

## **LLM Legal Theory 2015-15 - Looking back at 10 Months of Legal Theory**

First Year's Legal Theory Students Draw an Interim Assessment of the LL.M. Programme at the Goethe University Frankfurt/Main

Just before we enter the hot phase of writing our master thesis, we first year legal theory students collected our impressions, thoughts and criticism on the LL.M. programme. Being the first class of an LL.M. programme can entail some risks, however it might also be the opportunity to witness the beginning of an incredible and unique programme.

In the following several students share their individual perspective on their motivation to apply to the programme, their feedback on the structure of the courses and their impressions of individual classes.

*Thomas Weber*

Having finished my First Legal State Exam in Munich in Germany, I was looking for something besides the normal track of legal education. I especially had the feeling that the normal legal education was not very scientific and therefore I wanted to complement it with courses in legal theory.

I was looking for an LL.M. programme in the area of legal essentials (legal theory, sociology of law, philosophy of law, etc.) and quickly came across the LL.M. of the European Academy of Legal Theory as the most interesting programme.

I finally applied for this LL.M. because it was the most diverse programme I could find. While other universities were focusing on specific areas of legal theory the European Academy had a whole variety of different subjects from classical philosophy to sociology and law and economics. In addition I was very much attracted by the different options to attend modules at other universities.

When I arrived at the host university in Frankfurt the first surprise was the module structure of the LL.M. because I was expecting the usual semester-long courses. But this surprise quickly turned into appreciating the advantages of this style of teaching, for it allowed to intensively focus on one subject at a time and not having to concentrate on different subjects simultaneously. May that be a difficult structure for undergraduates, as a graduate I really liked this way of teaching which allowed for a really deep learning process.

Another advantage was that the group was quite small and therefore we had very close contact with the teaching professors. This enabled us to discuss in depth with the professors the topics taught, which would have been impossible with a large group.

Another advantage is that the whole environment at Goethe University is made for discussions: First there are a lot of opportunities to participate in seminars/lectures from other professors, the cluster of excellence "Formation of Normative Orders" or the Max Planck Institute for European Legal History. The lecturers were very happy to have us there or Prof. Schulz made it possible for us to participate in more closed events. The only problem with these opportunities was that apart from some lectures of the Cluster and the Max Planck

Institute most of the events were not in English but in German. Therefore it is quite helpful to understand some German, at least it broadens the lecture opportunities.

Secondly the relationship between professors and students in general is quite unique in Frankfurt because in the seminars the discussions are very open and students are encouraged to participate in the discussions on equal ground.

Regarding the mobility windows we did not have the chance to choose between all the possible offers for due to our small class size some mobility windows for instance Bologna could not be offered. With respect to the offered mobility windows I can only say that it is a lot of fun and a chance to see all the different academic environments like for instance in Italy or in Belgium and compare them to Frankfurt.

Concerning the examinations of the different modules it is important to note that due to the module structure it can be quite demanding to prepare for the different exams. Since most modules last only one week there is not that much time to prepare for the oral or written exams.

Regarding the study programme, it was a wide overview that included a strong begging of history of legal theory that gives the tools in order to understand the diversity around the contemporary approaches of legal theory. The study of a wide overview helps to overlapping the study of only one tradition (like the German or the British) and includes a complete vision of the European discussion around different schools (as the analytical jurisprudence, the discourse theory, the pragmatic approach, the critical legal studies, the economic analysis of the law, the systems theory, the American realism, etc.) and different topics (traditional and contemporary issues of legal theory). Even that some of the approaches are apparently different, a coherently structure of the study programme makes easy to find the connection between each module. The compulsory modules give the basis and the theoretical foundations to the student in order to be able to understand and discuss the issues and debates of the electives modules.

#### *Felipe Tenorio Obando*

After finishing my lectures at the International Criminal Law LL.M. programme, I realized that legal technicalities tend to overshadow the necessary overall understanding of law. Therefore, I started looking for a Master Programme exclusively dedicated to legal theory, fortunately, I found the LL.M hosted by Goethe University and ran by the European Academy of Legal Theory, which has a broad approach to law: from Ancient Greece to contemporary legal issues, from anthropology to economic analysis of law, being all addressed within the programme. In addition, the very attractive elective modules offered by the Master allows to discover other lines of thought and academic environments all around Europe.

#### *Carlos Gálvez Bermúdez*

During my internship at the Interamerican Court of Human Rights, a couple of months before my graduation as a lawyer, I was planning to continue my theoretical education around the fields of philosophy of law, philosophy of criminal law and human rights. For that reason, I was looking for an LL.M. programme which focuses on legal theory and philosophy of law,

and as a consequence, I found the really attractive option of the LLM programme hosted by the Goethe University and organized by the European Academy of Legal Theory.

For me, it was a strong asset that the academic programme offers an open overview of the diversity inside the contemporary discussion of legal theory that covers different schools, topics and approaches. The diversity around the topics, the opportunity to discover the academic life of different universities, the coherent structure of the academic programme (with a really interesting structure between compulsory and elective modules) and the variety of a really well known academic staff were a strong advantage that influenced my decision of applying to the programme.

Finally, the recognition of the master as an LLM valid to apply to a doctorate programme in multiple universities around the world (especially all the universities that are actively involved around the programme) was also an advantage that I considered in order to apply to this programme.

### *Antonios Andreou*

There are a lot of factors which may lead someone in choosing a legal theory programme. But why should someone choose Goethe University in Frankfurt and not another institution? The obvious and immediate answer that someone would give is because Frankfurt is known for its tradition as being a non-conservative university, open to the new challenges of our era. My answer to the aforementioned question would be its' very strong focus on diversity. Even if someone is not into sociological jurisprudence or philosophy of law, this programme has the advantage of being multifaceted, covering a lot of different scientific fields in the domain of law.

Consequently, the LL.M. is structured in such way that the student may get inspired in a field of law that it was unknown to him hitherto. There is a big range of modules that cover topics such as Governance and Compliance, Global Law, Legal Anthropology, Human Rights, Economics and Law, Technology and Law etc. In addition to the modules - core and elective alike - one must, inter alia, stress the importance of guest lectures in which renowned Professors present ground-breaking and innovative developments in the legal sphere. All of the above features suggest that LL.M. in Legal Theory at the Goethe University and the network of other European Institutions is a complete, multi-structured and multi-layered programme.

Furthermore, it is imperative to mention that the programme is brilliantly supported by the amazing facilities of the University Campus, one of the most modern and technologically advanced in Europe. In addition to this, one of the biggest assets of the campus, is that it includes two very important institutions; Max Planck Institute for European Legal History and the Cluster of Excellence of Normative Orders. Almost every week, legal scholars around the world gather together and exchange ideas by giving lectures in seminars organised by these institutions. I think it is needless to say how much stimulating and thought provoking these seminars are.

One cannot but mention the professionalism of the people involved in this herculean task of putting all these differentiated topics together, thus crystallizing in a very coherent whole. It is rather obvious, that the people behind this have invested a lot into this project. If an

unforeseen problem or difficulty arises, they will try to overcome it and give the best possible solution. This strongly indicates that it is a truly International programme, respecting the different backgrounds of the students and help them adapt to their new environment. This last, but very crucial at the same time, point is the key to success for this LL.M.

#### *Karolina Zawada*

One's first steps in academic research can be challenging. While studying Law at the Goethe University in Frankfurt most of my studies concerned the understanding of the application of law. The nature of law, the impact of legal developments on society, the effects of globalization on law and the intersection between law and neighbouring sciences such as economy, sociology and even technology was addressed only occasionally in the curriculum. The LL.M. in Legal Theory allows interested students to complement their knowledge exactly in these areas.

However gaining knowledge and being able to answer questions for instance on the Hobbes's theory of the social contract or the critique of administrative global law is only one side of the coin. The other side of the coin is the ability to ask the right questions, to formulate research proposals. This can be challenging for a young scholar and needs practice. The LL.M. provides for numerous occasions in which the students can observe and discuss current research of various professors and PhD students. Personally, it was liberating to observe how much controversy there is even between established scholars. It was liberating to realize that some of the obstacles in academic research are very common and that there are wrong ways to do academic research, but to a greater extent there are also multifarious ways to do good research. The LL.M. offers a unique platform supporting young scholars in finding their own research interests and research questions.

#### *Lasha Bregvadze*

LL.M. in legal theory, organized by EALT and hosted by the Goethe University of Frankfurt am Main is truly an international program. It gathers participants from different academic cultures and professors from various outstanding universities. The structure of the program is unique in the sense that together with compulsory modules, the elective courses enable participants to narrow down the broad theoretical interests and concentrate on particular issues potentially leading to prepare a sound LL.M. thesis.

Teaching staff is very open, friendly and accessible to participants. Program managers are always responsive to the needs and questions of participants. Also some critical insights regarding teaching materials and program structure have been welcome by the organizers and integrated in the new edition of the program which will surely improve performance of future participants.

The program is devoted to contribute and improve standards and methods of teaching legal theory, to bring new insights and observe current stand of theoretical discourses of law, together with historical description of classical legal thought. It gives perfect possibility to improve research skills not only to new graduates and beginning academicians, but also to people already having some experience in postgraduate research and studies. Also legal

practitioners might be happy to benefit from the program thanks to its overwhelming theoretical perspectives.

Most importantly, participants have been welcome to all scientific activities, seminars, public lectures held at the Goethe University and partner institutions. The Brussels module allowed participants to join the Brussels Global Law Week, which gathered prominent scholars dealing with Global Law issues, also representatives of big law firms. The event stimulated an unforgettable interaction between practitioners and theoreticians.

The program must become a reference point for potential participants who enjoy different cultures, international community, perfect facilities of the university and most importantly – academic travelling, to become part of German, Belgian, Italian and other academic infrastructure.

#### *Lamija Muftić*

Upon finishing law and a master in Immigration and Ethnic Relations, I was looking to deepen my knowledge on theory that is behind legal frameworks, and to gain a broader perspective on law as a science. LL.M of the European Academy of Legal Theory was most beneficial for the fulfilment of my academic aims.

The programme is rich and informative, offering a broad range of perspectives, approaches and theories. Most importantly, as a student you are allowed a critical insight and invited to participate in interesting discussions. Central location of the LL.M at Goethe University offers an academic surrounding suited for a serious study, while the course structure allows for experience of other academic centres.

Upon finishing the lectures, I feel I am leaving enriched with a much broader perspective of both classical legal theory and current debates. The mixture between academic excellence offered by the programme, international experience both in regard to the lecturers and students, the possibility of elective modules abroad and the beautiful campus of the Goethe University together make a perfect study opportunity.

I would whole-heartedly recommend this programme to students interested in legal theory.

#### *Vladan Miljkovic*

I am very pleased with the philosophy of EALT Master Program in Legal Theory. It is a very good one-year degree program. It was interesting to meet intellectually curious and thoughtful colleagues from a variety of legal systems and backgrounds and with various career plans. LL.M. program includes lawyers working in firms, law professors, judges, diplomats, human rights activists, doctoral students, business men and women, and others.

It was quite interesting to listen professors from different universities. There are different opportunities. The diversity of the participants in the LL.M. program contributes significantly to the educational experience of all students at the Goethe University in Frankfurt. One of the main strengths of the program is the link between theory and practice, which is the key skill for legal practitioners and is often missing in conventional legal studies.

In addition, the course offered give an effective review of various aspects of Law while focusing in particular on different specific subjects. The international-mindedness of the program, with well-known and prestigious resident professors and guest lecturers, the fact that you work with students from virtually any place in the world, and especially the concrete methodology exceeded my expectations of the program. I would recommend it to everybody.