

Call for Papers

Democracy in Crisis – Critiques of Democracy

International Graduate Conference
Gießener Graduiertenzentrum Rechts-, Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften
Justus Liebig University Gießen
June 21st and 22nd, 2012

Given the profound reverberations contemporary economic crises have had in established democracies, a new phase of post-democracy appears to have emerged, severely constraining processes of autonomous decision-making and traditional modes of contestation. At the same time, democracy as purportedly the best possible form of government has not lost its appeal, as is evidenced by the upheavals of the ‘Arab spring’, claiming regime change in favor of a fundamental democratization. Furthermore, these developments have intensified the hitherto forcefully suppressed migration crisis in the Schengen Area by amplifying migration processes across the Mediterranean and endangering the EU's various cooperative relations with its autocratic partners in North Africa. This has revealed the illiberal and exclusionary foundations of the ‘cosmopolitan’ democracy embodied by the EU.

Against the backdrop of this volatile situation, the graduate conference “Democracy in Crisis – Critiques of Democracy” seeks to explore the idea of democracy between the poles of *crisis* and *critique*. If the term crisis is not equated with the imminent danger of catastrophe, but is rather understood as a decisive moment in a time of intense difficulty, then crisis opens up the possibility of a radical critique of democracy by unveiling and reflecting its very concept, its epistemological and ontological foundations, its principles and institutions, as well as revealing its limits, contradictions and unredeemed promises.

Following the conference “Democracy & Resistance” (June 18th-20th, Gießen), which will inaugurate the *Gießener Graduiertenzentrum Rechts-, Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften*, this international graduate conference is intended to serve as a platform for PhD candidates and early stage postdoctoral researchers to present and discuss current research and work-in-progress. The main focus of the conference will include the following thematic fields, which can be addressed from normative perspectives, including theories of poststructuralism, feminism and postcolonialism, as well as empirically, by drawing on case studies and field research:

Democracy & Economy

How can the relationship between democracy and free market economy be conceptualized? Do they need, exclude or eliminate each other? Are there (necessary) strategies that strengthen or enable processes of democratic decision-making in the sphere of economic life? To what extent do economic crises influence the perception and interpretation of democracy?

Democracy & Revolution

What is the relationship between democracy, resistance, violence and a revolutionary ‘new beginning’? Does the constitution of freedom depend on the desire for and experience of self-liberation in emancipatory struggles? Where is the line drawn between emancipatory and reactionary resistance? How can democratic postcolonial/-autocratic citizenship be created?

Democracy & Migration

How does migration bring democracy's underlying dichotomy between the universal claim of freedom and equal rights and the particularistic enforcement of borders into crisis? To what extent does migration open up a space for critiques of established conceptions, institutions and practices of democracy? How can a liberal and inclusionary form of migration and border regime be conceived of?

We welcome submissions to answer these questions from scholars working in the humanities and social sciences. Please submit abstracts of 300-400 words, including a short author biography, by **March 31st**. Authors will be informed whether their abstract has been accepted by April 15th. Proposed talks should not exceed 20 minutes, as the panels are explicitly intended as discussion forums.

Childcare during the conference will be provided upon request. To support the participation of presenters, the conference organizers will apply for funds to cover travel expenses and costs for accommodation.

The conference will be open for registration as of May 2012 and is free for participants.

Please submit abstracts and questions to the following e-mail address:

ggrws@uni-giessen.de

Conference Organizers

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