Politics and Society

The Bachelor's programme «Politics and Society», which is worth 60 ECTS credits, has both a politological and a sociological orientation. It focuses primarily on subjects related to the political system of society. This includes analysis of systems of government and their states as well as discussion about the central actors of the political system. It further addresses questions of political sociology: what are the social prerequisites of political power? How autonomous are the political system and its state? How should the problem resolution and governance capacity of the state be evaluated, particularly in times of political crises? To this end, various developments in Western and Eastern Europe are analysed from comparative perspective. Apart from autocratic «temptations» which can be observed in many places, increasing doubt has been cast on established democracy and the question of whether, and to what extent established elites are capable of solving major political problems, if at all. The programme is embedded in the discussion of specific sociological topics which complement the politologically oriented programme.

Profile of the study programme

The programme provides knowledge of general and current politological issues. It combines analyses of political sociology with critical appraisal of regional political systems in Eastern and Western Europe.

Fribourg Profile

The language of tuition for the programme in Fribourg is German, a number of lectures may be offered in English. While the introductory module «Fundamentals of Social Sciences» gives an overview of some classical works on the history of the subject and presents selected theoretical approaches and central concepts, the Bachelor's programme in political science is chiefly based on three pillars:

1. Democracies and autocracies

In various regions of the world, democracies are being challenged by autocratic tendencies. Such developments are also observable in Central and Eastern Europe. After the common experience of totalitarianism, different political systems have evolved in this region. The states also differ from each other depending on the accomplishment of the post-communist system transformation. How can this discrepancy be explained? The module approaches this question on the one hand by examining different factors influencing the development of political systems in Central and Eastern Europe. On the other hand, it compares democracies and autocratic political regimes with regard to their stability, efficiency and learning capacity.

2. State and governance

States are subject to constant change and have been challenged by a wide range of developments, e.g. globalisation, economic crises and conflicts. In several areas of the state's activity (economy, health, science), the state has become part of multiple forms of cooperation with other governmental as well as private actors. Although the state is still the action centre of the political system, it can no longer consider itself capable of controlling or steering society. This is also expressed in the increased use of the word governance rather than rule these days. It can also be seen that the state is no longer a uniform centre of action, but has rather become a non-uniform or even fragmented actor which is active on a number of levels. The lectures in this module focus on issues concerning state capacities, crisis, (good) governance and leadership from a theoretical, conceptual and methodological point of view.

3. Political sociology

This module deals with selected topics of political sociology, which is an integral part of political science. This involves taking a close look at the societal conditions of power, politics, political stability and democracy in modern society. The focus lies on the analysis of political systems, actors such as political parties, social, economic and political elites, and topics such as political protest, mobilisation, forms of populism, trust, clientelism and informal relationships.

Learning outcomes and career openings

The Bachelor's programme «Politics and Society» qualifies students to analyse political systems and their actors in the relevant social context. In addition to this, students should be able to give a critical review and comment on scholarly literature, and conduct targeted literature research. The programme provides a solid foundation for the pursuit of a career in areas such as research, diplomatic service, international organisations, journalism, non-governmental organisations and development cooperation.
The following Swiss school-leaving certificates grant admission to Bachelor programmes at the University of Fribourg:

- Swiss academic Maturity Certificate
- Swiss professional Maturity Certificate in conjunction with the supplementary exam certificate from the Swiss Maturity Commission
- Bachelor Degree from a Swiss university, from an accredited Swiss university of applied sciences (HES/FH) or from a Swiss university of teacher education (HEP/PH)

A complete list of all further recognized Swiss school-leaving certificates is to be found on the webpages of swissuniversities (in French and German only):
https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/services/admission-to-universities/schweizerische-ausweise/

Foreign upper secondary school-leaving certificates are recognised only if they correspond substantially to the Swiss Maturity Certificate. They must qualify as general education. Foreign school-leaving certificates are considered to be general education if the last three years of schooling include at least six general education subjects, independent from each other, in accordance with the following list:

1. First language (native language)
2. Second language
3. Mathematics
4. Natural sciences (biology, chemistry or physics)
5. Humanities and social sciences (geography, history or economics/law)
6. Elective (an additional language or an additional subject from category 4 or 5)

The general admission requirements to the Bachelor programmes at the University of Fribourg for holders of foreign school-leaving certificates as well as the admission requirements for individual countries are to be found on the webpages of swissuniversities:
https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/services/admission-to-universities/countries/

In addition, foreign candidates must present proof of sufficient language skills in French or German.

The assessment of foreign school-leaving certificates is based on the «CRUS Recommendations for the Assessment of Foreign Upper-Secondary School-Leaving Certificates, 7 September 2007» (http://studies.unifr.ch/go/crus07en). The admission requirements are valid for the respective academic year. The Rectorat of the University of Fribourg reserves the right to change these requirements at any time.

Contact

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