

Prof. Dr. Fabian Schuppert  
Chair of Political Theory



### **Information for International Students**

Dear international students,

Welcome to the Chair of Political Theory at the University of Potsdam! We look forward to meeting you in one of our lectures or seminars. Below, you will find some general information on the chair, the classes we offer, and on performance requirements, as well as useful guidelines for borrowing books from the chair, and preparing presentations, protocols, term papers, and finding a suitable topic for your term paper.

#### **The Chair of Political Theory**

The Chair of Political Theory at the University of Potsdam is, among others, mainly concerned with the following areas of research:

- History of political thought (especially the history of Republicanism and the discussion of marginalized and underrepresented political theorists and thinkers)
- Climate justice and climate politics
- Territorial rights and natural resources
- Political, social and economic processes of transformation
- Alternative theories of political economics, post-capitalism
- Contemporary patterns of change in democracy and democratic theory
- Foundations of political theory / contested concepts and terms in political theory
- Social inequality / overcoming social inequality
- Structural injustice, sexism, racism etc.
- Ethics of risk
- Decolonialism
- State and power

All members and lecturers of the chair and additional information on their respective research fields can be found on our website: <https://www.uni-potsdam.de/de/lspoltheorie/mitarbeiterinnen>

### **Classes**

The chair offers a variety of classes in the field of political theory and the history of political thought at the BA and MA level. For each semester, you can find a complete **list of the chair's classes** on our website: <https://www.uni-potsdam.de/de/lspoltheorie/studium-und-lehre/lehrangebot>

If you require assistance or advice in putting together your course schedule, if you have specific questions relevant to your field of study or regarding the study programs and course of studies at the University of Potsdam, or if you encounter any challenges in your studies, please do not hesitate to contact the **tutor for international students** at the Faculty of Social Sciences: [sowitutor@uni-potsdam.de](mailto:sowitutor@uni-potsdam.de)

### **Performance Requirements**

The specific performance requirements for each class will be listed in the respective **course syllabus**. You can either receive credits (*Leistungspunkte/ECTS*) for your **active participation** in the class (*Teilnahmeschein*) or you can receive **full graded credit** (*Leistungsschein*) with a grade for the entire module the class is offered in. The exact form of examination and the amount of credits you can receive for the course depend on the module and your study program.

In general, for **active participation**, you are required to read the literature for each session, actively participate in class discussions and perform other small tasks, such as preparing a presentation or writing a short essay/response paper/critical text analysis. To receive **full graded credit**, you usually have to fulfill all of the requirements mentioned above in addition to writing a term paper (*Hausarbeit*) or an exam (*Klausur*).

## **Borrowing Books from the Chair of Political Theory**

If you would like to borrow a book from the Chair of Political Theory, please send an email with all relevant details to Ms. Eichler: [sabine.eichler@uni-potsdam.de](mailto:sabine.eichler@uni-potsdam.de)

After you have received a notification from Ms. Eichler that the book is currently available, you can pick it up Monday to Thursday from 9 AM – 3 PM in room 1.74 (Building 1, *Campus Griebnitzsee*). Please bring your **Student ID** when picking up the book from Ms. Eichler.

The **loan period** is usually limited to **2 weeks**, but individual arrangements are also possible.

## **Guidelines for Presentations**

The following guidelines can help you if you have to prepare a presentation for one of the classes offered by the Chair of Political Theory.

- You should **introduce yourself** at the beginning of your presentation and clearly state the **topic** and the **main goal** of your presentation. You should also give an overview of the **outline** of your talk and of your **main arguments**.
- You should logically and coherently **structure** the presentation and especially the arguments you would like to advance. This will make it easier for the audience to follow your presentation and to understand your main points.
- You should aim to **speak as freely as possible**. You may use bullet points during the presentation, but you should not simply read a prepared text out loud.
- Your presentation should not exceed the set **time limit**. Thus, it is highly recommended to practice the presentation in advance.
- If you would like to use **PowerPoint slides** during your presentation, please make sure that the text (font and font size) is still easily readable from a

distance. Whilst **bullet points** and **illustrations**, such as diagrams or tables, can be useful for the audience when following your presentation, too much text on a single slide is generally not advisable.

- You may create a separate **handout** for your audience that summarizes your main arguments.
- You should list all the **sources** you have consulted for your presentation on a separate slide or handout.
- Leave enough room for **questions** or a **class discussion** at the end of your presentation.

### **Guidelines for Reports**

A report (*Protokoll*) should not exceed **2-3 pages** and usually aims to give an overview of the content discussed in one specific seminar session.

Your report should be clearly structured and reader-friendly since it is supposed to help other students to recall and memorize what was discussed in a specific seminar session. Therefore, it is recommended to **use bullet points**, to **highlight or underline** the most important concepts/terms/arguments and to **compile tables or graphs** (if suitable).

In addition to content-related details, your report should also include the following information: Your name, the course title, topic and date of the seminar session you are writing the report for, name of the lecturer.

To be able to write an excellent report, you should pay close attention during the seminar session and **take detailed and well-structured notes**. Make sure to also include open questions, recommended readings, definitions, and specific arguments in your notes.

## **Guidelines for Term Papers**

If you would like to write a term paper in one of the classes offered by the Chair of Political Theory, please take a look at the following guidelines first. Whilst these are **general guidelines**, you should always pay close attention to **specific requirements and instructions** given by the instructor of the class. Also, please make sure that your **topic** is approved by the lecturer before starting the writing process.

You should use an **appropriate font (e.g. Arial or Times New Roman) in 12pt** and use **1.5 spacing**. The standard settings for margins should be followed and paragraphs should be fully justified (*Blocksatz*). You should also include **page numbers** (beginning on the first page containing full text).

The first page of your term paper should be a **cover page** that includes the following information:

- Your full name, enrolment number, study program, the semester you are studying in, your University of Potsdam email address
- Title of your paper, date of submission, word count (if required)
- Course title, name of lecturer, term (winter or summer) and academic year the class was offered in

A **table of contents** is often optional, but it is generally recommended for more extensive term papers.

You should include a **Works Cited Page/Bibliography** at the end of your term paper, in which you list all the sources that you have used in an alphabetical order. It is recommended to use a reference management software. The University of Potsdam offers a campus license for **Citavi**, which can be accessed here: <https://www.uni-potsdam.de/de/zim/angebote-loesungen/software-campuslizenz/campuslizenz-citavi> Mac users might be interested in considering **Zotero** as an alternative.

You are free to choose which of the established **citation styles** you would like to use in your term paper. You may use either **in-text references or footnotes**, but please make sure to remain consistent in the citation style you use throughout your paper.

## **Finding a Topic**

If you encounter any difficulties in **finding an appropriate and feasible topic** for your term paper, the following questions could help you to narrow down a topic and formulate a good research question:

- **Which topics/areas of inquiry** that I have engaged with in my seminars on political theory and the history of political thought **interest me the most?**
- Do any **open questions/unresolved issues** come to my mind when thinking back to class discussions and the texts I have read thus far?
- Which **perspectives/assumptions/arguments** from the literature could I critically examine? Which **concepts/constructs/terms** from the field of political theory would I like to analyze/question/reconstruct? Are there any **particular texts or theorists/philosophers/thinkers** I would like to engage with more closely?
- Would I be interested in **testing the empirical validity of a theory** and can I think of **empirical cases** that might be suitable for this purpose?