

Please find below a job announcement for 2 full-time PhD positions at UCLouvain in Belgium in the Action de recherche concertée project *Discourse, populism and democracy. Tracking the uses of populism in media and political discourse (TrUMPo)*, led by Barbara De Cock; Philippe Hambye; Min Reuchamps; Sandrine Roginsky.

### **Project description**

In contemporary democracies, there is not a day without the word *populism* being used in political and media *discourse*. For many observers worldwide, the spread of populism is one of the main threats to democracy. This has led to the development of a booming literature on populist political parties and politicians. These works have provided rich insights into the origin, the discourse and the impact of such particular actors. Nevertheless, one major aspect of populism remains understudied, namely the use of the term *populist* itself by political and other actors, which is the subject of a real political struggle (Laclau, 2005). *Populism* is indeed used by some political actors to disqualify political opponents but also as a positive category/label demonstrating proximity to people's concerns in order to gain legitimacy (Mazzoleni, 2007). These uses of *populism* lead to fierce debates about the role and place of the people in democracies, and about who can pretend to best represent the people. It also raises the question of what is a legitimate (or illegitimate) way to refer to the people in a democracy in the context of a deep democratic malaise worldwide and in particular in Western democracies. Hence, the way the word and the notion of *populism* are defined, used and circulated is directly related to competing conceptions of democracy. In order to understand how the construction of this category of *populism* contributes to shaping our collective imagination of democracy, we consider that we need to understand in which contexts and situations this notion is used, which meaning it conveys in actual discursive practices, and how it circulates in the public debate. This is why we will study this topic from a threefold perspective: political science, communication studies and linguistics. We will compare these discourses in the national public sphere of three countries Belgium, France and Spain, and we will conduct a qualitative and quantitative analysis of data from different forums in which discourses about populism can be held: (i) the *parliamentary arena* (ii) *mass media* and (iii) *social media platforms*.

#### ***PhD 1 – Linguistics***

**1 full-time PhD position, for 4 years** (supervisors: B. De Cock and Ph. Hambye). This project will be carried out in the field of linguistics and more precisely discourse analysis. It will focus on the comparison between languages in order to capture in a detailed way how the term “populism” is used, focusing on the linguistic strategies to do so and the specificities of the different languages and countries involved. This PhD will hence involve comparative work on Dutch, French and Spanish data. While approaching the data from a linguistic point of view, this project will consider the Belgian and French data in French separately, in order to take into account differences possibly due to the different constellation of the public sphere.

#### **Profile**

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- Master in linguistics, or master in languages with a strong focus on linguistics, or near fields;
- Min. C1 command of French and Spanish. A good knowledge of Dutch is an asset.;
- High level of academic English, both written and spoken, will be considered an asset;
- Good methodological skills both quantitative and qualitative;
- Familiarity with discourse analysis (asset);
- Dynamic and motivated;
- Ability to work both independently and as part of an interdisciplinary team.

#### ***PhD 2 – Communication***

**1 full-time PhD position for 4 years** (supervisors: S. Roginsky and B. De Cock) will focus on the circulation of discourses on populism in traditional and social media: how discourse

concerning populism is transferred, which fragments are used and re-used, by whom and how, also taking into account the media infrastructures, in two languages. Through its communicative angle, this research will then look into how discourse concerning populism is transferred with a focus both on the communication settings and the forms used to do so. This part of the project then also implies a reflection on the communication infrastructures in the respective case studies. In the second place, this research will also adopt a communicative-linguistic approach to the ways in which the discourses are transformed when being transferred.

#### Profile

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- Master in communication science or near fields;
- Min. C1 command of at least 2 of the three languages studied in the project (Dutch, French, Spanish). A good knowledge of the third language is an asset;
- High level knowledge of academic English, both written and spoken, will be considered an asset;
- Good methodological skills both quantitative and qualitative;
- Dynamic and motivated;
- Ability to work both independently and as part of an interdisciplinary team.

#### Work environment

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The PhD researchers will be funded by the Action de recherche concertée funds of the Université catholique de Louvain within the TrUMPo research project. The salary is according to UCLouvain regulations for PhD scholarships. The employment starts on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2020. Grant duration: 4 years.

#### Procedure

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Interested candidates should send their application to: Catherine Goossens ([trumpo@uclouvain.be](mailto:trumpo@uclouvain.be)) before 10 July 2020. Applications should include in one single pdf file: (1) a curriculum vitae, (2) a letter of application stating to which PhD you apply (PhD 1, PhD 2, or both), (3) a list of courses and academic transcripts, (4) an academic publication (if you have one) or your Master's thesis, and (5) the contact information (e-mail) of two potential references. After a first round of selection based on the applications, the short-listed candidates will be interviewed via videoconferencing between 15 and 20 July 2020.

For questions, please contact the promoters of the project: Barbara De Cock ([Barbara.decock@uclouvain.be](mailto:Barbara.decock@uclouvain.be)), Philippe Hambye ([philippe.hambye@uclouvain.be](mailto:philippe.hambye@uclouvain.be)), Min Reuchamps ([min.reuchamps@uclouvain.be](mailto:min.reuchamps@uclouvain.be)) and Sandrine Roginsky ([Sandrine.roginsky@uclouvain.be](mailto:Sandrine.roginsky@uclouvain.be)).