The Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies at the University of Tartu invites applications for two fully-funded PhD scholarships to commence PhD studies in the academic year 2020/2021

Application deadline: 1 March 2020 (details here)

Duration (nominal study period): September 2020 – August 2024

Funding: A monthly stipend of 1,060€ (conditions stipulated here)

You are invited to submit your application along with a research proposal on one of the following topics:

1. **Changing political cleavages and their implications in Europe**

This topic focuses on contemporary transformations of patterns of political conflict and contestation in European societies, as well as the impact of such transformations on political behaviour and public attitudes (e.g. voting behaviour, support for parties, political incumbents and institutions). The traditional cleavage theory developed by Lipset and Rokkan in 1967, which positions voters along the social-economic and religious-secular dimensions, is facing multiple challenges. The European debt crisis and the migration crisis have revealed new social and political divides which focus on globalisation, European integration and immigration, resulting in a successful politicisation of these issues by mainstream as well as populist actors. The rapid rise of digital technologies has transformed the public sphere and altered political processes. Moreover, liberal democracy is no longer considered to be “the only game in town.” Some of the new cleavages have proven to be extraordinarily divisive, contributing to high levels of political polarization and undermining societal cohesion. Taken together, these developments suggest that European societies may have reached a critical juncture in their political development – one where liberal democracy, shared identity and societal cohesion are at stake. Responding to the need to better understand these new and emerging realities, the PhD project will investigate changing political cleavages and their impact on European politics and polities. The research will be conducted using quantitative methods and will rely on data from large-n cross-national surveys, e.g. the European Social Survey, Eurobarometer, Comparative Study of Electoral Systems or the European Election Study. The PhD candidate undertaking this project is expected to have basic statistical skills and be familiar with widely used data analysis methods such as regression modelling. As part of the project, the candidate is expected to develop joint publications with the supervisors.

Interested candidates are invited to prepare a research proposal outlining the specific research project they would pursue under this general topic. Admission requirements, including guidelines for the research proposal, can be found here.

Main supervisor: Piret Ehin, Senior Researcher, Deputy Head of the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, piret.ehin@ut.ee

Co-supervisor: Liisa Talving, Research Fellow at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

Please contact Dr Piret Ehin for an approval of your proposal ahead of the application deadline!
2. Self-Determination of Peoples in Historical Perspective

A new research project entitled “Self-Determination of Peoples in Historical Perspective” is announcing a call for applications for a PhD position.

Self-determination of peoples is one of the key normative principles in contemporary politics. Yet its meaning and implications are notoriously difficult to pin down. The notion of the people is elusive and its relationship to those of the state and nation undetermined. There is also a tension between two common interpretations of this principle. On the one hand, e.g., in the UN Charter, ‘self-determination of peoples’ is understood as referring primarily to state peoples, thus adding a further layer of legitimacy to the state-centric international order. On the other hand, it is also widely believed that sub-state peoples have a right to determine their political status, which potentially challenges state sovereignty. The project rests on the thesis that uncovering the concept's historical origins will help to illuminate these uncertainties, and the ways in which the latter are exploited in international politics. Experimenting with the approach of ‘serial contextualism’, the project seeks to offer a novel transnational intellectual history of self-determination from the Enlightenment to the end of the Cold War (including its links to related terms such as autonomy, popular sovereignty, principle of nationality, self-government). The project suggests that diverging understandings of self-determination are grounded in theories of radical, constitutional, and federal republicanism, proposing to reconstruct the ways in which these understandings were modified at different historical junctures related to the evolution of the modern state and international competition. The project’s main focus is on continental European political and international thought, while it also explores some of its global transformations.

The proposed PhD project linked to “Self-Determination of Peoples in Historical Perspective” may have a historical or a contemporary focus. Historical projects may propose to explore 1) debates about individual self-determination, popular sovereignty, and international relations in German Idealism, German Socialism, or French republicanism in the nineteenth century; 2) debates between Russian Bolsheviks, Austro-Marxists and German Socialists on national self-determination in the early twentieth century; 3) ideas about self-determination in Baltic projects of federalism during the WWI or in the Interwar period, or the ways in which the Baltic diaspora sought to link decolonisation debates and the nationalities-question within the Soviet Union in the post-WWII period. Projects proposing to explore self-determination of peoples from a contemporary perspective might focus on debates between neo-Kantians and liberal nationalists, or on the rights of indigenous peoples.

Interested candidates are invited to prepare a research proposal outlining the specific research project they would pursue under this general topic. Admission requirements, including guidelines for the research proposal, can be found here.

Main supervisor: Eva Piirimäe, Associate Professor of Political Theory, Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, eva.piirimae@ut.ee

Potential co-supervisor: Kaarel Piirimäe, Associate Professor of Contemporary History, Institute of History and Archaeology

Please contact Dr Eva Piirimäe for an approval of your proposal ahead of the application deadline!
3. You can also submit a proposal on a topic of your own choosing, on the condition that the proposal fits the research interest of one of the supervisors at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies.

The proposal should fall under (one of) the following broad areas of supervision:

**Comparative Politics:**
- Electoral studies, political participation, and political culture;
- Democracy and democratization;
- Nationalism and ethnopolitics;
- Memory politics and transitional justice;
- E-services, e-governance and e-voting, and the impact of information and communication technologies on political participation and electoral behaviour.

**International Relations:**
- International relations, international security, and foreign policy;
- Identity, sovereignty, geopolitics;
- Borders, regions, regionalism;
- European integration;
- Historical and contemporary theories of international justice, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism.

*Our regional focus is mainly on:*
- Russia and Eurasia
- Eastern Europe
- European Union

Admission requirements, including guidelines for the research proposal, can be found here.

Please contact either the potential advisor directly or Ms Maili Vilson, Coordinator of PhD programme (maili.vilson@ut.ee), for advice on potential advisor(s) for your proposal ahead of the application deadline!