



UNIVERSITÄT  
ZU KÖLN

# Computational Text Analysis of Political Representation

Summer Semester 2026

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Thursdays, 10:00 - 13:30 (IBW building, room 3.40)

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Office Hours: online appointment via link on Ilias

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## 1. Course Description

Political scientists increasingly rely on large amounts of political documents and speeches to study political representation. This research seminar surveys current computational text analysis methods and teaches seminar participants how to apply these methods in their own research. We discuss important concepts in the study of political representation and how they can be studied using computational text analysis methods. These include political rhetoric in election campaigns and in parliaments. The course will introduce important text corpora that lend themselves to the study of these concepts, including parliamentary speech corpora, and discuss how the data-generating process of political speech differs according to the institutional arena. Finally, students will have the opportunity to apply different methods, including Large Language Models to examine political representation concepts in political texts. The sessions will consist of a mixture of theoretical grounding and hands-on analysis of political texts.

## 2. Course Objectives

- Learn how to operationalize concepts of representation using computational text analysis
- Learn various computational text approaches, including capabilities and limitations of generative AI
- Learn how to apply approaches using R and how to present results appropriately

- Learn the promises and pitfalls of computational text analysis in political science and critically evaluate political science publications that use text analysis methods

### 3. Prerequisites

This is an advanced seminar. **Students must have successfully completed the Quantitative Methods module in political science (or equivalent). Basic experience with R is expected.** This is not an introductory seminar to R. Most methods in this course will be implemented in R, using primarily - but not exclusively - the R package `quanteda`.

### 4. Course Requirements

This module follows the project work of examination, meaning you will complete several assignments. You need to submit ALL assignments for the project work in order to receive a passing grade. The project work will include a computational text analysis, presentation, and write-up. Details will be communicated at the beginning of the course.

### 5. Course Material

Readings will be available as electronic articles through Ilias.

## 6. Course Outline

### Week 1 **Overview: Introduction**

16 April

Readings:

- Benoit, K. 2020. “Text as Data: An Overview”. Handbook of Research Methods in Political Science and International Relations. Ed. by L. Curini and R. Franzese. Thousand Oaks: Sage: 461–497.
- Getting started with the [Quanteda R package](#)

#### **Text Analysis Lab 1:**

Introduction to Quanteda, corpus, keywords in context, term-document matrices, basic dictionary analysis

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### Week 2 **Political Rhetoric in Election Campaigns**

23 April

Readings:

- Lowe, Will, Ken Benoit, Slava Mikhaylov and Michael Laver. 2011. “Scaling policy preferences from coded political texts.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 36(1), 123-155.
- Müller, Stefan, and Sven-Oliver Proksch. 2024. “Nostalgia in European Party Politics: A Text-Based Measurement Approach.” *British Journal of Political Science*, 54(3): 993–1005.
- Bischof, Daniel and Roman Senninger. 2018. “Simple politics for the people? Complexity in campaign messages and political knowledge.” *European Journal of Political Research*, 57(2), 473–495.

#### **Text Analysis Lab 2:**

Text complexity, similarity measures, dictionary-based analysis, sentiment analysis

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Week 3 **Large Language Models for the Study of Political Representation**  
30 April

Readings:

- K. Benoit, S. De Marchi, C. Laver, M. Laver, and J. Ma (Forthcoming). “Using Large Language Models to Analyze Political Texts Through Natural Language Understanding.” *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Ornstein, J. T., Blasingame, E. N., and Truscott, J. S. 2025. How to train your stochastic parrot: large language models for political texts. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 13(2), 264–281
- Tutorials of [quallmer R Package](#)

**Text Analysis Lab 3:**  
Working with LLMs

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Week 4 **Political Rhetoric in Parliament**  
21 May

Readings:

- Proksch, Sven-Oliver, and Jonathan B. Slapin. 2012. “Institutional Foundations of Legislative Speech.” *American Journal of Political Science* 56.3: 520-537
- Proksch, Sven-Oliver, Will Lowe, Jens Wäckerle, and Stuart N. Soroka. 2019. “Multilingual Sentiment Analysis: A New Approach to Measuring Conflict in Legislative Speeches”. *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 44 (1): 97–131
- Schwalbach, Jan; Hetzer, Lukas; Proksch, Sven-Oliver; Rauh, Christian; Sebók, Miklós. 2025. “ParLawSpeech”, GESIS, Cologne. doi:10.7802/2824.

**Text Analysis Lab 4:**  
Working with parliamentary speech

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Week 5 **Political Rhetoric in Parliaments II**  
11 June

Readings:

- Valentim, Vincente and Tobias Widmann. 2023. “Does Radical-Right Success Make the Political Debate More Negative? Evidence from Emotional Rhetoric in German State Parliaments.” *Political Behavior* 45: 243–264
- Blumenau, J. 2021. “The effects of female leadership on women’s voice in political debate.” *British Journal of Political Science*, 51(2), 750-771.

**Text Analysis Lab 5:**  
Replications of text analysis studies

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Week 6 **Student Presentations**  
2 July

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Week 7 **Student Presentations**  
9 July

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