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## **The Institute of Political Science, University of Warsaw: Courses Taught in Foreign Languages**

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*English-language studies, political science, Institute of Political Science,  
University of Warsaw, internationalisation*

Over the years the University of Warsaw has been going through numerous changes caused by circumstances such as the end of the cold war, political transformation or the process of Poland's entry into NATO and the European Union. The same can be said of the Institute of Political Science (IPS), founded in 1967 – Poland's oldest and largest academic centre of learning in political science. The IPS has launched the process of opening up to foreign students and the internationalisation of its teaching offer by developing courses in foreign languages. It teaches future political scientists to meet Poland's domestic demand in this field as well as internationally, thus becoming a centre of excellence whose importance in terms of the teaching potential goes far beyond its borders.

The beginnings of the teaching programme for international students go back to the courses organised (from 1999) in English and other languages for students following the EU Erasmus Student Exchange Programme. At the same time, the IPS started introducing courses taught in foreign languages into its regular programme of political science studies taught in Polish, first as optional courses and later also as obligatory ones. Pursuing this further, the IPS organized 'summer schools' for students, first, from Germany, then Ukraine and Russia with the goal of increasing their knowledge of Polish history, culture and politics.

Nevertheless, what really increased the international scope of teaching at the IPS was the decision to organise in 2009/2010 a graduate two-year degree programme taught in English (from 2012/2013 these became full-time studies) – *Master's Degree Studies in Political Science*<sup>1</sup>. This programme targets Polish and foreign graduate students, BA or MA degree-holders (with a stipulation that students participating in the Erasmus and other scholarship programmes as well as students enrolled in courses taught in Polish may take part in some of its classes).

The original study programme consisted of 20 subjects (increased to 24 in 2012/2013) focusing on Europe, the European Union and the region of Central and Eastern Europe. A broad range of subjects allows for an in-depth study of the standard issues of political science with a selection of the following subjects: History of Political Institutions, Theory of Politics, Methods in Political Research, Political Thought, Sociology and Psychology of Politics, Social Movements and International Relations. However, the curriculum goes beyond this, offering a chance of conducting rigorous regional analysis in courses such as European Political Systems, Historical Politics in Europe, Political Institutions of the EU, European Law, Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe, Russian Politics, Polish and General Contemporary History and Poland's Foreign Policy. This offer is especially meaningful for foreign students keen on pursuing their interest in Poland as well as other countries of this region. The numbers of such students are growing annually, including those who come from distant parts of the world, the Far East, for instance.

These studies offer the chance to develop one's knowledge, skills and social competences by providing various forms of theoretical and practical courses (for instance Political Decision-Making, Political Communication or the Art of Negotiation). One can attend first of all tutorials which allow for discussions in which multiple perspectives on the same issue are explored by students from different countries and cultural backgrounds, an asset in its own right. The ability to see the way these issues are perceived by representatives of different nationalities is very important when analysing political conflicts. A large number of the courses are optional allowing the students to develop their own individual path of study.

There are many additional activities to enrich the study programme in English, among them lectures delivered by guest professors, or seminars

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<sup>1</sup> [www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie](http://www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie)

and conferences organized at the Institute of Political Science and other venues. Students are encouraged to actively participate in conferences and present their papers. This provides them with an opportunity to develop their interests and scholarly passions. In addition to this, meetings are organized for them at key institutions of Polish political life, the Sejm (lower house of the Polish Parliament), or the Senate; and with leading figures of the Polish political, social and cultural scene.

Students may also link their Master's Degree Studies in Political Science at the IPS with a stay in other countries for a short period of study. The best second-year students can study for one semester at a university of their choice within the European Union (or Turkey) under the Erasmus programme. The IPS offers a wide selection of higher learning institutions across the European Union to choose from (a lot of agreements in this regard, a dozen or so, have been concluded with German universities). Since the University of Warsaw has been involved in other new EU programmes, mostly within the Erasmus Mundus programme, there are more universities to choose from. On top of this, it is also possible to study under the double-diploma programme, where students typically spend the whole second year of study abroad (for more see below).

The study programmes taught at the IPS in English and other foreign languages are run with the aid of cutting edge technology, including different media, facilities, teaching aids and electronic versions of teaching material handed out to students or posted on the web site. Some courses are conducted in the e-learning system using the potential of the Centre for Open and Multimedia Education, University of Warsaw (COME UW).

The teachers involved in this study programme are drawn from academics employed at the IPS and other institutes of the Department of Journalism and Political Science (the Institute of European Studies, Institute of International Relations and Institute of Social Policy). Many of them had long-term teaching stints at higher learning institutions across a wide spectrum of countries, mainly in Europe and the USA. Lectures are also delivered by scholars employed at other departments of the University of Warsaw and guest speakers not involved with this University, or practitioners, such as the former Polish foreign minister, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz. This furthers the practical aspect of studying at the IPS, which is quite meaningful from the perspective of job-seeking university graduates. Some courses in the English language MA Degree programme are taught by foreign academics residing in Poland as well as those who live abroad. In that number are lecturers from Germany

(Jens Boysen, German Historical Institute), the USA (Clifford Bates, American Studies Centre, University of Warsaw), and China (Wei Lichun, CEE Research Centre, Jilin).

The high quality of the English language Master's programme taught at the Institute of Political Science at the University of Warsaw, is borne out by the achievements of its students. During the second year of the programme's operation an IPS Japanese student, Anna Sugiyama, was awarded the top prize for the best foreign student studying in Poland in the category of MA studies in the INTERSTUDENT competition run by the *Perspektywy* Education Foundation<sup>2</sup>.

Students are not the only ones receiving awards and achieving success. The same can be said of the IPS alumni who are typically highly successful in their professional and academic fields. A diploma awarded by this institution opens the door to a career in Polish institutions, from banking to government ministries, and foreign ones, such as international organisations. Employers have recognized the merits and value of these studies, and the fact that in addition they develop a graduate's language skills, international contacts and the ability to work in an international team and an international environment. A degree in this course is a ticket to an academic career, starting with PhD studies – in Poland or at other major universities abroad, such as the Central European University in Budapest, as has been the case of the award-winning student from Japan.

The interest generated by these English language studies taught at the IPS is hardly surprising in the light of these facts. There are many inquiries during the annual recruitment process. The courses are attended by Poles and students from the following countries (given in alphabetical order): Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bhutan, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Moldova, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Syria, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and Yemen. In this group are grant holders of the Polish Government, numerous programmes of the EU (Erasmus Mundus) and regional institutions (International Visegrad Fund or the scholarship of the Council of the Baltic Sea States). Such a diverse study environment enriches the teaching process and enhances the intercultural and inter-religious dialogue on all levels.

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<sup>2</sup> For more see *Japonka, Białorusin, Ukrainiec i Włoch – laureatami konkursu INTERSTUDENT*. [www.perspektywy.pl/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=3568&Itemid=1](http://www.perspektywy.pl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3568&Itemid=1), 16.02.2013.

The Institute of Political Science is not relying on these achievements. It is committed to improving its study programme on a regular basis in order to make it more interesting to the students, develop their interests, prepare them for the challenges of the labour market and help them find fulfilment in their new jobs. The IPS uses different methods of bettering the organisation and programme of studies. Questionnaires in which students are asked to assess the subjects as well as direct consultations with the students are some of these methods. Also, the Institute takes part in an exchange of experience and information with institutions in Poland and abroad, which run study courses in foreign languages, at special conferences devoted to English language studies<sup>3</sup> or education fairs. This also helps to improve the recruitment process, the running of the studies, the course-content and teaching methods.

The provision of the English language study course by the IPS has the additional indirect benefit of developing the internationalisation of the University of Warsaw, providing the groundwork for developing international cooperation. It facilitates the organisation of other international study programmes at the IPS, for instance the double diploma, an undertaking made possible by the sheer volume of the teaching offered in English under the Master's Degree Studies in Political Science. This programme was launched with the German University of Konstanz in 2011. It will be soon a case of the Autonomous University of Madrid.

To conclude, one can say that the English language Master's Degree in Political Science at the IPS reflects the changes that have been taking place in higher education in the aftermath of 1989. The study programme has been designed to meet the challenges faced by the education sector from the modern, globalized world where knowledge is the foundation for the economic development of any country. These studies provide the chance to gain theoretical knowledge and practical expertise indispensable for functioning on the labour market and furthering a graduate's professional career. It enables the University, and the Institute, to function in the international environment by enhancing their teaching potential. At the same time, these studies meet the goals of European Union education policy and economic strategy – Europa 2020<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> A case in point is the Conference on *Foreign Students in Poland, 2011*, organised in Łódź, 23–25 February, 2011, in which representatives of the IPS participated and the author of this paper presented a paper *The Introduction of the Second-Cycle Studies in the English Language*, based on the work of the Institute of Political Science, University of Warsaw.

<sup>4</sup> More on this subject in <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

## **ABSTRACT**

Since 2009 the Institute of Political Science, University of Warsaw, has organized second degree (Master's) studies in political science taught in English. This is an example of the Institute's growing international teaching potential. The paper aims at profiling this original venture and pin-pointing the vast opportunities it offers in teaching Polish and foreign students of political science. It also highlights the benefits this study programme brings to the international stature of the University of Warsaw in terms of, both, teaching and scholarship.

## **Bibliography**

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