his thesis in German medieval studies, Dr Martin Sebastian Hammer examined metalepsis in courtly romance. He analysed the chivalric epics Erec, Parzival and Wilhelm von Österreich, texts that originated around 800 years ago in medieval royal courts and which in many ways “function” differently to modern novels. He receives the UGO award for his application of modern narratological concepts to earlier literary epochs, which paved the way for a new understanding of the term metalepsis. A metalepsis is the combination of two otherwise separate narrative levels – for example, when the “fourth wall” is broken in a film and the narrator addresses the main character directly. Hammer studied at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nuremberg and conducted research at the Universities of Oldenburg, Wuppertal and Braunschweig. He is currently a research associate at the Technische Universität Braunschweig.