**Teaching Statement - Sofie Marien**

I truly enjoy supporting the intellectual development of students. This includes expanding their knowledge on systems of governance and power and strengthening their analytical and critical thinking skills. In line with the global citizenship mission of the quality agreements, ultimately my teaching also aims to contribute to the development of strong democrats and democracy advocates.

I strongly believe that high quality teaching in universities is based on high-quality research. Political science research offers fantastic material for highly engaging research-based classes that can enable students to learn and reflect on the pressing problems democracies face today. Many of these problems need to be addressed at the European level in which the EU plays a vital role (e.g. rising inequalities, misinformation, climate change, migration). Classic and recent studies in European and comparative political science offer excellent material to support the intellectual development of students and emerging European citizens.

What we teach and how we teach are both important components of research-based teaching. Inherent to scientific knowledge is its changing nature, which creates the need for continuous learning. Strong analytical thinking, and sound knowledge of research designs and methods are critical. Even more so in times of misinformation, factual polarisation and democratic erosion. Therefore, I believe it is important to engage in class as much with the nature of current scientific knowledge as with the nature of solid knowledge production (quality but also research ethics for example). My strong passion for good research has made enthusiasm a reoccurring theme in my student evaluations in Leuven and Amsterdam. I believe this is key to an effective learning environment.

As a university teacher, it is my task to enable students to think critically and analytically, to have an open mind and to ask probing questions, rather than to just accept the information they receive (or be critical without good reasons). Training the ability to think analytically and critically is one of the most important elements of academic education. It is the prerequisite for academic research but also indispensable for democratic societies and many jobs. To achieve this, I rely on insights from deliberative democracy including the Habermasian ideal speech conditions in which inclusion and respect feature prominently. In line with recent works in this field, I also strongly believe in expanding the focus of the exchange of rational arguments with other types of communication such as story-telling, which can increase reflective reasoning and inclusion. In large groups, technology can enable large (inclusive) participation. Good moderation is key to have all voices heard in smaller groups. I very much enjoy to experiment and innovate to arrive at better and more inclusive learning environments (experiments have included audience engagement technology, speed dating, development of discussion protocols). My interpersonal skills and strong empathy enable me to create a high-quality learning environment for all students. As a first-generation academic, I understand the importance of inclusivity and of creating a sense of belonging for all students, therefore, I am actively committed to create a high-quality learning environment. My commitment to inclusion is also reflected in the syllabi I created, which include different methodological approaches and geographical regions.

It is my belief that a community can contribute significantly to the creation of an effective learning environment. I strive to build welcoming atmospheres, as I believe that they foster continuous learning, and I care deeply about equal opportunities. The initiatives in the context of #NEXTGDC[[1]](#footnote-1) offer just one recent example of my continuous commitment to inclusive community building (e.g. online conferences and network events). Working with younger generations and building communities are the parts of the job I have always enjoyed tremendously.

Throughout the past 15 years, I have successfully applied this vision by teaching small and large (diverse) groups in a wide range of subfields (such as comparative politics, political behaviour, political theory, research methods and statistics, political history, political communication, political sociology), and I have been part of different quality assessments committees (‘NVAO visitatie’). I have already contributed to the teaching curriculum in Amsterdam and very much enjoyed this experience and I am enthusiastic to take up this role again and make an active and positive contribution to the university’s teaching program and learning environment.

1. Next Generation Deliberation Celebration [↑](#footnote-ref-1)