

**Research Proposal**  
**Laidlaw Scholarship Programme 2020/21**

University: UCL  
Scholar: Christian Alexander Filt  
Supervisor: Dr Lucy Barnes  
Title: Mental Models in a Political Economy

Background:

The Mental Models in a Political Economy (MENMOPE) research project is a project that will attempt to discover the models and meanings ordinary people and policymakers associate with economic mechanisms. Data for this is being gathered by using large scale surveys, quantitative text analysis, and elite interviews across five countries – the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Denmark. Specifically, we investigate the use of different models within each nation, the variance and difference between groups and demographics, and how models are affected by social or political context.

Political scientists and other social scientists have been intrigued by what affects people's political behaviour. Over the years, a model which focuses on people's values and knowledge, emerged as the "traditional" way of understanding how people act. MENMOPE investigates a more complex cognitive process. The project looks at the different ways in which these things can be combined – what the team calls *understandings*. A good example of something resembling an understanding or mental model is thinking of state deficits being similar to household debt. Something that academics have argued may be part of why austerity measures can be popular despite their inefficiency.

The scholar's responsibilities:

My task within the scope of this larger project is examining and analyzing existing survey data to complement our original data collection and potentially provide a comparison between MENMOPE and research that is already available. This can show whether understandings have been an element which has not been present in existing data and research.

Among the sources I will examine are the European Social Survey, International Social Survey Programme, Eurobarometer, World Values Survey, and others.

Over the duration of the programme, I will remotely attend 1 on 1 supervision meetings each Monday as well as a MENMOPE team meeting.

Project outcome and importance:

The report which is to be produced by me is currently seen as the basis for a chapter that would present core findings of the projects as a whole.

As for the entirety of the project, the findings and publication will be used to create an online tool for checking language that presents economic news and policies in media channels. This will improve economic communication between important political and economic stakeholders.