

Abstract

How to establish pluralism at universities

Congress: Momentum 15, Kritik

Track #3: Kritik und Geschichte der Ökonomie
(alternatively) Track #5: Zur Mobilisierung kritischer Masse

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Who we are

Our student's initiative "Kritische Wirtschaftswissenschaftler" (Critical Economists) questions the current curricula in Economics and our group emphasizes alternative theories and schools of thoughts besides the neoclassical paradigm.

For more than ten years, students in our initiative initiate campaigns, organize lectures and discuss several economic issues. Furthermore, we are part of the German "Netzwerk für Plurale Ökonomik" and the "International Students Initiative for Pluralism in Economics - ISIPE" so that the call for pluralism in economic theory can grow louder.

What we do

"It is not only the world economy that is in crisis. The teaching of economics is in crisis too, and this crisis has consequences far beyond the university walls. What is taught shapes the minds of the next generation of policymakers, and therefore shapes the societies we live in." (ISIPE, An international student call for pluralism in economics, open letter, 2013)

From our point of view, we can only oppose economic orthodoxy and neoclassical monism by getting active on our own. We want to encourage our fellow students to reflect the current economic curricula critically and that multidisciplinary and pluralism in economics will lead to a better understanding of economics and our world, today.

Last Semester, we reached a new milestone at our University: Supported by Prof. Dr. Kisker, our group (mainly worked out by Lino Zeddies and Janina Urban) organized a creditable course, called "Schools of thought and current controversies in economics" that provided a general overview about heterodox' theories, e.g.

- What does pluralism stand for?
- Behavioural Economics
- Feminist Economics
- Marxian Economics
- Post-Keynesianism
- Ecological Economics
- Evolutional Economics
- Austrian Economics

The lectures were held by professors from different universities and institutions, mostly from Berlin, and even Prof. Dr. Steve Keen participated with a lecture, criticizing the neo-classical paradigm.

This course for itself is rather unique in Germany as it was planned and implemented voluntarily by students, and became part of the official economics curricula. On average, nearly one hundred students attended the course every week what demonstrates the great demand for pluralism in economics! Further, we got excellent feedback and are hopeful to have stimulated critical thinking about economic thought in others.

The success of this semester has generated its own dynamics: For the current summer term, our group grew substantially and now, we organize the course “Financial crises and the monetary system” where several historical crises, the financial and monetary system and potential reforms will be analysed. Meanwhile, several Professors support our course so that we will probably be able to continue these two courses in the future.

What we would like to share

The organization was obviously a lot of work and many decisions had to be made. During the Momentum 15 congress, we would like to share our experiences and insights from organizing the pluralistic lecture series. Our presentation includes the following topics:

- I. The Problem
- II. Our Idea
- III. Course structure, content & concept
- IV. Organization
- V. The Problem of Accreditation
- VI. Financing & Advertising
- VII. Feedback & Surveys
- VIII. Summary & Conclusion

We hope that our case motivates other students to establish pluralistic courses at their universities. With our presentation at the momentum 15 congress, we want to show how dissatisfaction can be transformed into positive actions, which may change the status quo.

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