



Vacancy Postdoctoral Researcher (100%) in Political Science

Project “Negativity and positivity on social media across the electoral cycle”

Skills: social media data analysis, quantitative analysis, automated text analysis, data management

Information about the position

Faculty of Philosophy and social sciences, Department of political science

Centre d'étude de la vie politique (Cevipol)

Director : Frédéric Louault

Promotors : Caroline Close

Title of the position: Postdoctoral researcher

Type of contract : CDD – 1 year contract

Length of contract : 12 months (with the possibility of up to two extensions of 12 month each)

Full time (100%)

Salary: According to the experience of the candidate, the monthly net income will range around 2,500 euros.

The Department of Political Science at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) is hiring a post-doctoral researcher with a specialization in social media and quantitative text analysis for the project “Belgian-style compromise? Negativity and positivity in online communication of Belgian parties across the electoral cycle”.

Context of the project

Politics in the last decades have been marked by profound transformations that have raised concern for the quality of the democratic debate. First, political communication would be marked by increasing negativity or ‘uncivility’. Second, societies would have become more and more polarized: political and social groups would increasingly feel apart from each other, both ideologically and affectively. Third, the generalization of social media among elites and citizens would reinforce and encourage these two phenomena, given the permanent campaigning and 'homophilic' interactions produced by these platforms. However, the genuine effects of these transformations, and their causal relationship, is still debated.

This project aims to examine negative campaigning and polarization on social media, in Belgium across the electoral cycle. The project consists in three work packages. WP1 consists in collecting and analysing how parties and party leaders communicate on social media in terms of positive and negative appeals towards political actors but also towards social groups. WP2 aims at examining variations across parties, language communities; across social media platforms (mainly X and Facebook); and over time (campaign, routine times, government formation, crises etc.). WP3 will assess how these online communication patterns can affect citizens' political attitudes and level of affective polarization.

Job description

This is a call for applications for a full-time post-doctoral position for one year, with the possibility of extension.

The post-doctoral researcher will become an active member of the Social Media Lab (SML) at the Cevipol¹. The SML is connected to the research project “NotLikeUs”², which aims to analyze patterns of polarization and perception of differentness in Belgium. The project offers a stimulating working environment in a dynamic and international research team. In the NotLikeUs project, the Social Media Lab team works closely with 7 research teams from the Universiteit Antwerpen (UA), Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), KULeuven, Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL), University of Ghent, University of Namur and Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB).

The post-doctoral researcher will have an office on Solbosch campus and relevant administrative support at ULB. She/he will have no teaching obligations but will be allowed to engage in a limited amount of teaching if this is judged appropriate for their academic development. She/he will be expected to contribute to collective work on the project, and to present and publish individual or collective research outputs.

Within the project, the selected candidate will:

- Collect, manage and analyze data collected on social media
- Coordinate the SML and team of job students (for manual coding tasks)
- Bring innovative methods for data collection and data analysis of social media data (data scrapping, automated text analysis etc.)
- Conduct research on elite discourse on social media, digital political parties, effect of elite discourse on voters’ attitudes, polarization

Profile

The candidate will hold a PhD in political or social sciences. Candidates holding a PhD in political communication and/or computational social science are also invited to apply.

Skills

- Research interest and/or expertise in political communication, social media, political parties and/or elections and electoral campaign
- Expertise in quantitative text analysis, social media analysis, sentiment analysis, and/or automated text analysis
- Good command of dataset management and statistical software
- Good organizational and time management skills
- Ability to work in a team
- A good command of English and Dutch (or French)
- Experience with survey experiment is a plus, but not a requirement

¹ <https://cevipol.phisoc.ulb.be/fr/projets-de-recherche/sml>

² <https://cevipol.phisoc.ulb.be/fr/projets-de-recherche/notlikeus>



Application

INTERESTED?

Questions regarding the position can be addressed to Professor Caroline Close (caroline.close@ulb.be)

APPLICATIONS should include (in one single PDF document):

- a letter of motivation explaining the candidate's general interest for the project
- a full CV (including a list of publications)
- Name, affiliation, email and phone number of two referees who can be contacted if necessary

Please send the above documents electronically to Professor Caroline Close (caroline.close@ulb.be)

The deadline for applications is 19/08/2024. Interviews (online or face to face) will be conducted on the last week of August or the first week of September.

STARTING DATE is 01/10/2024.

Equal opportunity

The Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) is an equal opportunity employer.

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La politique de gestion du personnel en matière de diversité et égalité des chances prévoit sur chaque offre d'emploi publiée par l'ULB une mention indiquant que :

« *Nous recrutons les candidats.es en fonction de leurs compétences, indépendamment de leur âge, leur genre, leur orientation sexuelle, leur origine, leur nationalité, leurs convictions, leur handicap, etc.* »

Les candidats porteurs d'une maladie, d'un trouble ou d'un handicap qui souhaitent bénéficier d'aménagements raisonnables dans le cadre de la procédure de sélection ont la possibilité, lorsqu'ils postulent en ligne, de cocher une case qui attire l'attention de l'équipe Recrutement et lui permet d'adapter les processus de sélection.

Si une personne porteuse d'une maladie, d'un trouble ou d'un handicap devait être présélectionnée par l'équipe SSRM pour l'offre que vous avez demandé de publier, la personne chargée des projets Diversité au sein de l'équipe (sophie.veys@ulb.be) reprendra contact avec vous pour vous donner de plus amples informations sur le profil du candidat en question.