Program Description

An Honour Certificate

Title: Concepts that matter - Debating Democracy

Level: Masters

Credits: 20

Duration: two semesters

Teaching: Fall 2024 and spring 2025 + Fall 2025 and spring 2026

Admission, application deadline: July 1, 2024

Examination: Spring 2025 + Spring 2026

Teaching Language: English

30 students every year from the partner institutions (Belgrade University, University of Perugia, Universite Paris Cité, University of Agder and University of Oslo)

Cooperation: International Summer School at the University of Oslo, Institute of Health and Society at University of Oslo, Circle U, UiO:Democracy.

Content

Do you ever wonder whether concepts like democracy and sustainability mean the same thing to different people? To politicians, activist communities, and other social actors? Do they just mean what the literature tells us they mean? One way to find out is to look at a large corpus of authentic texts in which these concepts are used, an electronic corpus that runs into millions of words and can be analysed by a powerful, state-of-the-art software interface and visualization tools. Join us to learn how to use corpora and engage in collaborative analysis and debate with students from a range of different countries.

DEBATING DEMOCRACY aims to develop collaborative, research-informed educational resources that support students working in a range of European languages. It seeks to hone students' skills in critical reflection and complexity thinking, with a particular focus on the negotiation of key concepts underpinning shared civic values in various and often competing discourses on democracy and sustainability, including concepts such as empowerment, participation and equality. Although sustainability and democracy are both crucial civic values, the relationship between the two concepts is not without challenges. SDG 16 highlights democratic principles by emphasizing the need to strengthen the participation of all people and to ensure inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels. However, the word "democracy" is not explicitly mentioned in this goal, which may reflect a difference in opinion among countries with varying political systems and perspectives regarding the importance and definition of this value. We will propose ways in which the findings of interdisciplinary, collaborative analysis of such key concepts in two complementary, multi-million word corpora (OMC and GoK) can be incorporated into a critical, culturally sensitive and empirically informed educational model.

Programme Structure:

Semester 1	August	Understanding Key Concepts in Social and Political Life (10 ECTS)
	September	
	October	
	November	
	December	
Semester 2	January	Corpus-driven Conceptual Datathons (10 ECTS)
	February	
	March	
	April	
	May	
	June	

The Honours Certificate is in two modules:

Module 1: Understanding Key Concepts in Social and Political Life (10 ECTS)

This module aims to familiarize students with practices of conceptual analysis and existing literature on key concepts in social and political life, most notably democracy, sustainability and related concepts. Students will gain a thorough understanding of the historical and cultural contexts of each concept and an appreciation of the contingency and complexity of many concepts that underpin social practices. The module integrates different disciplinary perspectives to encourage students to examine each concept from various angles and explore how it has come to accommodate various and sometimes conflicting ideological messages. Participants will engage in critical reflection about how concepts and their divergent and sometimes conflicting meanings impact how we frame and address various challenges, such as those arising from attempts to put the ideals of sustainability and democracy into practice. They will be encouraged to think of ways in which meanings attributed to taken-for-granted concepts might contribute to framing societal challenges in ways that can potentially both promote and obstruct democratic and sustainable practices, thus fostering a more reflective and rigorous debate on the key issues at stake in European society today.

Indicative list of concepts to be covered in the syllabus:

- Democracy: Models and Practices
- Emancipation and empowerment
- Sustainability and degrowth
- Equality and equity

Module 2: Corpus-driven Conceptual Datathons (10 ECTS)

This module aims to provide students with training in corpus analysis, with a particular focus on the use of corpora for conceptual analysis. Students will learn to access and interrogate the Oslo Medical Corpus and the Genealogies of Knowledge corpus through a web-based interface, using the extensive range of digital tools provided to collect and analyze data. The module offers a rare and valuable

opportunity for students with many different backgrounds to work together to gather and analyse data, explore areas of agreement and disagreement, and develop a more nuanced appreciation of the diversity of meanings that the same concept may acquire in different contexts. This module is designed to complement Module 1, Understanding Key Concepts in Social and Political Life, as part of the MA Supplement/Honors Certificate on Concepts that Matter: Democracy and Sustainability. Students will have access to large electronic resources and software tools to interrogate the use of key concepts in a wide range of discourses and will be encouraged to gather further empirical data to explore the concepts introduced and discussed in the first module.

Session 1.: The empirical study of language: introduction to the OMC and GoK corpora
Session 2: Patterning and data-driven learning
Session 3: Retrieving concepts from large corpora
Session 4: Corpus and context
Session 5: Articulating agonism
Session 6: Final datathon

Learning outcomes

Knowledge
A student who has completed this course will:

- explain the importance of conceptual analysis for the debate on democracy and sustainability;
- identify discursive patterns associated with sustainability and democracy, as well a related concepts;

- account for taken-for-granted, singular definitions of key concepts that do not attend to historical, disciplinary and cultural diversity;

- understand what corpora are and how they can be employed for conceptual analysis;

- explain and debate the meanings of key concepts from different perspectives and points of view;

Skills
A student who has completed this module will be able to:

- identify patterns in a variety of discourses and genres and explain what they reveal about the semantic and affective properties of specific concepts in specific contexts;
- use corpus analysis tools effectively to analyse textual data and key concepts that underpin numerous debates about democracy and other key European values;
- address complex questions based on collective, live analysis of authentic data drawn from very large corpora in a *datathon* setting.

General competence
A student who has completed this module will:

- acknowledge the contingency of key concepts in discussing common values;
- be able to promote and take part in informed discussion of common values and how they shape our future;
- learn how to work in interdisciplinary teams and constructively collaborate across disciplines on topics pertaining to democracy and sustainability.
- address complex questions based on collective, live analysis of authentic data drawn from very large corpora in a *datathon* setting.
- carry out research in interdisciplinary teams;

Admission

The application deadline is April 1, 2024.

Students from University of Oslo and University of Agder must apply in the application portal Søknadsweb.

Students from Belgrade University, University of Perugia and University Paris Cité must apply in Nettskjema.

Only students admitted to the programme may take part in instruction.

Prerequisites

The formal requirement for participation is a completed Bachelor's degree of at least 180 ECTS, enrolment in a Master's programme at one of the universities (Belgrade University, University of Perugia, Universite Paris Cité, University of Agder and University of Oslo), your CV and a BA grade average equivalent to a C on the Norwegian grade scale.

We do not use conversion tables for foreign grades. All foreign education is individually evaluated during the admission process.

Please note that eligible applicants who fulfil the minimum grade requirement will compete with other applicants. Applicants will be ranked and admitted based on GPA, motivation letter (max. one page), and CV. The Honors Certificate has 6 study places for each partner university.

In case of more than 6 eligible applicants from each participating university, all applicants will be pooled together and chosen at random to ensure that all eligible candidates have an equal opportunity to participate.

The course setup is interdisciplinary, including, amongst others, Health Science, Political Science, Public Administration, Sociology, Law, Translation, Modern Languages and Communication Studies.

Teaching

The course incorporates hybrid research seminars and student driven activities. The teaching will start with research seminars and supervised group discussions, leading to student-driven group work.

The second module incorporates online workshops and student driven activities. The teaching will start with guided workshops and, as the students become familiar with the corpora and the tools,

they will continue working in student-driven collaborative sessions. The final session will consist of an in-person, collaborative datathon where students will work together to analyze and interpret the data collected.

This course will use Canvas as a digital learning platform. Read more about Canvas [here.](#)

Students must attend a minimum of 75% of the lectures in order to take the final exam. Active participation throughout the course is expected of all participants, and attendance during real time lectures, seminars and discussions is required.

Examination

For module 1, summative assessment will be in the form of group presentations. The purpose of the assessment is to record learners' progress and achievement toward the intended learning outcomes listed above. The presentation will focus on up to three concepts that the students will have chosen for further exploration. Students will be expected to justify their choices, outline their rationale for selecting the relevant concepts and the questions they want to explore further. They will provide a short bibliography of works consulted and to be consulted.

For module 2, each team of students will prepare a digital poster summarizing their findings. Each student will additionally submit a 2000-word report presenting their analysis and interpretation of the data collected for one or more of the concepts discussed.

- Grading: Pass/fail

Language of examination

The examination text is given in English, group presentations and reports should be in English.

Resit an examination

[Illness at exams / postponed exams](#)

[Resitting an examination](#)

Withdrawal from an examination

It is possible to take this exam up to 3 times. If you withdraw from the exam after the deadline or during the exam, this will be counted as an examination attempt.

[Withdrawal from examination](#)

More about examinations at UiO

- [Special exam arrangements due to individual needs](#)
- [Explanation of grades and appeals](#)

Evaluation

The course is subject to continuous evaluation. At regular intervals we also ask students to participate in a more comprehensive evaluation**.**

Career opportunities

In addition to the career paths usually associated with your main discipline of study, this Honours Certificate will strengthen applications for jobs that involve

1. Communicating effectively with a wide range of stakeholders across different sectors, developing communication strategies, policies and training programs for effective communication in the workplace;
2. Gathering and analysing evidence to develop and support policies in the public sector, private organizations, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs);
3. Working collaboratively across disciplines and cultures;
4. Innovative thinking and problem solving, ability to look at the same problem from different perspectives;
5. Understanding the complexity of taken-for-granted concepts that underpin social and political practices, how they contribute to the status quo and how they could be drivers or obstacles to progress;
6. a heightened sense of civic engagement and willingness to participate meaningfully in the various debates taking place in our democratic societies.

As well as an academic career, other careers that require those skills are

7. Public/Health/Environmental Policy Analyst/Consultant
8. Parliamentary Aid
9. Company Sustainability Manager/Co-ordinator
10. Programme manager/coordinator in NGOs and other non-profit organizations
11. Communications Officer
12. Community Liaison Officer