



Call for Papers & Save the Date

**Conference 'Practicing Intersectionality in Research,
Activism and Politics'
at the FU Berlin on November 30th and December 1st 2023**

Prof. Dr. Gülay Çağlar and Friederike Beier

Division for Gender & Diversity, Otto-Suhr-Institute for Political Science, FU Berlin

In the last two decades, intersectionality has been widely established both as a framework and field of study within gender studies and as a praxis in feminist movements and politics. Intersectionality, a term introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, has gained a great deal of popularity as it provides a prism to identify complex and intersecting social inequalities. Putting Black women's experiences of discrimination and marginalisation at the centre, Crenshaw argues for overcoming a single-axis thinking both, in anti-discrimination law and in political strategies of feminist movements. Yet the popularity and reach of intersectionality has been accompanied with contestations over the meaning of intersectionality and the direction of intersectionality studies.

Firstly, one point of contestation is the institutionalisation of intersectionality in academia and its appropriation by white feminists (particularly in Europe), leading to a de-politisation and to—as Sirma Bilge puts it—a “whitening of intersectionality” since the category of race and with it, the focus at Black women's experiences, increasingly disappear from scholarly engagements. This has triggered debates around practices of knowledge production in different regional, institutional and disciplinary settings. Secondly, a great deal of discussions revolves around the question of how to analytically conceptualise categories of difference and their interrelationship along different axis of oppression such as racism, sexism, capitalism, ableism and homophobia within different social and political contexts. There is a huge variety of approaches ranging from conceptualisations of categories as positional, co-constitutive, or discursively constructed to deconstructivist, approaches that reject references to categories at all. These debates are important for methodological reasons and inform the ways in which the concept of intersectionality is employed for conducting empirical studies and analysing intersectional inequalities.

Against this background, this conference aims at taking stock and identifying the current state of intersectionality research in the fields of political and social sciences, politics, and activism. Our objective is to understand, how the above-mentioned debates feed into the analytics of political science. What consequences do feminist scholars in this disciplinary field draw from these debates

for their research? What are their practices of knowledge production and how do they engage with institutions and communities that practice intersectionality? How do students of political science and early career scholars perceive the debates and attach meaning to the concept of intersectionality?

The conference will be organised around three issue areas:

1. Practices of Intersectional Knowledge Production in Political and Social Sciences

This panel reflects the politics of intersectional knowledge production by discussing the methodological question of how to deal with categories of difference. We therefore invite scholars to share their approach to operationalise intersectionality as well as their empirical experiences and strategies to navigate challenges in researching intersectional inequalities. We are interested but not limited to the following questions.

- What exactly does an intersectional lens in political and social sciences entail? How does the framework of intersectionality contribute to better understanding of processes of marginalisation in political institutions, movements, and procedures?
- How do empirical analyses of intersectional inequalities reflect categories of difference?
- What role do different epistemological standpoints play (Black feminist, anti-colonial, transgender etc.)?
- What are ethical questions and how do they inform research practices?

2. Practicing Intersectionality in Activism

Intersectionality studies in political science predominantly focus on the ways in which intersectionality is practiced in social justice movements and non-governmental organisations. These studies scrutinise processes of appropriation, de-politicisation as well as resistance. This panel invites contributions that are concerned with the translation of intersectionality into activism and social movements:

- How is intersectionality practiced within social movements, grass-root organisations and other activist contexts? How is white supremacy reflected in these contexts?
- What does intersectional feminism mean for activists and what are concrete practices of intersectional solidarity?
- How is intersectionality applied and conceptualised in social movements research?

3. Practicing Intersectionality in Politics

Intersectionality has emerged as a buzz word in political institutions at different levels (local, national, supranational and international). Particularly in the context of gender equality politics, intersectionality has been proposed as a way to account for complex inequalities and diversity (i.e. gender+ approach within the EU). Yet, it remains unclear how exactly intersectionality is approached in political institutions. We are interested in whether intersectional inequalities have been addressed in political institutions beyond tokenism and therefore invite contributions that are concerned with the following questions:

- How do political parties, governmental institutions or supra- and international organisations refer to the concept of intersectionality? What meanings are produced?
- How does an intersectional lens contribute to the study of political participation and representation?
- How is intersectionality employed in different political contexts? How is it translated and implemented into policies?
- How do gender equality and diversity policies tackle intersectional inequalities?

Conference details:

The conference is a joint effort by the Division of Gender and Diversity at the Otto-Suhr-Institute for Political Science and the Margherita von Brentano Center for Gender Studies at Freie Universität Berlin.

It is organised by senior and junior researchers, as well as students of the Master programme Gender, Intersectionality and Politics (<https://www.ma-gip.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/>). It takes place on Thursday and Friday, the 30th of November and 1st of December 2023 at Freie Universität in Berlin. There will be a reception after the keynote on Thursday. Online options will be considered for those who cannot travel.

We invite scholars, activists and students to submit their proposals by **April 15th 2023** to friederike.beier@fu-berlin.de

Paper proposals should include:

- Title and short abstract (max 400 words) for a 20 minutes presentation
- Brief biographical details including positionality statement (max 200 words)

Workshop proposals should include:

- Title and short abstract (max 400 words)
- Outline of the didactic concept (max 200 words)
- Brief biographical details including positionality statement (max 200 words)

You will receive feedback by the end of April 2023 as to whether your contribution will be included in the conference programme.

Additional benefits for speakers:

A small allowance will be paid to speakers who do not have institutional support. Submitted papers have the chance to be published in the conference proceedings. Those who are interested in the publication submit a written paper by November 1st 2023.

We thank the Margherita von Brentano Center for Gender Studies at Freie Universität Berlin for their financial and organisational support.