

## On the Nature of Politics

### Philosophical Foundations of the Recent Political Thought

**Type and reader:** Reading seminar held by Jozef Zelinka, doctoral candidate.

**Course description:** There exist various philosophical assumptions on how the society can and shall be organized. Currently, two schools of thought continue an ongoing debate on this topic - the one claiming that »what is at a given moment accepted as the ›natural‹ order [...] is never the manifestation of a deeper objectivity that is exterior to the practices that brought it into being« (*Mouffe*, 2013: 2 [original emphasis]), and the other one calling for a »closer look at this realized and then overturned utopia« (*Ferraris*, 2014: 4) - i.e. at the deobjectification of reality. Now, considering these diametrically opposite opinions, one may pose a number of questions: What are the core principles and consequences of these assumptions? How are they actually applied in the study of politics? What different solutions do they offer? Are they limited? How to trace their philosophical and theoretical influence in political sciences? When entering a study of politics, students are often confronted with a wide array of topics and their different theoretical explanations. Understanding the philosophical background of different theoretical approaches has a significant impact on further academic and research activities. The aim of the course, therefore, is to offer an insight into these schools of thought, to assist in recognizing and distinguishing between them and to strengthen the argumentative and theoretical skills of the participants.

**Course objectives:** By completing the course students will be able:

- ≈ to distinguish between and explain the core principles and philosophical assumptions of recent political schools of thought;
- ≈ to problematize and reflect on a range of topics (e.g. equality, conflict, reality, social construction, etc.) that constitute the subject of contemporary political science;
- ≈ to develop, defend, and understand the limits of one's own theoretical argumentation.

**Design:** Except of compulsory reading, students will be given a variety of possibilities to sharpen their own views and discuss their research and academic interests within consultation hours, group works and presentations.

**Time and place:** Monday 4-6 p.m.; Scharnhorststraße 100; Room 100.107

**Conditions for attending the course:**

- ~ Background knowledge in political theory and/or political philosophy (i.e. completing of the basic course »Introduction to the Political Theory«, or of other thematically related course)
- ~ Advanced English skills (B2/C1 levels of CEFR);
- ~ Readiness to prepare the literature and engage in discussions.

**Course evaluation:** Examination will follow in two parts. In the written part students will pass a test with open-ended as well as close-ended questions based on the given readings. The oral part will be focused on students' abilities to reflect and argue on a specific topic from two theoretical standpoints.

**Literature:**

- ≈ Chantal Mouffe (2013): *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. Verso. London.
- ≈ Maurizio Ferraris (2014): *Manifesto of New Realism*. SUNY Press. New York.