

Announcement

CELLS RESEARCH SEMINAR
SUMMER SEMESTER 2026



Armin Schulz, Department of Philosophy, University of Kansas

SPECIAL SESSION!

Wednesday, April 8 2026, 16.15-17.45 s.t.

ROOM 1930.A001 (Otto-Brenner-Str. 1)

Armin Schulz is Professor and Chair of Philosophy at the University of Kansas. He is an interdisciplinary researcher investigating the link between evolutionary biology and the cognitive and social sciences. His particular focus is on the evolutionary pressures on different ways of making decisions, both with a view towards cognitive psychology and economics.



Institutional Conflicts of Interest: A Novel Functionalist Account

Much of economics (and the social sciences in general) is dedicated to studying conflicts of interest: different individuals have different goals and yet somehow need to work together. What is less well studied is the question of how to make sense of conflicts of interest involving non-individuals like social institutions or social collectives. However, the latter is very important, too: from the occurrence of institutional corruption to the creation of workplaces with much internal conflict, understanding clashes between the interests of individuals and non-individuals is an important social phenomenon. How, though, can this phenomenon be studied? What, exactly, are the “interests” of social institutions or collectives? To make progress with this, this paper uses recent work in social functionalism to develop a theory of cooperation and conflict involving non-individualist social entities. To make the discussion precise, the paper focuses on principal / agent problems (though it is not restricted to the latter). The paper ends by applying this theory to cases of internal conflicts in social collectives.