The Significance of Suffering in Theory and Practice
Call for Abstracts/Papers and Registration

Annual Conference of the German Society for Utilitarian Studies
University of Bielefeld, November 19-21, 2026

This year's annual conference of the German Society for Utilitarian Studies (Gesellschaft für Utilitarismus-studien) will focus on the *Significance of Suffering in Theory and Practice*. What is suffering, and which entities can suffer? What is severe or unbearable suffering, in particular, and should it take priority over happiness and other prudential, moral, or political values or reasons? If so, what kind of priority and why?

Our speakers include Roger Crisp (Oxford), David Enoch (Oxford), Felicia Knaul (UCLA), Jennifer Corns (Glasgow), Michael Brady (Glasgow), Bjørn Morten Hofmann (NTNU), Claudia Bozzaro (Münster), Leonard Dung (Bochum), and Dieter Birnbacher (Düsseldorf/GUS Honorary President).

To participate in person or online, please email adriano.mannino@hm.edu. Participation is free. The conference will start Thursday afternoon, November 19, and end Saturday afternoon, November 21, 2026 (schedule TBA). You are welcome to attend only part of the conference.

Our schedule has room for additional speakers. Please attach your abstract or paper if you would like to give a talk; we will notify you within a few days of submission. We can fully cover travel costs within Europe, and at least partly from elsewhere.

Suitable topic areas include but are not limited to: the concepts and mental phenomena of pain, suffering, aversion, etc., and the concepts of severity and unbearability; pain and suffering as they relate to the theory of illbeing and wellbeing, value and disvalue; to intra- and interpersonal (non)aggregation, nonidentity, and population-level choices; to Kantian dignity, contractualism, virtue ethics, and other nonconsequentialist perspectives; to the concept of illhealth and issues in biomedical ethics or normative health economics more broadly (e.g., unbearability and end-of-life care, the measurement of suffering and the QALY/DALY/WELLBY metrics, patient prioritization and triage); to other areas of applied ethics (e.g., research ethics, animal ethics, AI ethics, applied population ethics/future ethics); to issues in political philosophy/theory and practice; and to the history of utilitarian thought and rivaling traditions.

The German Society for Utilitarian Studies (Gesellschaft für Utilitarismusstudien) is an association of scholars interested in utilitarian thought. Its aim is to foster engagement with the utilitarian tradition in philosophy and adjacent disciplines. Needless to say, the association welcomes utilitarians and non-utilitarians alike.

We are grateful to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for supporting our 2026 annual conference.