

Profile report

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MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Chair Social and Political Philosophy

Motivation

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS) of Maastricht University (UM) proposes to establish a Chair in *Social and Political Philosophy* in the Department of Philosophy. Maastricht University is the most international university in the Netherlands and stands out for its innovative education model and its interdisciplinary approach. FASoS offers BA and MA programmes that combine subjects and approaches from both the humanities and the social sciences. An international group of staff teach and research the challenges of contemporary Europe and its constituent societies, against the backdrop of a rapidly globalising world. Research and education across national and disciplinary boundaries is at the heart of the FASoS identity and one of its core strengths.

There is a need for philosophical reflection on the challenges faced by contemporary societies, and to develop critical visions that respond to those challenges. Cosmopolitanism, open market ideologies, and ideals of global justice are vying with protectionist forms of nationalism and more local, communitarian conceptions of justice. On the national level, the legitimacy of representative democracy is being put to the test by various forms of populism demanding more direct and/or more authoritarian forms of political governance. National sovereignty is contested simultaneously by local and regional forms of politics, and by supranational bodies like the EU. These challenges raise questions such as: what does citizenship imply in modern societies marked by a partial loss of national sovereignty, by cultural pluralism and other forms of diversity, and by meritocratic ideologies and practices that foreground competition and individualism? To what extent is this individualism compatible with forms of collective organisation that have hitherto enabled and channelled emancipation processes and political struggles? What are modern forms of exploitation, alienation and exclusion; how are these dealt with; and how to deal with them? How useful are concepts and values that previously acted as normative anchor points – “solidarity”, the “common good”, “democracy” – for navigating the rapidly changing landscape? These questions must be considered from within a context wherein economies are subjected to permanent and ever more rapid reorganisations, challenging established organisations and ways of dealing with questions of production, distribution, and power, while at the

same time normative visions on the desirable relations between state, market, and civil society are still as diverse as ever.

Profile of the chair

We are looking for an expert with a solid background in social and/or political philosophy. The successful candidate will have a firm grasp on the history of social/political philosophy, and be able to relate those historical concepts and ideas both to their original societal context and to the problems of today.

Specific to philosophical research at FASoS is an interdisciplinary approach, including methods and approaches from the humanities and qualitative social sciences. The defining characteristic of the Faculty is its broad definition of 'culture', so as to include the arts, science, technology, politics, and everyday life. Staff include humanities scholars from fields such as (digital) media studies, art, literature, philosophy, history, European studies and specialists with a focus on (artistic) objects and practices, as well as social scientists including political scientists, anthropologists and sociologists with a focus on science and technology, (European) politics, and globalisation.

The chair will contribute to and take the lead in the scholarly development of this broad interdisciplinary approach in the field of Social and Political Philosophy. Current FASoS research touching upon social and political philosophy deals with the culture of politics and the politicisation of culture, the role of emotions (e.g. resentment) in democratic politics, diversity in different forms, meritocracy, poverty, ideologies of disruptive innovation, and the reshaping of European democracy under the influence of digital technologies, e.g. in 'smart cities'. The candidate will be located in the Faculty's research programme "Politics and Culture in Europe". However, willingness and the ability to contribute to one or more of the other programs is considered an asset: Arts Media and Culture; Globalisation, Transnationalism & Development; or Science, Technology & Society Studies.

Functional requirements

The suitable candidate should:

- be a scholar with a solid background in social and/or political philosophy, and show a deep understanding of the history of the field.
- hold an excellent record as a researcher, evidenced through national and international publications, grant acquisitions, lectures and other expert roles.
- be a first-class and inspiring teacher, experienced both at bachelor and master levels, and willing to work with our system of small-scale problem-based learning (PBL).
- have experience in academic leadership roles.
- possess proven skills in talent-scouting and in supervision and coaching of students, PhD students and post-docs.
- have a high-level national and international network in relevant fields and communities.
- be able to write for non-expert audiences, as evidenced for example by participating in public debates and/or projects with non-philosophers.

Tasks

Contribution to research

The role of the chair is to explore and critically reflect on the many ways that contemporary societies change, and how those changes acquire a political form. The incumbent will seek to elucidate both the dynamics of contemporary social change, and to reflect on normative responses to these. A particular focus on how these challenges play out in Europe is desirable.

There is a need to bridge the realm of political concepts and theories and the practices in which these are embedded and take shape. As such, the chair will combine critical, philosophical reflection with an openness to insights from the social and political sciences, and seek to converse with researchers and non-academics beyond his/her disciplinary field.

Relevant areas of interest are:

- Models of democracy, democratic practices, democratic legitimacy, challenges to democracy, both in a national, European and global context
- Citizenship: rights, duties, virtues.
- Politics as/and culture; identity politics (gender, ethnicity, age, ability, etc.)
- Political ideologies, including reflection on key political values like equality, inclusion, solidarity, freedom, community, identity, respect, merit, toleration, diversity, and so forth
- Modalities of power (e.g. discipline, incentivisation, surveillance, nudging, etc.), and resistance

Contribution to teaching

The successful candidate will take on a central role in the development, teaching and management of the educational programs offered at FASoS. The Faculty offers BA programs in Arts and Culture and in European Studies, and is in the process of developing a new BA program in Digital Society. It also has several MA programs in which social/political philosophy and normative analysis play a role. These include the MA Art, Literature, and Society, the MA European Studies, the MA Globalisation and Development Studies, the MA Politics and Society, and the research MA European Studies.

In addition, each academic year, a wide variety of Bachelor papers and Master theses relate to social and political philosophy. The chair needs to possess extensive experience in supervising papers and theses at both BA and MA level. As both undergraduate and graduate teaching programs are organized in an interdisciplinary way at FASoS, the new chair is expected to be able to teach and cooperate in an interdisciplinary environment. FASoS employs a wide range of PhD candidates whose

research topics link to social and political philosophy, and thus the new chair should have experience with the supervision of (interdisciplinary) PhD students.

In the light of the rapid changes occurring in the field of higher education, it is essential to be open to new developments in educational formats and in the Faculty's educational system. The new chair will thus have broad experience in teaching and the management of teaching in the field of social and political philosophy, and a demonstrable interest in teaching innovation, and in motivating and stimulating junior colleagues in their teaching careers.

Contribution to management

In addition to research and teaching, the newly appointed professor will have management responsibilities at FASoS. Potential positions include chair of the Philosophy Department, director of one of the research programs, director of studies in a BA or MA program, or positions in the FASoS Graduate School or the Faculty Board. In order to be able to fulfil those tasks, s/he should have broad administrative experience, and demonstrate an open, collaborative, inspiring and effective management style. Leadership and managerial skills are of considerable importance.

Institutional context

This chair will be situated in the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Maastricht University.

Hiring committee

Chair: Prof. S. Vanhoonacker, Dean, FASoS, UM

Prof. T. Swierstra, chair in Philosophy of Technology, UM

Prof. T. Christiansen, chair in European institutional politics, UM

Dr. T. Sharon, Assistant Professor Philosophy, UM

Dr. S. Koenis, Associate Professor Philosophy, UM

Prof. R. Boomkens, Chair in Social Philosophy, UvA

S. Kantor, student member