

Teaching-consensus

Against the backdrop of right-wing extremist and anti-democratic activities at the University of Kassel, the Department of Political Science published a statement in July 2021 reaffirming the central importance of free and critical scholarship and thought for enabling democratic conditions.¹ This commitment to free scholarship, democracy, freedom, equality and anti-discrimination also gives rise to the obligation to resolutely oppose authoritarian, racist, anti-semitic and anti-feminist statements and practices. It is only through such resolute opposition to anti-emancipatory forces that spaces can be created in which an equal, reflective, open, problem-oriented and critical examination of social conditions is possible.

This also places demands on our teaching. The following key points should serve as a guideline for our common approach in our courses and they represent a basic consensus for our teaching at the University of Kassel. In addition, we as a department would like to actively participate in the development of appropriate university-wide offices and structures for the documentation and analysis of right-wing extremist and anti-democratic activities.

With the subsequent points, we try to meet the above-mentioned requirements for a democratic society:

1. Anti-discrimination

We do not tolerate misanthropic and discriminatory behavior or statements in our courses. We consider it our duty to support students who are particularly affected by social inequality and discrimination. This means that faculty can be approached in confidence at any time and students can point out such discriminatory behavior. In cases where such behavior is practiced by faculty, we encourage students to contact other members of the department or other (counseling) offices of the university.

2. Open and respectful exchange in the seminars

In our courses, we endeavor to facilitate an open, constructive, and collaborative exchange of knowledge among ourselves. This entails the integration of diverse perspectives and the creation of a shared learning environment. A shared learning process also means that there can be different levels of knowledge, which is why we advocate a constructive approach to "mistakes". At the same time, there are clear boundaries regarding discriminatory statements and behavior in the courses. (see point 1).

3. Development of common manners in the seminars

In the courses, it is our intention to establish a consensus regarding the norms of conduct and behavior with the students. As a starting point, we may consider the question of how a conducive and inclusive seminar atmosphere can be created in which all participants feel at ease with their differences, as well as a sensitivity to various forms of exclusion, discrimination, and devaluation. This also encompasses the phenomenon of "silencing," which refers to the denial and suppression of (discriminatory) experiences and perspectives. Additionally, a joint discussion could be held on how to respond to and address discriminatory and inhumane conduct within the seminar setting.

4. Support for student initiatives

We explicitly endorse students' efforts to challenge group-related misanthropy and discriminatory behavior. As faculty, we recognize the necessity of collective action to counteract such tendencies.

5. Reference to anti-discrimination at the University of Kassel

In addition, the seminars may include references to the advice services and statutes for anti-discrimination at the University of Kassel.

Anti-discrimination statutes of the University of Kassel:

<https://www.uni-kassel.de/hochschulverwaltung/themen/gleichstellung-familie-und-diversity/diversity/antidiskriminierung#:~:text=The%20University%C3%A4t%20Kassel%20sets%20its%20gender%20identity%C3%A4t%2C%20of%20the%20religion%20or>

University's understanding of discrimination:

<https://www.uni-kassel.de/hochschulverwaltung/themen/gleichstellung-familie-und-diversity/diversity/diversity-an-der-uni-kassel/intersektionalitaet>

Advice services:

<https://www.uni-kassel.de/hochschulverwaltung/themen/gleichstellung-familie-und-diversity/diversity/antidiskriminierung/ansprechstellen>

Kassel, April 2024, Department of Political Science

¹ <https://www.uni-kassel.de/fb05/fachgruppen-und-institute/politikwissenschaft/aktuelles/stellungnahmen-der-fachgruppe>