RESEARCH

Research Areas

Nature and Sustainable Development
This area of study examines questions of successful relations between humans and nature from ethical, theoretical and historical perspectives. Topics are land usage and biodiversity, water, energy supply, biotechnologies, bio-based economy. A particular emphasis is also placed on transformative approaches within sustainability research itself. Education for sustainable development is central to the Studium Oecologicum coordinated by the IZEW. In addition, sustainability networking within the university (School of Sustainability) and in the region are supported.

Ethics and Education
This field of study explores the relationship between ethics and their mediation in schools, universities and society. In doing so the field deals with questions on subjects ranging from didactics to research in professional ethics. The field of study is likewise developing and coordinating ethics teaching modules for BAs, MAs and teaching degrees as well as further education courses for leaders in the field of education and in social organizations. We also offer regular discussion programmes with high school students.

Junior Research Groups
Two groups of young researchers are working on “Media Ethics in Interdisciplinary Perspectives – Values and Social Cohesion in New Public Realms” and “Ethics of Science in the Research for Sustainable Development”.

Specialized library for Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities
The IZEW reference library is one of the largest specialized libraries for ethics in the sciences and humanities in Europe. It covers moral philosophy as well as the whole range of themes in application oriented ethics.
AT A GLANCE

**The IZEW**

- is an interdisciplinary research centre of the University of Tübingen, supported by all faculties.
- was initiated in 1985 and founded in 1990. It is one of the few ethics centres in Germany that addresses the full range of ethical topics.
- developed the concept of “Ethics in the sciences and humanities”: Questions of responsibility are a subject of reflection and discussion already within scientific disciplines.
- promotes an interdisciplinary dialogue with the natural sciences, humanities, social and cultural sciences in research and education; social actors and the public are an integral part of this dialogue.
- develops and realises research projects focusing on nature, the environment and sustainable development, ethics and culture, ethics and education, security ethics, ethics and the digital society, medical and bioethics. In addition to application-oriented questions, the centre also addresses basic questions of ethics.
- is one of the main centres for research and education for the next generation of scientists in interdisciplinary ethics: In recent years we hosted DFG-funded research training groups in “Ethics in Science” (1991–2000) and in “Bioethics” (2004–2013).

CONCEPT

**ETHICS IN THE SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES**

Bio-technical engineering, digital networking, constantly growing knowledge and rapid technological progress in many other fields are fundamentally changing the world around us. During this process ethical questions arise. These new questions demand that we reflect on traditional values and balance them with one another, critically analyse underlying assumptions and arrive at well-founded decisions. “Ethics in the sciences and humanities” aims at forming substantiated judgments on complex problems on the basis of interdisciplinary ethical reflection.

“Ethics in the sciences and humanities” understands ethical reflection as an integral part of responsible research and education processes. In this way ethical questions can be determined well in advance, before problematic developments become social issues.

“Ethics in the sciences and humanities” is inevitably interdisciplinary. By the same measure, the ethical discussion is not just to be carried out within the field of academia, but also in contact and collaboration with representatives of politics and society.

RESEARCH

**Research Areas**

**Security ethics**

This research area addresses ethical questions arising from different understandings of security, different contexts of security and different processes of security production. The development and implementation of new security technologies are becoming just as important an issue as the questions concerning the objectified state of security and subjective feeling of security. In this regard the IZEW is developing a new area of application-oriented ethics at the crossroads of moral theory, technology ethics, philosophy of technology and political ethics. Questions of freedom and privacy are reflected in this field, as are questions of justice.

**Ethics and Culture**

“Culture” is a system of meanings and symbols, and at the same time it refers to the actual practices of human beings that change or maintain these systems of meanings and symbols. This area of research deals with the ethical questions arising from “culture”. In addition to ethical research on demographic change, this area of study is currently focusing on questions of digitalisation. Here, the themes of privacy and autonomy in the digital world are especially important: As information technologies are not only intertwined with the many different areas of our lives, but also with politics, administration and economics, new questions and crisis points emerge. Conflicts and correspondences between the demand for a self-determined life and technical innovation are analysed with the help of ethical and cultural approaches.

“At the IZEW, I learned how to work with the complex challenges in interdisciplinary studies in a way that does justice to both methodological standards and human interaction.

Prof. Dr. Silke Schicktanz
Culture and Ethics of Biomedicine, Göttingen University

To me, the IZEW is proof that it is possible to change university structures in order to scientifically deal with pressing problems of our day.”

Prof. Dr. Klaus Steigleder
Applied Ethics, Bochum University