

30/12/2023



Dear Selection Committee,

I am writing to apply for the position of Lecturer in [REDACTED]. I am currently [REDACTED] at the University of [REDACTED] and have previously taught at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. My research is primarily situated within democratic theory and the political theory of markets, and I have a strong record of world-leading publications in these areas. This includes a monograph forthcoming with *Oxford University Press* and eight articles in top journals, such as the *American Political Science Review*, *Political Studies*, and *Politics, Philosophy, & Economics*. In what follows, I will explain my experience and suitability for this position and how I could contribute to [REDACTED]'s outstanding research and teaching community.

Much of my research has focused on the epistemic dimensions of democratic politics and how democracy may be justified through its ability to make good decisions. Whether due to the Trump presidency, Brexit, or the rise of populism, this vital component of democratic legitimacy is increasingly challenged, and some now argue that we should look for alternative forms of politics. In a monograph titled "Intelligent Democracy", I aim to reject this new democratic scepticism. I claim that we should value democratic government not only because it treats us all equally, but also because it can acquire knowledge, utilise diversity, engage in experimentation, and motivate decisions towards the common good. Central to the book's contribution is the first systemic approach to epistemic democracy. While existing work focuses on formal models of single mechanisms, I argue that democracy's value is produced through the interaction of many institutions – from elections and deliberation to random sortition and the informal public sphere – and I examine how they are best connected to produce a system which is more intelligent than its parts. This systemic approach then offers innovative ideas for improving democratic decisions, such as institutionalising randomly selected assemblies as a new means of democratic accountability. It also allows me to establish democracy's superiority over elitist proposals for empowering the more knowledgeable as well as those which grant greater powers to free markets and private actors. The result is a unique justification of democratic politics and a comprehensive response to democracy's contemporary critics.

The high quality of this research is evidenced by a series of peer-reviewed articles connected to the project. For instance, my papers in *Political Studies* and *PPE* engage with work in political theory and economy which defends the informational advantages of markets. In the former paper, I argue that consumers often lack the knowledge needed to act on other-regarding values and develop an epistemic case for the ethical limits of markets and the need for democratic regulation. In another article in *Synthese*, I offer a model to explain diversity's contributions to democratic deliberation, arguing that my approach relies on more realistic assumptions than those popular in the literature.

While the above topics have motivated me since my doctoral thesis, my current and future work focuses on issues of political polarisation and the divisive nature of contemporary politics. Although there is much concern for polarisation's impacts on democracy and extensive empirical literature on the topic, it has received relatively little attention from democratic theorists. I, therefore, aim to link empirical findings to normative principles to determine if and when polarisation should be seen as a threat to democratic values. The project is particularly interested in the discursive and elite dimensions of polarisation, which are currently overlooked by democratic theorists who have so far concentrated on psychological drivers. In a paper in *APSR*, for instance, I argue that psychological accounts misidentify polarisation's harms by focusing on distortions in individuals' political beliefs. Combining elite framing research with democratic and feminist theory, I instead locate such harms in polarisation's tendency to reduce the diversity of social perspectives in a democratic system. Given the strength of early publications and popular interest in the topic, this project can form an excellent basis for future funding applications, such as an ISRF Early Career Research Fellowship, a BA Mid-Career Fellowship, or possibly an ESRC New Investigator Grant.

I believe this work would make an excellent contribution to [REDACTED] and to the [REDACTED]. While bringing new expertise in contemporary democratic theory, my research would deepen existing strengths in applied and empirically

informed political theory – such as the work of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] on global institutions and [REDACTED]'s on the welfare state – and has close connections to [REDACTED]'s interests in competition and [REDACTED]'s in nationalism and populism. My recent work on polarisation and partisanship would also interest those in the [REDACTED] Cluster, and my research on market institutions would contribute to the work of the [REDACTED] Centre.

Having taught at [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED], I possess significant teaching experience at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This comprises large lectures, smaller group seminars, and the supervision of dissertation students within and outside my direct expertise. I have taught introductory courses in political theory, which aim to familiarise students with core topics and methods, as well as more advanced modules on applied political theory, democratic theory, environmental issues, and economic ethics. I have also gained experience designing new courses, having co-created a research-informed module covering debates over voter competence and misinformation from normative and empirical perspectives. Alongside my teaching in political theory, I am passionate about interdisciplinary education, often combining philosophical material with empirical social science and co-teaching with colleagues from other fields on political economy programmes and politics, philosophy, and economics (PPE) degrees. I am also currently collaborating on a new PPE textbook, offering an integrated approach for guiding students through an interdisciplinary research project.

I am pleased to have received first-rate student feedback and to have maintained this through fully online and hybrid teaching during the pandemic. Of my students last year, 81% 'strongly agreed' and 14% 'agreed' that my teaching was 'excellent'. I place much emphasis on structure in my teaching, clearly defining assessments and student requirements, and designing lectures that are well-organised as well as engaging. Informed by my research and deliberative approaches to pedagogy, I believe teaching must be equal and inclusive to be productive and is at its best when all can speak, be heard, and benefit from the resulting diversity of student perspectives. I, therefore, prioritise a safe teaching environment and utilise a range of active learning techniques to engage students with different learning styles and abilities. This includes conventional large and smaller group discussions, as well as problem-solving tasks, interactive demonstrations, peer review exercises, formal debates, and think-share activities. I take my responsibilities for pastoral care and the student experience very seriously and understand that university produces many challenges, particularly for those from underrepresented backgrounds or with disabilities. A willingness to provide additional support and office hours for those in need is, then, essential to effective education. While working in the Netherlands, I also gained a Dutch University Teaching Qualification, which involved a structured reflection on my pedagogical practices.

This broad experience makes me well-placed to contribute to Manchester's existing courses in political theory, including 'Introduction to Political Theory', 'Injustice and Resistance', and 'Debating Justice', as well as more interdisciplinary modules, such as 'Democracy in Theory and Practice' and 'Issues in PPE'. I would also be excited to offer new research-informed teaching in my areas of expertise. This could include a course titled 'Can Democracy Work?' covering contemporary issues such as voter knowledge, misinformation, populism, and polarisation from a democratic theory perspective, and another on 'The Political Theory of Capitalism' focusing on economic justice, work, and the scope of markets.

At all my institutions, I have engaged actively with the academic and social lives of my departments, regularly attending and presenting at research seminars, and I hope to continue to do so in [REDACTED]. I have similarly participated in the wider academic community, presenting at a range of national and international conferences, and organising a conference and two workshops on topics connected to my research. I place much value in collegiality, often working closely with colleagues in both teaching and administrative roles. This includes sitting on examination and admissions committees with responsibilities for ensuring a diversity of assessment and conducting selection processes for new students. I would, therefore, be very capable of performing any and all organisational duties involved in this position.

Finally, I would like to reiterate my keen interest in further developing my research and teaching at the University of [REDACTED], and I thank you very much for considering my application.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]