

ACADEMIC SPECIALTY: SOCIOLOGY

Master's Program in SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND POLITICAL MARKETING

Educational and Qualification Degree: MASTER

Professional Qualification: MASTER IN SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND POLITICAL MARKETING

Duration of Studies: 1 year

Mode of Study: regular

QUALIFICATION CHARACTERISTICS

The master's program "**Sociological Research and Political Marketing**" for specialists is designed for graduates holding a bachelor's or master's degree in fields within the professional area 3.1 Sociology, Anthropology, and Cultural Studies. The program is also suitable for young professionals who have oriented themselves towards the analysis of political conjuncture as well as the compilation and analysis of sociological research.

The primary goal of the program is to develop students' knowledge and skills through the use of various academic methods and practices, enabling them to prepare survey questionnaires, conduct objective and accurate data interpretation, perform in-depth data analyses, understand the functioning of the political governance model in Bulgaria, grasp the specifics and main functions of the country's institutions, and comprehend the forms of local self-government. All these topics are situated within the context of European sociological and political practices and analyses.

The program plans to build, through diverse academic methods, students' managerial and communication skills, comparative analysis capabilities, expert conduct, and more. Students acquire knowledge in specialized disciplines such as the application of qualitative methods in political research; constitutional law; the Bulgarian political system; the economic policy of modern Bulgaria; European policies – main characteristics; public opinion and political communication; contemporary demographic trends; and political marketing.

Graduates of the master's program possess:

- A broad range of theoretical and practical knowledge specialized in their field, building upon the knowledge acquired in previous educational stages; they understand and are familiar with theories, concepts, principles, and regularities;
- Highly specialized practical and theoretical knowledge that forms the basis for originality in the development and application of new ideas and solutions; they demonstrate critical awareness of knowledge in the field and the connections between different studied areas;
- A rich set of practical knowledge and approaches necessary for understanding abstract problems and developing creative solutions and problem diagnostics, based on contemporary research through the integration of knowledge from new or interdisciplinary fields.

Graduates of the Master's program possess the following skills:

- They make adequate judgments in situations characterized by incomplete or limited information and unpredictability, develop new and diverse skills in response to emerging knowledge and practices, and demonstrate confident application of innovative methods and tools distinguished by creativity in solving complex tasks and unforeseen problems in their specialized field of work; they identify and maintain arguments when addressing interdisciplinary problems.
- They show initiative in work and learning within complex and unpredictable environments requiring the resolution of problems involving multiple interacting factors; they possess skills to create and lead networks or teams, manage time efficiently, and oversee human and financial resources, as well as solve complex problems using new technological methods and tools.
- They quickly locate, extract, organize, synthesize, and evaluate necessary information from various sources; they have the ability to solve and overcome critical issues in research and/or innovation; rapidly acquire new qualities and skills and anticipate technological and creative development.
- They possess entrepreneurial spirit, rigor, adaptability, intellectual flexibility, independence, and responsibility, which are developed throughout the course and the execution of assignments within the Master's program.

Professional Competencies:

- Graduates collect, process, and interpret specialized political information necessary for solving social problems; they integrate a wide range of sociological and political science knowledge and sources of information into a new context; they make well-founded expert assessments and find solutions in a complex political environment with diverse interactions.
- They are capable of solving social and political problems by integrating complex sources of knowledge, under conditions of insufficient available information, in a new political environment; they are able to initiate changes and manage social development processes in complex political conditions. They engage with important political and social issues arising in the course of their work or studies.

Graduates of the master's program can pursue careers as:

- Heads of units, directorates, and departments in local and state administration;
- Managing and executive directors;
- Political leaders at national and local levels;
- Human resources management leaders;
- Managers in political and administrative activities, etc.;
- Consultants in the field of management and local self-government;
- Consultants in state and private sociological agencies;
- Consultants preparing programs for empirical sociological research on the political, social, and economic life of Bulgaria;
- Experts in non-governmental organizations and foundations.

STRUCTURE OF THE CURRICULUM

First Year			
First Semester	ECTS credits	Second Semester	ECTS credits
The Bulgarian Political System	8	The Economic Policy of Modern Bulgaria	2.5
Constitutional Law	6	European Policies – Key Characteristics	2.5
Application of Qualitative Methods in Political Research	8	Local Self-Government	5
Elective Course	8	Elective Course	5
		State Examination or Master's Thesis Defense	15
	Total 30		Total 30
Elective Courses / First Semester / <i>Students choose one course</i>	ECTS credits	Elective Courses / Second Semester / <i>Students choose one course</i>	ECTS credits
Administrative Law	8	Political Marketing	5
Public Opinion and Political Communication	8	Contemporary Demographic Trends	5
OVERALL FOR 1 ACADEMIC YEAR: 60 CREDITS			

ANNOTATION OF THE ACADEMIC COURSES

COMPULSORY COURSES

THE BULGARIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

ECTS credits: 8

Assessment: exam

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petrana Stoykova, Department of Sociology

E-mail: petrana_stoikova@swu.bg

Weekly hours: 2 lectures + 2 seminars

Type of Exam: Written

Annotation:

The presented course aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the rich political experience and practices of the Bulgarian state and society. It traces both the democratic traditions and the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes of governance. The course includes an in-depth analysis of the Bulgarian party system, key party ideologies, and political policies. A sociological examination is also conducted on the most prominent political figures in Bulgaria's history who have significantly contributed to the country's prosperity and societal development.

The thematic units are designed to equip students with knowledge and skills for conducting sociopolitical analysis and for forecasting governance systems within the country. Special emphasis is placed on the study of the contemporary political system, which holds a

central place in the academic preparation of the students. Through extensive lecture content and the inclusion of key authors, students in the master's program develop term papers on relevant topics, applying comparative historical-sociological analysis.

Content of the course:

The discipline explores the fundamental forms of political power, the types of societies in relation to their political systems of governance, and the main forms of political governance within Bulgarian society. It clarifies the core concepts and theories associated with political issues in the country, with particular focus on the political system.

Students develop a conceptual framework and gain proficiency in applying it, acquiring the skills necessary to analyze various forms of political governance. The course fosters an in-depth "understanding" of the Bulgarian political landscape, especially within the context of a globalized society.

Teaching and Assessment Method:

The final grade for the course "The Bulgarian Political System" is determined at the end of the semester based on students' responses to written examination questions.

CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

ECTS credits: 6

Assessment: exam

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Vesela Mircheva, Department of Public Law Sciences

E-mail: dvar@abv.bg

Weekly hours: 2 lectures + 1 seminar

Type of Exam: Written

Annotation:

The course in Constitutional Law aims to clarify the regulatory mechanisms that govern the relationships between citizens and the state. The discipline is designed to present the constitutional characteristics as defined by the fundamental law of the country, as well as the organization and structure of state power.

The course includes the following thematic modules:

1. Constitutionalism, Constitution, and Constitutional Law
2. Economic and Political System
3. System of State Authorities
4. Local Self-Government and Public Administration
5. Amendment and Supplementation of the Constitution

Content of the course:

The academic discipline provides the constitutional foundations for the other branches of law and, on this basis, introduces students to the fundamental law of the state and society, as well as the most important social relations regulated by it. The course clarifies the basic principles of the structure and functioning of the political system, with particular focus on the state. It also examines the constitutional and legal status of citizens.

Teaching and Assessment Method:

The final grade for the course is determined at the end of the semester based on the students' responses to a designated written question.

APPLICATION OF QUALITATIVE METHODS IN POLITICAL RESEARCH

ECTS credits: 8

Assessment: exam

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Prof. DSc. Dobrinka Peycheva

E-mail: peichevad@swu.bg

Weekly hours: 2 lectures + 2 seminars

Type of Exam: Written

Annotation:

The course aims to develop in students a theoretical “understanding” of the foundations and traditions of qualitative research on religions, as well as their relevance to contemporary Bulgarian society, while simultaneously combining this with practical know-how and direct experience in their application. Students are introduced to the debate between proponents of quantitative and qualitative methods in the study of religions, along with the arguments presented by each side.

Qualitative research was deliberately underdeveloped in sociology during the communist period. Therefore, the course draws on the contributions of classical and contemporary Western authors to familiarize students with the heuristic potential of qualitative methods. It also traces the few examples from pre-war traditions in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the new trends and reasons for their revival in the post-communist era.

Content of the course:

The course familiarizes students with specific methodologies such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, life histories, content analysis, discourse analysis, and focus groups.

In this way, students acquire the skills to:

- apply practical know-how and direct experience in implementing these methods;
- and to practically employ specific techniques that will assist them in gathering empirical data for their future master's theses

Teaching and Assessment Method:

The final grade for the course is determined at the end of the semester based on the results of the coursework.

THE ECONOMIC POLICY OF MODERN BULGARIA

ECTS credits: 2.5

Assessment: exam

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daniela Pastarmadzhieva, Department of Philosophy and Political Sciences

E-mail: daniela.pastarmadzhieva@swu.bg

Weekly hours: 2 lectures

Type of Exam: Written

Annotation:

The course aims to introduce students to the fundamental issues of the modern economic policy of the Bulgarian bourgeois state from the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century until the establishment of the totalitarian socialist system. The focus is on

the formation of the modern economic policy of the Third Bulgarian State; the challenges encountered during its development; the formation and competencies of the main economic institutions; the primary laws and principles underpinning this policy; as well as its achievements and shortcomings. The course also examines the structure of the economy and the international economic and trade relations of the modern Bulgarian state during this period.

The purpose of the academic discipline is to enable students to understand the issues related to the formation and development of the economic policy of modern Bulgaria; to grasp the essence and advantages of this novel economic policy for the country. Students will become familiar with the main economic institutions of modern bourgeois Bulgaria and their role in the governance and development of the modern market economy. This comprehensive study requires referencing both ancient classical sources and Christian patristic, as well as distinctive hagiographic literature, spanning from the earliest times to the present.

Content of the course:

Students should acquire a clear understanding of the structure of the modern Bulgarian economy and the main institutions that determine the economic policy of the Bulgarian bourgeois state. They should become well-oriented in these issues and be able to analyze, from a comparative perspective, the policy of the modern Bulgarian state in its integration into the modern capitalist economy of the West, as well as the current challenging transition of the country toward market relations and bourgeois democracy.

Teaching and Assessment Method:

The course concludes with an examination at the end of the semester, which consists either of an essay on a specific topic or a comprehensive test covering the entire material. It is also possible to submit written assignments on selected topics, such as reports or coursework.

EUROPEAN POLICIES – KEY CHARACTERISTICS

ECTS credits: 2.5

Weekly hours: 2 lectures

Assessment: exam

Type of Exam: Written

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Prof. DSc. Valentina Milenkova, Department of Sociology

E-mail: vmilenkova@swu.bg

Annotation:

The main objective of the course is to familiarize students with the emerging prerequisites and conditions in Europe for the transition towards continental, pan-European economic, political, and social integration. The Republic of Bulgaria is an active participant in this pan-European process. Bulgaria's economic, political, and social conditions determine its involvement in several subregional economic unions. The strategic goal of our country is full membership in the most highly developed integration formation in the contemporary world – the European Union.

In the memorandum of the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria concerning its application for EU membership, it is explicitly emphasized that Bulgaria's accession to the European Union is a strategic goal reflecting the national interests of the state. Bulgaria's joining the European Union is one of the few issues on which there is a national consensus in the country, both among the public and political forces.

Content of the course:

The course examines the methodology, practical organization, implementation, and execution of policies across various sectors, including the economy, taxation, transportation, environment and ecology, education, culture, and media. All these areas fall under the jurisdiction of EU member states, where cooperation takes place and is actively pursued. EU legislation holds precedence over national laws and policy areas to which it is related. The course demonstrates how these policies evolve over time through the different stages of the European Union's development.

Teaching and Assessment Method:

The final grade for the course is determined at the end of the semester and takes into account the completed coursework.

LOCAL SELF-GOVENMENT

ECTS credits: 5

Assessment: exam

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daniela Pastarmadzhieva, Department of Philosophy and Political Sciences

E-mail: daniela.pastarmadzhieva@swu.bg

Weekly hours: 2 lectures + 2 seminars

Type of Exam: Written

Annotation:

The course aims to reveal to students the essence of local self-government through its historical development, to introduce them to the relevant terminology, and to familiarize them with the evolution of municipal legislation and the historical practice of various types of municipalities both abroad and in Bulgaria, including metropolitan, urban, rural, and others.

Significant emphasis is placed on the importance of local self-government for the development and consolidation of social communities, municipal policies in the life of social communities, and the opportunities for individual participation in addressing local issues.

Content of the course:

The course is designed to acquaint students with both the theory and the historical development of the interaction between the state and local self-government. Special attention is given to the various forms of cooperation among municipalities, the new European legislation on local authorities, as well as the opportunities for young people to participate in local self-government. Particular focus is also placed on the history of local self-government in the region of Southwest University and the history of the Blagoevgrad Municipality.

Teaching and Assessment Method:

The final grade takes into account the results of the ongoing assessment as well as the evaluation of the defense of the term project prepared by the students.

ELECTIVE COURSES

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW

ECTS credits: 8

Assessment: exam

Methodical Guide:

Weekly hours: 2 lectures + 2 seminars

Type of Exam: Written

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Cheshmedzhieva, Department of Public Law SciencesE-mail: margo@law.swu.bg**Annotation:**

The course covers the nature of the executive branch and public administration, emphasizing their distinct legal characteristics. Special attention is given to the operational autonomy and linked competencies of executive authorities. Administrative law norms and administrative legal relationships are analyzed in detail. Due to their significant practical importance, the sources of administrative law are studied extensively, with particular focus on secondary normative acts—such as Council of Ministers' decrees, regulations, ordinances, and instructions.

Within a legal-logical framework, the course examines the main institutions of administrative law, outlining the administrative-legal status of citizens, non-profit legal entities, and business entities—including commercial companies, cooperatives, municipal enterprises, and others. The legal characterization of executive bodies is delineated, accompanied by various classifications. Priority is given to the central and territorial executive authorities.

Content of the course:

The course provides students with a thorough understanding of the administrative-legal status of executive authorities. It prepares them to draft normative, general, and individual administrative acts. During the course, students are trained to comprehend the procedures for appealing decisions of administrative bodies and the enforcement of administrative-penalty liability.

Teaching and Assessment Method:

The final grade for the course is determined at the end of the semester based on students' performance in case study analyses, tests, and coursework.

PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION**ECTS credits:** 8**Weekly hours:** 2 lectures + 2 seminars**Assessment:** exam**Type of Exam:** Written**Methodical Guide:****Department of Sociology**

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Prof. D.Sc. Dobrinka PeychevaE-mail: peichevad@swu.bg**Annotation:**

Media and public opinion are respectively considered the fourth and fifth powers in any society. Unlike the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, which are formalized and institutionalized within specific governmental institutions and structures, the power of the media and public opinion is non-institutionalized and informal, yet no less influential and effective. It is no coincidence that the governance of any administration is successful only when it aligns with public opinion; similarly, elections—being the manifestation of public opinion—serve as indicators either confirming or prompting the emergence of new consensus regarding the governance of a society. The media express either agreement or disagreement with a given administration and thus embody the public nature of public opinion.

Political communication lies at the core of shaping political public opinion, which, in turn, is inconceivable without the media.

Content of the course:

The course "Public Opinion and Political Communication" encompasses the study of the role of communication in general, and political communication in particular, in shaping public opinion across various political contexts and temporal frameworks. It explores classical models as well as a diversity of contemporary models and scopes of influence of political communication and its effects, alongside the different methods and techniques used for their investigation. The course highlights the role and significance of political communication in the formation of public opinion. It further emphasizes the specific model effects and consequences of political media influence on public opinion within the broader process of political mediatization.

Teaching and Assessment Method:

The grade for the course is determined at the end of the semester based on the students' responses to a given written question.

POLITICAL MARKETING

ECTS credits: 5

Assessment: exam

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petrana Stoykova, Department of Sociology

E-mail: petrana_stoikova@swu.bg

Weekly hours: 2 lectures + 2 seminars

Type of Exam: Written

Annotation:

Within the course "Political Marketing," fundamental theoretical issues are examined, including the subject matter, methods, principles, functions, and structural scope of this discipline, as well as questions concerning the evolution of political marketing and its various types. The course also focuses on other important theoretical topics such as the nature of elections, the phenomenon of the "political market," the historical aspects of "political money," among others.

In addition to theoretical and methodological problems, the practical aspects of political marketing are analyzed in depth: planning and conducting electoral campaigns, socio-political diagnostics, branding, political communication, political advertising, political image management, and more. The course also raises a range of discussion topics related to the financing of electoral campaigns, electoral systems, models of voter behavior, and other relevant issues.

Content of the course:

The course "Political Marketing" is divided into two sections. The first section is of a theoretical and methodological nature, while the second focuses on issues related to the practical application of political marketing. Emphasis is placed on national models of political marketing as well as the specific characteristics of its functioning. Trends and challenges facing contemporary political marketing are analyzed in depth.

A special part of the course consists of seminars that actively involve students in analyzing specific electoral campaigns, pre-election political propaganda, and the psychological aspects of political marketing.

Teaching and Assessment Method:

At the end of the “Political Marketing” course, students’ answers to assigned written questions or their independent research on current issues within the discipline are evaluated.

MODERN DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

ECTS credits: 5

Assessment: exam

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Prof. DSc. Valentina Milenkova, Department of Sociology

E-mail: vmilenkova@swu.bg

Weekly hours: 2 lectures + 2 seminars

Type of Exam: Written

Annotation:

The course on Contemporary Demographic Trends provides theoretical knowledge of the fundamental concepts and categories related to population, as well as the approaches and methods for measuring and analyzing data in socio-demographic research. It covers the methodology and practical organization and implementation of statistical studies on phenomena and processes (natural and mechanical movement) that shape the main structures of the population and its development, economic activity of the population (employment and unemployment), income, expenditure, and consumption structures of the population (household budgets), and the educational and health status of the population. The course identifies the primary sources of statistical information and presents statistical data from state statistical observations. It also discusses the application of international regulations (Eurostat, UN, ILO, etc.) and practices in other countries concerning demographic and social research.

Content of the course:

Through the lecture course and the acquired practical knowledge, students master the fundamental concepts and population categories within the field of demographic and social statistics. They utilize primary sources of information, applying various methods; calculate and analyze key indicators characterizing the size and structure of populations; and track the level and intensity of the development of demographic processes.

Teaching and Assessment Method:

The final grade for the course is determined at the end of the semester based on the results of a written test, ongoing assessments, and a coursework developed using real statistical data.