

# Master in Life Sciences

A cooperation between  
BFH, FHNW, HES-SO, ZHAW

<b>Module title</b>	<b>Politics and Society</b>
<b>Code</b>	B4
<b>Degree Programme</b>	Master of Science in Life Sciences
<b>Workload</b>	3 ECTS (90 student working hours) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Asynchronous and synchronous distance learning, decentralised teaching: 32 h</li> <li>- Self-study: 58 h (20 h self-study before module starts)</li> </ul>
<b>Module Coordinator</b>	<b>Name:</b> Dr Ian Jennings <b>Phone:</b> +49 172 179 4490 <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:ian.jennings@fhnw.ch">ian.jennings@fhnw.ch</a> <b>Address:</b> Brückenstr. 5, D-79541 Lörrach, Germany
<b>Lecturers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ian Jennings</li> <li>• Guest lecturer(s)</li> </ul>
<b>Entry requirements</b>	Several pre-course readings for the B4 module in pdf or mp4 form will be provided at the beginning of the semester.
<b>Learning outcomes and competences</b>	<p>After completing the module, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• examine critically the fundamental assumptions underlying the politics and culture of today's Western-style democracies, and, in particular,</li> <li>• explain how these assumptions affect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the actual practices of today's Western-style democracies and</li> <li>- the professional practices of life scientists,</li> </ul> </li> <li>• explain how global political issues affect the professional practices of life scientists,</li> <li>• respond in writing in a structured, critical, and ethical manner to the dilemmas and assumptions encountered in the study of local and global politics and culture and their effects on the professional practices of life scientists.</li> </ul>
<b>Module contents</b>	<p>This module seeks to bring students to an understanding of the interconnected nature of professional practice as a life scientist, the local political system in which such practice functions, the global political system in which the local political system functions, and the ethical and philosophical commitments and assumptions which shape the practices of politics and business.</p> <p>In line with these objectives the module has four pillars:</p> <p>First "How Modern Western-Style Democracies Function". This section provides an introduction to the theory and practice of Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.</p> <p>Second "How Modern Western-Style Democracies Think". The major issue discussed in this part of the course is the concept of Human Rights.</p> <p>Third "Globalised Political Issues". These issues include Migration and various forms of Globalisation.</p> <p>Fourth "How the Life Sciences are Affected" – an examination of the practical effects of the political context on the Life Sciences professions, in which various contemporary examples and cases will serve as material for discussion, exercises, and debates. Three or four cases/issues serve as the primary focus of the decentralised classes. Examples are the political response to the covid-19 crisis, the controversy regarding the misuse and marketing of the opioid drug OxyContin, and ethical and regulatory questions arising from the use of cell therapy techniques such as Kymriah.</p>

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<b>teaching / learning methods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tutorial-style (decentralised) classes, which include debate-style presentations</li><li>• Preparation for the exam long questions, premised on student research (centralised)</li><li>• Preparation for the exam short questions, in the form of online classes (centralised)</li></ul> <p>The 58 hours of self-study will be taken up by a combination of pre-course reading (and the viewing of video material), the readings required for the centralised and decentralised sequences, participation in teamwork projects, and the research and writing necessary for answering the exam long questions. Close guidance will be given in all cases, and the students' progress will be monitored.</p>
<b>Assessment of learning outcome</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Final written exam (closed book, combination of short questions plus one long question) (75%)</li><li>2. Class presentations in the decentralised teaching (25%)</li></ol>
<b>Format</b>	7 weeks
<b>Timing of the module</b>	Spring semester, CW 16-22
<b>Venue</b>	online / decentralised teaching at respective school
<b>Bibliography</b>	<p>Extracts from the following books will be used in the module:</p> <p>Adam Briggie and Carl Mitcham <i>Ethics and Science</i> (Cambridge UP 2012) Andrew Clapham <i>Human Rights</i> (2ed) Oxford UP (2015) Andrew Heywood <i>Politics</i> Palgrave MacMillan (4ed) (2013) Manfred Steger <i>Globalization</i> (4ed) Oxford UP (2017)</p> <p>Shorter articles and extracts on various topics will also be provided.</p>
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Links to other modules</b>	-
<b>Comments</b>	-
<b>Last Update</b>	25.09.2025