



**VIU**  
**PhD**  
**academy**  
**WHAT**  
**IS A PEOPLE?**  
**SOCIAL, POLITICAL,**  
**AND LEGAL**  
**CONTROVERSIES**

**What is a People? Social, Political,  
and Legal Controversies**

**March 28 – April 1, 2022**

**Venice International University  
Isola di San Servolo, Venice**

# VIU International PhD Academy

## What is a People? Social, Political, and Legal Controversies

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Scientific Coordinator:

Daniele Archibugi

Italian National Research  
Council (CNR)

The concept of 'people' has been a feeding ground for social sciences, public debates and political processes since the 19th century and today has again emerged as the core of the discourse of recent populist movements. The notion of people is the foundation of nationalisms, the formation of states, the processes of democratization, post conflict settings, the theory of self-determination, and the claims of separatist movements. It is also at the basis of the 'people's Europe', an idea thrown into crisis by both the Occupy movements and the rightist populisms that, once again, contraposes 'the people' to 'the elites'. The notion has been also used to separate the 'us' from the 'others' leading to fierce forms of discrimination, racial segregation and international crimes. However, the outlines of its definition are not distinct but rather blurred and involve a broad semantic range which overlaps and intersects with the notions of state, country, nationalism, culture, ethnicity, group, language, minority, and identity. In the quest for justice after conflicts, peoples' tribunals have been created to fill the gaps of transnational justice and to give voice to invisible and abused victims/survivors (including through peoples' tribunals and courts). So, what is a people? This international PhD Academy discusses this question by offering a series of lectures that address this tricky and ambiguous concept both in its (mis)uses in the political arena, and as a scientific label adopted to comprehend the riddle of collective identities. This intensive training program combines various disciplines such as Political Sciences, International Relations, Anthropology, Sociology, History, Peace and Conflict Studies, International Human Rights Law, which put the concept of 'people' at the core of their reflections, often proposing conflicting theorizations. Without eluding the distinctiveness of each disciplines, the Academy aims at enhancing the dialogue between different intellectual traditions, between normative and descriptive approaches, synchronic and diachronic perspectives.

This PhD Academy will be led by:

- Italian National Research Council (CNR)
- Tel Aviv University, Israel
- Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy

## Faculty

Daniele Archibugi, Italian National Research Council, Italy  
Uriel Abulof, Tel Aviv University, Israel  
Sara De Vido, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy  
Sophie Duchesne, University of Bordeaux / CNRS France  
Mary Kaldor, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK  
Fabio Dei, University of Pisa, Italy  
Lorenzo D'Orsi, University of Catania, Italy

## Methodology

This Academy will provide students with an interactive learning experience utilizing frontal lectures, class discussions, team exercises, presentations, and simulations. A learning-by-doing approach will be privileged. Participants will be invited to exchange their impressions and research experiences and will have the opportunity to present their PhD projects in relation to the concepts explored. Participants not only from different nationalities but also from different backgrounds of studies will contribute to enrich the experience inside and outside the classroom.

The program will also make intensive use of films to illustrate the controversies associated to nationalism, populism and race. A selected number of films will be shown during the week, while others will be included in the "reading and watching lists" of individual lectures. Students will be asked to explore and discuss these learning materials. The program structure will also include cultural insights about Venice.

## Topics

Interdisciplinary in its nature, this international PhD Academy will offer a theoretical review of the concept of 'people', moving from its first theorizations to its current implications. This notion will be scrutinized in the background of different fields of social sciences and in relation to the concepts of state, nationalism, ethnicity, populism, collective memory, global civil society and elite. It will explore how a cosmopolitan democracy could mitigate conflicts.

## Learning outcomes for participants

The program provides participants with advanced skills for successfully implementing their PhD research projects on issues related to politics of

identity, post-conflict analysis, ethnicity, political theory, new social movements, self-determination theory, through an international and multi-disciplinary approach. It aims to provide a general rethinking of the concept of 'people' in contemporary societies and within the realm of social sciences.

## Who can apply?

This international PhD Academy is offered to PhD students, Post-docs, and young researchers in political science, international relations, political anthropology, sociology of social movements, international relations, political philosophy, post-conflict studies, modern and contemporary history.

This PhD Academy is a postponed 2021 activity. Applications are currently closed, however, should any places become available, a new call for applications will be opened.

[Updated information will be available on the dedicated webpage.](#)

## Fees & Grant Support

Students from the VIU member institutions will pay no participation fees. Grant support is also available to support, partially or fully, the costs of international travel and accommodation.

The participation fee for students of non-member institutions is Euro 1.100 incl. VAT. The fee is inclusive of tuition, course materials, accommodation, lunches, social events and taxes. Students from non-member institutions are not eligible for VIU grant support. VIU Alumni are eligible for a reduced fee.

Selected participants will be asked to present a poster.

For further information: [phdacademy@univiu.org](mailto:phdacademy@univiu.org)

*As the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing, VIU will continue to monitor the situation, and in the event that it is not possible to confirm the program on the VIU campus as scheduled, other practicable solutions will be evaluated. Applicants and confirmed participants will be informed of any changes.*

## VIU International PhD Academies

Venice International University is a consortium of 20 universities, representing 15 countries throughout the world.

The mission of VIU is to foster cooperation among VIU member institutions while facilitating the exchange of knowledge and ideas, by developing, promoting and organizing joint academic, research and training/capacity-building program. Students from non-member universities may participate in selected academic programs.

The academic programs at VIU are distinguished by a markedly interdisciplinary approach to the topics, and by the international perspectives that the participants contribute to the discussions. The VIU campus is on the island of San Servolo in Venice, Italy.

Venice International University holds two/three International PhD Academies each year. They are intensive training opportunities open to PhD candidates from the member universities of VIU.

A PhD is the highest diploma awarded by universities in the world, and PhDs are naturally expected to take on major responsibilities in their professional life. Apart from the disciplinary scientific skills acquired during doctoral study and research, it is the ability to respond to the requirements of creativity, innovation and project management, that produce the significant added value of a doctoral degree.

Whether they will work within or outside academia, PhDs must be able to develop a forward-looking vision of the challenges they have to face. The interdisciplinary approach of all VIU activities is adopted also in the PhD Academy, where the participants have the opportunity to meet their peers from all over the world, and to tackle transversal topics.

[www.univiu.org/study/phd-academy](http://www.univiu.org/study/phd-academy)

### Location



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