



Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München is a leading research university in Europe. Since its founding in 1472 it has been committed to the highest international standards of excellence in research and teaching. At LMU Munich, the Unit Digitalization and Political Behavior (Prof. Dr. Alexander Wuttke) and Geschwister-Scholl Institute for Political Science are looking for a

PhD Researcher

(75%, starting January 1, 2027 or as soon as possible, 4-year term).

Do you want to understand how ordinary people think about democracy? Do you want to run experiments and design interventions that foster support for democracy? Are you excited by the idea of using large language models and text data to answer questions that matter for society? If so, we warmly invite you to join our team.

This position connects two DFG-funded research projects at our unit. Initially, you will work in the project "**Democratic Persuasion: How to Make the Case for Democracy**" ([Project Proposal](#)). You will continue in our Emmy Noether research group "**Predictably Paradoxical: Mapping the Democratic Mind with AI**" ([Project Proposal](#)).

Drawing on psychological theory and collaborations between academia and civil society, *Democratic Persuasion* aims at strengthening democratic resilience in established democracies. We identify the motivations behind democratic skepticism and test which communicative strategies reinforce support for democracy. Our studies include survey experiments, LLM-based persuasive conversations, and a framed field experiment involving one-on-one dialogues.

The *Emmy Noether group* seeks to illuminate the often puzzling and contradictory attitudes people hold about democracy. Standardized surveys struggle to map what is on people's minds because their response options only capture what researchers already expect. The group therefore uses large language models as interviewers in semi-structured interviews. With AI Conversational Interviewing, respondents describe in their own words what democracy means to them, while the AI interviewer asks follow-up questions. The resulting text data allow us to map democratic belief systems and to distinguish well-founded from superficial democratic attitudes.

Your dissertation will be situated in the area of **Computational Text Analysis for Mapping Democratic Belief Systems**, and you can shape its specific focus within this area.

What we offer

- Meaningful opportunities to foster democratic resilience through impactful research
- Involvement in innovative social science research with strong academic visibility, at the intersection of political science, psychology, and computational social science
- A 4-year contract with the possibility of extension that gives you the time to complete an ambitious dissertation
- Experience in two related research projects and a team with diverse methodological expertise
- A welcoming, inclusive atmosphere that highly values ambition, collaboration and individual contribution
- Supportive professional environment committed to your career growth
- Employment at one of Europe's premier research universities located in Munich, a city consistently ranked for outstanding quality of life
- Salary according to TV-L E13, 75% (approx. €44,000 to €47,000 gross per year depending on prior experience, non-binding, [1](#), [2](#))
- Various services and benefits provided by LMU, including family support ([1](#), [2](#))

Your responsibilities

- Democratic Persuasion:
 - Contribute to the framed field experiment on Socratic probing in collaboration with civil society organizations, from theory and research design to analysis
 - Develop and implement your own theory-driven interventions to strengthen support for democracy
 - Help conduct and analyze LLM-based persuasive conversations and survey experiments
- Emmy Noether research group:
 - Collect semi-structured interviews at large scale using AI Conversational Interviewing
 - Analyze text data to describe and explain democratic belief systems
- Throughout:
 - Develop and carry out a PhD on Computational Text Analysis for Mapping Democratic Belief Systems
 - Contribute to high-quality research publishing in leading venues
 - Contribute innovative ideas for research hypotheses and designs
 - Assist with project management and administrative tasks

Ideal Skills/Profile

No candidate is expected to meet all the criteria listed below. The tasks are distributed among project members with diverse skill sets. Please explain in your cover letter how your profile relates to the following qualifications.

- Completed (or near completion of) M.A./M.Sc. in the Social Sciences, Psychology, Computer Science, Computational Linguistics, or a related field
- Computational social science skills, which are especially useful for this position:
 - Python skills and experience working with LLMs (e.g., orchestrating LLM agents or building dialogue systems)
 - Text-as-data methods and natural language processing
- Education in quantitative methodology, including experimental designs
- Interest in or experience with political psychology, persuasion research, belief systems or democratic attitudes
- Strong organizational skills and a conscientious, reliable way of working (attention to detail, keeping agreed deadlines)
- Good written and oral English communication skills; German language skills are an advantage for the experiments in the first project phase
- Willingness to work with the team on-site with flexible working hours and home office options

Application

We welcome applications from women and other groups that are currently underrepresented in the academic system. Disabled applicants will be preferred, provided equal skill sets. Please send complete application documents, a writing sample (e.g., MA thesis or term paper) and a cover letter to A.Wuttke@lmu.de. We review applications on a rolling basis, so the earlier you apply, the better. Please submit your application no later than **October 20, 2026**. Your cover letter should explain how your profile relates to the ideal profile outlined above.

Zoom interviews will begin in October 2026. Depending on the number of applications, a second stage with a work sample and in-person interview at LMU Munich may follow (travel costs covered). Join us in shaping democratic futures. Apply today!