



Democracy in Times of Social Change

Call for Papers

Democracy serves as a platform for the negotiation of different convictions in everchanging social structures. It is therefore of interest to always consider the interplay of democratic processes between current social transformations, their history and discursive staging. Investigations into the forms, content and institutionalization of democratic (educational) processes as well as their conditions and challenges are just as central as discussions of the historical and theoretical foundations of democracy. The rules and truth conditions of democratic discourses – including their technological embeddedness in the digital space – as well as expansions, shifts and constrictions of these can be examined.

The aim of the graduate conference is to discuss questions on democratic structures, their prerequisites, conditional contexts and institutional locations with colleagues from cultural studies disciplines.

Topics or questions may be:

Transformation(s) of Democracy

What conditions contribute to the failure or sustainable success of democracy? How are participation, consensus and decision-making within societies negotiated or made impossible? What transformation processes do (anti-)democratic movements undergo? Are the concepts of “post-democracy or radical democracy” suitable as a framework for the analysis of current democratic processes? How are democratic transformations picked up in literary and artistic representations, as well as in media and theological discourses, or influenced by them?

Democracy and Education

What role does the university play as a democratic educational institution? What influence does the heterogenization of social structures have on democratic educational processes? What interrelationships exist between (digital) transformation processes and concepts/understandings of democratic education?

Democracy and Truth / Democracy and Discourse

How can the influence of populist narratives, conspiracy theories or pseudo-scientific ideologies on democratic processes be examined? How do concepts such as freedom of expression, scientific freedom, “wokeness” or “cancel culture” function in social opinion-forming processes? In contrast – how can democratic rules of discourses be formulated?

Democracy and Digitality

What questions arise regarding shifts in discussions into the digital sphere? To what extent does content filtered by algorithms in social media and on platforms (X, TikTok, etc.) influence democratic processes? What relevance does (generative) A.I. have?

Presentations (German or English) may take up to 20 minutes plus discussion time. Please send abstracts (max. 300 words) by 31.01.2025 to the following e-mail address: gfkf@uni-paderborn.de – which can also be used for inquiries. The publication of selected contributions is planned in the form of an anthology.

With best regards from the organizers of the Graduate Conference, Niklas Corall, Rebecca Schmidt and the Graduate Forum team.