

2nd term, Academic Year 2026-2027

Seminar in Political and Social Theory: Recognition

Time and Place: **Monday 15:00-17:00, Seminar Room 2**

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Theories of recognition are prominent in different theoretical domains of social and political theory. First, they touch questions of the ontological assumptions we make about what humans are. They understand the subject as someone always already entangled in the recognition practices shared with others. Any individual is fundamentally social. As such, theories of recognition can be closely, if often critically, connected to theories of identity (or indeed: identification) and subjectification. This, in turn, makes theories of recognition relate to theories of domination, as social roles, rank and status are negotiated through practices of recognition or misrecognition. Power relations are constituted not only through the direct effects of (mis)recognition but also through the underlying discourses and terms within which such recognition is authorised and granted in the first place. Consequently, theories of recognition also inform many theories of symbolic action in contrast to rational actor models. Here, action is made sense of through the meaning it has within the circles of recognition actors are or wish to be part of. This applies to the study of rituals of the everyday in which performances reconvene or also challenge subject positions and the terms in which they are constituted, in a more benign form perhaps in gift rituals, and more problematic through practices of stigmatisation. Finally, theories of recognition have become the base of normative theories of democracy and also international politics.

As it is obviously impossible to cover all these connections and few PhD researchers at the EUI work within political theory, the seminar will strive to touch those more related to social theory, which is directly related to empirical analysis, mostly but not exclusively related to international relations. This could include (but to be confirmed) recognition and identity (George Herbert Mead, Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth), recognition and domination (Pierre Bourdieu, Frantz Fanon, Judith Butler) and recognition as symbolic action (Erving Goffman, Marcel Mauss, Victor Turner, Paul Ricœur). In the past, additional (and voluntary) ‘ad hoc seminars’ were organised to respond to particular interests of the participants.