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STUDY GUIDE

Futures of Well-Being – Speculative Visions and Critical Perspectives (BIP)

Course/training name	Futures of Well-Being – Speculative Visions and Critical Perspectives (BIP)
Host Institution(s)	University of Cologne
Co-organising Institution(s) (if applicable)	Federal University of Pelotas, Brazil Linnaeus University, Sweden University of Florence, Italy University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain TU Dortmund (tbc)
Course level (if applicable)	Master, PhD; Bachelor only at advanced study level
Name and faculty of the lecturer(s)/trainer(s)	BIP/Summer School coordinators and teachers: Jun. Prof. Dr. Judith Rauscher, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Cologne Dr. Ruth Möhlig-Falke, Vice-Rectorate for Teaching and Studies (EUniWell), University of Cologne Dr. Jade Arbo, Federal University of Pelotas, Brazil Further EUniWell Teachers during the school: Etienne Helmer and Francisco J. Alcalá, University of Santiago de Compostela

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	Dr. Jan Springob and Dagmar Benincasa, University of Cologne Anna Seliverstova, Linnaeus University
Mode of delivery	Blended (online + on campus)
Location (if applicable)	University of Cologne
Dates of the online component (if applicable)	From 02 July 2026 to 14 September 2026
Dates of the on-site component (if applicable)	From 27 July 2026 to 31 July 2026
Cost	None
Target audience(s)	☐ Bachelor's ☒ Master's ☒ PhD ☐ Educators ☐ Researchers ☐ Administrative staff
Prerequisites	• interest in literature and theoretical perspectives; ability to read and discuss literary and theoretical texts in English • Enrolled Master or PhD student at a partner university of University of Cologne
Language(s) of instruction and recommended CEFR level	English (B2-C1)
Main Thematic Arena(s)	☐ Arena 1 - Health and Well-Being ☒ Arena 2 - Social Equality and Well-Being ☐ Arena 3 - Environmental change and Well-Being ☒ Arena 4 – Cultures, Multilingualism and Well-Being ☐ Arena 5 - Teacher Education and Well-Being ☒ Transversal ☐ Well-Being Centre for Advanced Studies

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Field(s) of research / study	Literary and Cultural Studies, History, Philosophy
Related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)	☐ 1 - No poverty ☐ 2 - Zero hunger ☐ 3 - Good health & well-being ☒ 4 - Quality education ☐ 5 - Gender equality ☐ 6 - Clean water & sanitation ☐ 7 - Affordable & clean energy ☐ 8 - Decent work & economic growth ☐ 9 - Industry, innovation & infrastructure ☒ 10 - Reduced inequalities ☒ 11 - Sustainable cities and communities ☒ 12 - Responsible consumption & production ☐ 13 - Climate action ☐ 14 - Life below water ☐ 15 - Life on land ☒ 16 - Peace, justice & strong institutions ☐ 17 - Partnerships for the goals
Number of ECTS	3 ECTS
Workload in hours	90h
Key words	Future visions; The good life; Critical speculation; Social justice; Utopia/dystopia
Catch Phrase	What is our vision for "the good life"? Join us to critically discuss what makes a positive or negative future vision and understand better how discourse shapes our own futures.
Total number of places for EUniWell participants	30
Application procedure	Specific application process (please specify): To apply, please submit a letter of interest as well as a short text (ca. 1.5-2 pages) that speaks to how you would imagine a future in which well-being is taken seriously. This short text can be a scholarly reflection, a more personal essay, a poem, a letter to your future self, etc. – be creative! Together with your letter of interest, it should give the organizers a sense of you as a person and scholar as well as of your perspective on the topic of the summer school. Please send your application by **30 March 2026** to l.tillmanns@uni-koeln.de. The host University of Cologne will do a pre-selection based on the selection criteria (see below). Your home university will decide about the final selection based on the criteria which are relevant for the funding. Only participants who follow the pre-selection process will be considered for final nomination by the home institution.
Selection criteria	- Pre-Selection by the host university will be based on: convincing articulation of motivation and interest, capacity for creativity, critical and abstract thinking as shown in submitted text, knowledge of English - Only students from EUniWell alliance universities can be selected

Abstract	How can we conceptualize “well-being” as a social, political, and cultural vision? What is a “good life”? How do competing understandings of “well-being” and “the good life” imagine the flourishing of everyone versus the flourishing of some? How do different knowledge and value systems shape these competing visions for a “good life” and a “better future”? And how do these possible futures of well-being relate to the SDGs’ objective of producing a more peaceful, equitable, just, and sustainable societies as the SDGs envision them? Utopian and dystopian visions of what makes a good or bad life have existed for thousands of years. With this summer school, we invite students (MA/PhD) and scholars to discuss in an interdisciplinary and international setting which conceptualizations of well-being may be said to best serve individual and collective interests. The summer school foregrounds interdisciplinary future thinking and critical speculation by bringing together different theoretical and practical perspectives on the topic of well-being. Organized around several SDGs, the different sessions of the summer school investigate competing visions for our shared future from the perspective of philosophy, history, political science, teacher education, and literary studies. Zooming in on different cultural contexts, historical periods, and geographical locations, they foreground questions of history, the human, social and economic justice, sustainability, techno-scientific development, and knowledge production, while critically examining utopian and dystopian discourses surrounding ideas of a better future, the good life, and collective well-being. Combining instructor-led discussion sessions together on their own research projects, the summer school aims to facilitate students’ engagement with concepts, theories, cultural materials, and methodological tools that encourage critical as well as creative thinking about the future and well-being. By alternating periods of reflection and practical exercises, plenary discussions and group work, academic and social programming, participants will be invited to compare different conceptualizations of well-being and the good life, and to analyze how all future visions and practices of speculation, including those undertaken by scientists and scholars, are shaped by specific knowledge systems, value frameworks, and disciplinary perspectives. This summer school is designed to support participants in assessing the social, political, cultural, ethical, and ecological implications of different futures of well-being, and in connecting speculative imaginaries of the future with contemporary policy frameworks such as the SDGs. Particular emphasis will be placed on enabling participants to identify and reflect on the frequently implicit assumptions about well-being, futurity, and the good life that inform their own scholarly work, research methods, and theoretical commitments, and how these impact society.
Programme / session(s)’ schedule	Online kick-off session: 2 July 2026, 3.30 – 5 pm CEST Onsite Summer School week: 27 – 31 July 2026 in Cologne Online closing session: 14 September 2026, 3.30 – 5 pm CEST

Developed skills and competences	*T2 - Cognitive skills and competencies (critical thinking, creative thinking), use of logic and reasoning; T4 - social and interpersonal skills (perspective-shifting), intercultural skills, language skills (English, multilingual & intercultural communication), T6.6 - applying general knowledge* *https://esco.ec.europa.eu/en/classification/skill_main*
Objectives and learning outcomes	Students • use models of literary, cultural, and historical studies together with methods of critical thinking and analysis to examine the course topic • analyze literary and cultural texts and discus theoretical materials in historical, cultural, social and political contexts at an advanced level • independently evaluate alternative interpretations of reading materials against an interdisciplinary theoretical foundation • develop their own research questions in relation to the course topic • confidently practice subject-appropriate forms of oral presentation using professional academic working techniques • contribute their well-founded professional point of view to collegial exchanges • reflect on their position and perspective constructively and self-critically with reference to current research developments • possess the ability to present their research results in group discussions and in the plenary in a methodologically and theoretically sound manner • acquire media literacy, taking into account different types of media and texts • familiarize themselves with criteria for selecting suitable materials for the preparation of their own research projects • create their own idea of a future well-being vision and bring into some kind of text or cultural product • evaluate different approaches (disciplinary, cultural) to the study of well-being and the good life • analyze different texts (literary, academic) for their potential to produce future visions and practice comparing these visions • apply their prior knowledge to the critical analysis of texts and cultural artefacts concerned with questions of well-being • understand how cultural norms and values as well as past cultural experiences have shaped and continue to shape visions of well-being and the good life • link questions of well-being to other questions arising from their own fields of study and research interests
Assessment methods and criteria (if applicable)	Students will apply to the summer school with a short original text (1.5-2 pages) on how they imagine a future world in which well-being is taken seriously. Invited to reflect on their own disciplinary background and individual perspective on the future(s) of well-being, they will be encouraged to experiment with scholarly and literary forms for their submissions. During the online kick-off session, participants will be placed in small expert groups, based on interests indicated in their applications, and will receive information on the preparation expected from them for the summer school

	week (incl. a list of required and voluntary readings to prepare for the sessions and guiding questions helping them to select a topic and do preparatory research for their group project and poster presentation). During the summer school week, student expert groups will prepare a poster presentation on their group project. On day 4, students will present their projects to the other participants and instructors in a "museum walk" format, giving every member of each expert group room to talk about their project. Framed by the instructor-led sessions, the student projects will provide an opportunity for students to put their own research ideas into practice in an interdisciplinary setting.
Type of certification issued upon attendance or completion	EUniWell Completion Certificate; Transcript of Records
EUniWell Completion Certificate; Transcript of Records	List of local EUniWell catalogue's coordinators available here. *For questions related to the content of the course, please contact the offer's Institution's local catalogue coordinator. For questions related to administration, mobility or recognition the course in your curricula, please contact home Institution's local coordinator.*