

Obituaries

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Klaus von Beyme

(3 July 1934 – 6 December 2021)

*„O es ist ein seltsames Gemische von Seligkeit und Schwermut,
wenn es so sich offenbart, dass wir auf immer heraus sind
aus dem gewöhnlichen Dasein.“*

Friedrich Hölderlin

Selbstbestimmt bis zum Schluss.
In großer Liebe, Trauer und Dankbarkeit.

Prof. Dr. phil. Dr. hc. Prof. hc.

Klaus von Beyme

* 3. 7. 1934 Saarau (Schlesien) † 6. 12. 2021 Heidelberg

Maja von Beyme geb. von Oertzen
Maximilian und Heidi

Katharina und Robert mit Helena und Lucius

Gisela von Oertzen geb. von Beyme

Jutta Freifrau zu Inn- und Knyphausen geb. von Beyme

Nadia und Igor mit Linda und Elise-Charlotte

Die Beerdigung findet, coronabedingt,
im engsten Familienkreis statt.

"Goodbye, my friend, wordlessly and without a handshake.
Do not grieve, and do not take it so hard:
In this life death is nothing new,
nor does life bring anything new."

Sergei Yesenin, quoted by Klaus von Beyme

Prof. Dr. Klaus von Beyme

* 3.7.1934 + 6.12.2021

As an outstanding teacher and scholar, he represented and influenced German political science in an unusual breadth for decades. We students were fascinated by his personality. He has shaped our view of politics and political science forever.

In gratitude and veneration

His students

*Auf Wiedersehen, mein Freund, wortlos und ohne Händedruck.
Trauere nicht, und nimm es nicht so schwer:
In diesem Leben ist der Tod nichts Neues,
und auch das Leben bringt nichts Neues mehr.*

Sergei Jessenin, zit. nach Klaus von Beyme

PROF. DR. KLAUS VON BEYME

* 3.7.1934 † 6.12.2021

Als überragender Lehrer und Gelehrter hat er über Jahrzehnte die deutsche Politikwissenschaft in ungewöhnlicher Breite vertreten und beeinflusst.

Uns Schüler hat er durch seine Persönlichkeit fasziniert.

Unseren Blick auf die Politik und Politikwissenschaft hat er für immer geprägt.

In Dankbarkeit und Verehrung

Seine Schülerinnen und Schüler

Christine Althaus, Klaus Armingeon, Helge Batt, Timm Beichelt, Hans-Günter Brauch, Andreas Busch, Giovanni Capoccia, Dirk Gerdes, Stefanie Gerlach, Yvette Gerner, Michael Haus, Micha Hörnle, Christoph Hüttig, Michael Kreile, Christine Landfried, Ulrike Liebert, Wolfgang Merkel, Helga Michalsky, Michael Minkenberg, Arno Mohr, Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, Dieter Nohlen, Nico Siegel, Rolf Steltemeier, Jörg Ueltzhöffer, Ute Wachendorfer-Schmidt, Barbara Waldkirch, Tim Walleyo, Andreas Wüst, Klaus Ziemer, Reimut Zohlnhöfer

Prof. Dr. Klaus von Beyme

(1934 - 2021)

Am 6. Dezember ist in Heidelberg der Doyen der deutschen Politikwissenschaft, Klaus von Beyme, gestorben. Er war unprätentiös und lakonisch. Über seine humanistische Orientierung hat er nie viele Worte verloren.

„Kulturelle Vielfalt und demokratische Konfliktbewältigung“ lautete das Thema seines Vortrags bei meiner Verabschiedung.

2012 verlieh die International Political Science Association (IPSA) ihm auf Vorschlag von nicht weniger als zehn politikwissenschaftlichen Vereinigungen ihren – nach dem französischen Wissenschaftler Mattei Dogan benannten – Preis für sein Lebenswerk. In meiner Laudatio habe ich Klaus von Beyme als „global scholar and public intellectual“ gewürdigt.

Ich war nicht sein Schüler, aber unser beider Leben haben sich mehr berührt, als das in unserer Profession alltäglich ist. Sein Verlust schmerzt.

Rainer Eisfeld (Osnabrück)

Obituary

Klaus von Beyme was a fascinating teacher and scholar

Klaus von Beyme, one of the most renowned political scientists, is dead.



Klaus von Beyme in his garden in Heidelberg in the summer of 2014. On Monday night, he fell asleep surrounded by his family. Photo: Joe

Wolfgang Merkel

Heidelberg. When I began my studies at the University of Heidelberg in 1975, I knew nothing of Klaus von Beyme and his incipient fame. It was chance that led me to the legendary Lecture Hall 13. It was crowded, the buzzing sound of restrained conversations made one feel expectation, if not tension. Then he came, a rather small man with a great aura that immediately spread through the lecture hall with his first sentences. The students were fascinated, no one could escape. And how he lectured: Free, elegant, well-formulated, sometimes with subtle irony, from which, as I later often noticed, he never excluded himself.

It was one of his trademarks that "his" lecture hall did not empty even during the semester. Professor Klaus von Beyme was not only an inspiring speaker, but also an empathetic examiner who examined more than a thousand students, awarded doctorates to 100 PhD students and habilitated 16 political scientists. He was the teacher, the professor who shaped

the Heidelberg Institute of Political Science more than anyone else, including his eminent teacher Carl J. Friedrich, who lectured at Harvard and Heidelberg.

One who teaches and examines so much, one would think, has no time left to write. One would think so. The opposite was the case. Klaus von Beyme's oeuvre has probably surpassed that of any other political scientist in Germany in terms of scope and erudition.

He has published almost 50 monographs and around 500 essays, not only in German, of course, but in more than twenty languages. He himself was familiar with about a dozen of them, including Russian and Swedish.

Russia in general was close to his heart. He wrote his doctoral thesis on political sociology in Tsarist Russia (1965) and later published a thick book on "Economics and Politics under Socialism" (1975). Always a critic of the Soviet Union, he never couched this criticism in a zealous Cold War style. That was not his thing. Klaus von Beyme wrote soberly, analytically, rarely taking sides, and yet did not hide his own normative position. In the more recent Putin controversy, too, he was neither in the camp of the zealous critics nor in the camp of those who understood Putin. *Tertium datur*: For him, world views could not simply be divided into two camps.

Klaus von Beyme has written books on the political systems of the USA, Italy and Germany; on parties, trade unions, associations, on migration, housing and cultural policy, on neopopulism, conservatism, socialism, liberalism, racism, sexism and feminism; he has also written on "Parliamentary System(s) of Government", federalism and post-democracy.

His textbooks on the "Political System of the Federal Republic of Germany" and the "Political Theories of the Present" are legendary. They have been published in ten or more editions and have influenced generations of students. Far beyond Heidelberg, indeed beyond Germany. Klaus von Beyme's worldwide reputation earned him the presidency of the World Political Science Association between 1982 and 1985.

An extraordinary strength of the Heidelberg politics professor was comparison. In times when the profession throws itself into exuberant databases, computing software can be operated handily in a notebook and the real world can be coded supposedly precisely in abstract numbers - hardly knowing anything about the facts, countries and regions - Klaus von Beyme stood out with substantial encyclopaedic knowledge and theoretical savvy. Numbers were never the core of his science, but always only complementary tools to further break down the political and social world.

Klaus von Beyme was born in Silesia and not in the Palatinate where he lived most of his life. Nevertheless, he became a Heidelberger and remained one altogether. In Germany and the Western world, he could have been offered a chair at almost any university. He turned down concrete calls to Frankfurt and Berlin. He knew why. He had long since become the indispensable scholarly inventory of the venerable university city of Heidelberg.

Klaus von Beyme was not arrogant, not a full professor, never polemical. He was the opposite: amiable in the circle of his colleagues and friends, open-minded for "his" students. He gave immensely to us and to his science. Now we mourn him.

The author Wolfgang Merkel is Director Emeritus at the Science Centre Berlin (WZB).



Photo: Klaus von Beyme with his former students and colleagues Andreas Busch and Wolfgang Merkel at the Science Centre Berlin. Source: Science Centre Berlin (WZB), Berlin.

On Klaus von Beyme

- **Klaus von Beyme:** Born as one of five siblings on July 3, 1934 in Saarau. The parents were landowners in Silesia, later hoteliers.
- **Studies:** After graduating from high school in Celle in 1954, initially trained as a publishing bookseller. From 1956 he studied law, sociology and history in Heidelberg, after four semesters he swapped law for political science. Further study locations: Bonn, Munich, Paris and Moscow.
- **Teaching:** After completing his habilitation in Heidelberg, Beyme became a full professor at the Eberhard-Karls-University in Tübingen (1967–1973), and in 1971 also briefly rector. In 1972 he was offered a professorship at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt. From 1974 to 1999 full professor at the University of Heidelberg, here he was head of the Institute for Political Science (IPW). During this time numerous engagements and teaching activities in Florence, Paris, Stanford and Melbourne.
- **Awards:** Von Beyme has received a number of awards, including honorary membership of the Humboldt University in Berlin and the University Medal of the University of Heidelberg. In 1998, a survey identified him as one of the world's ten most important political scientists - the only German.
- **Political activity:** Von Beyme never made a secret of his SPD membership (since the age of 24). In his home town of Heidelberg, he was also involved in a variety of activities; he took a committed stance on important local political "hot potatoes" such as the expansion of the town hall. In 2014, he even ran for the Heidelberg city council - in order to get as many votes as possible for his party, which worked out: von Beyme ended up in 11th place. The student unrest was formative for the political scientist, whereby he not only let himself be called a "fucking liberal", but also recounted this

with relish decades later. Likewise the punch line that a Spartacist took him to task for being "not a class enemy".

- **Private life:** Von Beyme was married and has two grown-up children.

Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version)

Source: © Wolfgang Merkel, Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung, Tuesday, 7 December 2021, p. 2

- IPSA: “Klaus von Beyme in Memoriam (1934-2021)” <<https://www.ipsa.org/na/news/klaus-von-beyme-memoriam-1934-2021>>.
- IPSA-twitter: <https://twitter.com/ipsa_aisp/with_replies>.
- Wikideck: “Klaus von Beyme” [in Spanish], < https://wp-es.wikideck.com/Klaus_von_Beyme>.
- Gabriela Baranyaiová: “Klaus von Beyme in Memoriam”, in: Charles University Prague, Institute for Political Studies, Faculty of Political Sciences, < <https://ips.fsv.cuni.cz/ipseng-1.html> >
- Dirk Rochtus: „In memoriam Klaus von Beyme: ruimdenkend, ook tegenover Rusland - Beyme behoorde wereldwijd tot de top binnen de politieke wetenschappen“, in: doorbraak.be <https://doorbraak.be/in-memoriam-klaus-von-beyme-ruimdenkend-ook-tegenover-rusland/>



- Gobierno de Espana, Centro de Estudios Politicos y Constitucionales, 17 December 2021: “Fallece Klaus von Beyme”< <http://www.cepc.gob.es/actualidad/fallece-klaus-von-beyme>>.

Nachrufe zum Lebenswerk von Klaus von Beyme



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„Wahrscheinlich ist Freiheit der wichtigere Wert, der zentrale, der dann ableitet, was man sonst so macht“ – Ein werkspezifischer Nachruf auf Klaus von Beyme

12. Januar 2022, Isabelle-Christine Panreck

DVPW

Deutsche Vereinigung für Politikwissenschaft

Nachrufe auf Klaus von Beyme

[26.01.2022, von Wolfgang Merkel](#)