

Full name: *Dr. Kathrin Thomas*

What subject did you study? *PhD Politics*

Year of Graduation: *2013*

Current Job Title: *Senior Research Specialist*

Current Employer/Organisation Name: *Princeton University*



Can you give us an overview of what you have done since you completed your research degree?

I am very grateful that I was able to work on various different projects. After I obtained my PhD in Politics from the University of Exeter, I took on a Teaching Fellow position at the University of Aberdeen, where I was able to gain further teaching and teaching administrative duties. I taught large lectures and small group seminars at undergraduate and postgraduate level including research methods. I was soon able to move into a full-time research position working on the Austrian National Election Study in the Department of Methods in the Social Sciences at the University of Vienna. At Vienna, I was responsible for the data collection and management of several large n surveys representative of the Austrian general public. When my contract finished, I was able to move to City, University of London, to work as Research Associate in Survey Methodology in close collaboration with the European Social Survey. I predominantly worked on survey methods related questions such as the impact of interviewers on the survey process or how to help tackling the decline in survey response rates

How did you become interested in the area that you work in?

During my PhD I noticed that the data I needed to answer my research question were not available and I also got the chance to collect my own data. I got interested in how people collect data and I learned in my previous and current position that it is actually not that simple to collect survey data. There are a lot of challenges in national and comparative survey data collection. In addition, I realised that methods developed for Western or industrialised countries, may not apply to other contexts. I am intrigued by the idea of helping to improve survey data collection to give a voice to the people. I love to see how a project evolves. Starting the planning and seeing the results of all the efforts put into a project. There is nothing more pleasing than to analyse the data you have collected and actually being able to answer the question that you want to answer

What does your current role involve?

My interest in survey methods also brought me to Princeton. I was hired as Senior Research Specialist on the Arab Barometer, where I have managed the data collection for the fifth wave and am now involved in research using these data. I always enjoyed sharing my knowledge with junior researchers and taken on teaching as Visiting Lecturer along the way. For instance, I have taught methods at Vienna, the University of Duisburg-Essen, City, University of London, but also at the ECPR Winter School in Methods and Techniques

What do you enjoy most about your role?

I was lucky to be part of a wonderful European funded research network, the ELECDEM Initial Training Network in Electoral Democracy. Coming from qualitative research I was able to gain excellent training in quantitative research and a variety of methods. It really meant a lot to me to have this excellent training and I believe I would not be where I am today without the network, the training, the opportunities

What skills and experiences have been most useful for your career?

Methods skills. Many may find it very distressing to learn methods and believe me I was one of them. Today, I see that all the efforts and sometimes tears have resulted in a great career path and I am pleased to pass my knowledge on to student today

What advice would you give to a current PGR who wishes to pursue your career?

Don't give up. It can be tough to make your through a Masters or PhD, to learn methods and write dissertations. Be ambitious but also make sure you keep the balance. Your friends, peers and supervisors know it is tough and will help you to thrive

What are your plans for the future?

I am passionate about research and teaching and aim to further progress in my academic career

Do you have any tips or advice for beginning a career or working in your industry/sector?

Be yourself and don't compare yourself to other people. You will find your way