

# PhD student position at the Institute of Argumentation, Linguistics and Semiotics, Faculty of communication, culture and society at USI Università della Svizzera italiana

Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) is a young and lively university, a hub of opportunity open to the world where students are offered a quality interdisciplinary education in which they can be fully engaged and take center stage, and where our researchers can count on having the space to freely pursue their initiative.

Established in 1996, USI is in constant evolution, always taking on new challenges while remaining true to its three guiding principles: quality, openness and responsibility.

The Institute of Argumentation, Linguistics and Semiotics (IALS) represents a lively research environment for a PhD student who specializes in the study of discourse and argumentation. Interaction with several researchers specializing on argumentation in different contexts, as well as interdisciplinary interactions with colleagues inside and outside the Faculty is an asset for a PhD candidate who wants to work on empirical argumentation in communication contexts.

The Institute invites applications for a research and teaching PhD position (100%, 4 years). The PhD candidate will develop his or her dissertation project within the field of *argumentation in the domain of public controversies*.

## The project

Within IALS, the research team led by Prof. Sara Greco concentrates on argumentation in the management of interpersonal conflict as well as in broader public controversies. In the past five years, a growing research area for the team has been argumentation in the controversy surrounding the sustainability of the fashion industry; we have been considering activists' social media discourse as well as the discourse of brands and public institutions.

Within this context, the candidate will develop a PhD dissertation in the field of activists' argumentation, considering the empirical domain of sustainable fashion discourse, with a specific focus on social media discourse. At the theoretical level, the project will focus on the interrelation of argument schemes (*loci*) and evoked emotions. Overall, the ambition is to bring forward existing research on emotions in argumentation, by connecting emotions to argumentative inference. Thus, the project will include a component of empirical analysis of discourse datasets and a component of theoretical reflection.

The selected candidate will be inserted in a team of researchers at IALS working on argumentation in public controversies and considering sustainability issues. Moreover, s/he will be able to develop research in connection with a network of international scholars who collaborate on these topics with Prof. Greco and her team.

### **The PhD Position**

The doctoral student will be enrolled in the PhD in Communication Sciences (<https://www.com.usi.ch/en/study-communication/phd-doctoral-studies/phd-communication-sciences>) with a specialization in "Discourse and Argumentation". The doctoral student will work under the scientific supervision of Prof. Sara Greco (<https://search.usi.ch/en/people/28e36cfec1c93ec14e5b0879cd5311e1/greco-sara>). The successful candidate will be offered the possibility to work in a dynamic research team and in a multidisciplinary and international scientific environment.

The PhD candidate will collaborate to the development of the institute research agenda. He or she will have the task of setting up a collection of data for his or her dissertation, while at the same time participating in a variety of tasks related to the research streams in which s/he is involved.

On the teaching side, s/he will work as teaching assistant in courses at bachelor and master level taught primarily by Prof. Greco and possibly others, according to the needs of the IALS institute, helping in the preparation of teaching materials, tutoring students and assisting with exams in accordance to the Faculty requests. Additional tasks (e.g. help and support in organization of local events, participation to outreach events, social media management) may be asked as part of the workload.

The PhD candidate is also asked to present papers at scientific conferences, and produce publications for scientific journals, while working on her/his dissertation, in accordance with the supervisor.

### **Candidates' profile**

Ideal candidates should satisfy the following requirements:

- A Master (or equivalent title) in linguistics, argumentation, rhetoric, discourse analysis, applied linguistics, communication sciences, or related disciplines.
- Some expertise in discourse analysis and empirical work on discourse are required and we expect the candidate to be passionate about research on discourse. Specific training in argumentation studies is an added value, but it is not a requirement, as long as the candidate is willing to study argumentation and is committed to work in the field of argumentation studies during the doctorate.
- High personal interest in combining theoretical reflection within argumentation studies with *careful* empirical analysis of data, drawing from linguistics, discourse analysis and argumentation. Moreover, given the focus of this position, the candidate should have an interest in the study of emotions in argumentation.
- Fluency in oral and written English (official language of the PhD program).
- Some skills in Italian (not necessarily as a native speaker) are needed, because of teaching assistance tasks at the bachelor level. Skills in other national languages (French and/or German) are not required but will be considered as an added value.
- Ability to work independently and to plan and direct one's own work, while keeping in contact with a broader research team. It is expected that the selected PhD is ready to interact not only with the supervisor but also with other PhD students and post-docs in the same team and with IALS and Faculty colleagues.
- In this research team, we highly value the ability to contribute to scientific discussions, to engage in critical thinking and reasonable discussion, to accept corrections and to proactively seek help when needed, as well as listening skills and openness. We have an established profile in the study of argumentation as an alternative to conflict escalation and we wish to work with scholars who value collaboration, dialogue and mutual respect.
- Motivation to engage in the elaboration of a PhD dissertation. Autonomy in scheduling research steps and accept the difficulties inherent in research with resilience.

- Interest for contributing to teaching and tutoring students.

### **Contract terms**

Admission to the Ph.D. program is highly competitive. Admission decisions are based on the candidate's background, interests, attitude and potential for academic achievement. Successful enrolment in the Ph.D. program and the position as doctoral researcher are not compatible with a further professional activity.

The position is internally financed and the salary levels correspond to those set by the Swiss National Science Foundation for PhD researchers.

The successful candidate will work as research assistant at the Institute of Argumentation, Linguistics and Semiotics, and will have the possibility to interact with a national and international network of collaborators, for example related to the European Conference of Argumentation (ECA) and to the Swiss Society for Linguistics (SSG/SSL).

Workplace is USI Università della Svizzera italiana, located in Lugano, Switzerland. Availability to travel to other parts of Switzerland and abroad (for purposes of collaboration and research) is required.

Starting date is **1 July 2024** (at the earliest). However, the position will be kept open until a suitable candidate has been found.

### **The Application**

Applications should contain: (1) a letter in which the applicants discuss their research interests and the motivation to apply, referring specifically to the research topic indicated in this Call, (2) a complete CV, (3) copies of relevant diplomas, certificates as well as the full transcript of records that prove the candidates' eligibility for doctoral studies in discourse and argumentation, (4) an electronic version of a research work (Master thesis or other scientific publication). The latter must be accompanied by a short summary in English (1 page maximum). A support letter written by the Master thesis supervisor (or another Professor who knows the candidate well) is equally welcome.

Please send your application in electronic form or requests for further information to Prof. Sara Greco ([sara.greco@usi.ch](mailto:sara.greco@usi.ch)).

Applications received before **25 March 2024** will be given priority. However, applications will be received until the position is filled.

USI strives to be an equal opportunity and family friendly employer and is further responsive to the needs of dual career couples and people with caring duties. We guarantee that the selection process will give equal opportunities to female and male researchers. As an institution that values diversity, USI particularly encourages applications from women and from all individuals from underrepresented groups.

Lugano, 12 February 2024