

**The Gershon H. Gordon  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
Tel Aviv University**

## Call for 2 fully financed PhD positions on platformisation at Tel Aviv University: computational social science and digital ethnography

**Summary:** The School of Social Studies and Policy of Tel Aviv University offers scholarships to 2 outstanding candidates for research in digital communication and related fields. The doctoral students will work on independent research and as part of a new methodological center established in the school with the aim of making digital and particular platform research accessible to the social sciences.

**Background:** Society has undergone an accelerated process of digitization and platformisation in recent years. Researchers from very different disciplines try to understand the problem. The School of Social Studies at Tel Aviv University offers a unique interdisciplinary environment to understand the intricacies of the social with the technological. For this, the methodological centre will work with all of the School units: Departments of Communication, Sociology and Anthropology, Labour studies, and Policy studies. The centre will provide two scholarships to outstanding PhDs to work on independent project while building a broader conceptual and methodological frameworks for studying platforms with Dr. Alex Gekker.

### **Scholarship 1: Computational social sciences/ digital methods developer**

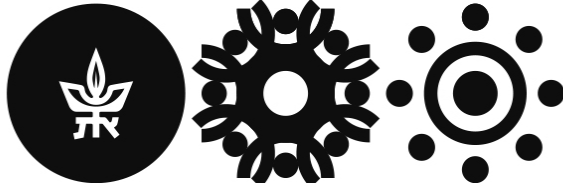
Candidates are academic and technical jacks of all trades, interested in the latest developments in data analysis and web technology and inclined towards experimenting with these. The ideal candidate is not afraid to dive into data flows, explore APIs, scrape data, with an eye to questions of society and technology. Candidates can work effectively independently as well as in teams, and are willing to take the initiative and clearly communicate with other (academic) staff.

As a developer, you will develop and maintain experimental and educational research tools to support the work of the Centre for Digital Methodologies and the School of Social and Policy Studies. These tools include scrapers and crawlers that facilitate quantitative and qualitative web research, as well as those of social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, 4chan and Reddit. As a PhD candidate, your own project is thus likely to revolve around (but not limited to) questions of digital methods epistemology, mis- and disinformation, information diffusion, or content moderation. The skill sets we will be happy to see include:

- Python, JavaScript, PHP, Docker
- Data mining (web crawling, screen scraping) and data analysis (both exploratory and hypothesis driven)
- Network analysis (Gephi/ Networkx)
- A proven experience in a relevant field, e.g., computer science, and/or data science are a considerable advantage
- Familiarity with academic environment (e.g., previous RA/TA position) are an advantage

### **Scholarship 2: Digital ethnographer**

Candidates are academic chameleons, able to fit comfortably into qualitative research discussion between various social sciences and humanities disciplines. They are interested in the recent developments in digital qualitative research, netnography, close reading and content analysis. They are (broadly) familiar with both analytical and evocative ethnography principles. Candidates can



**The Gershon H. Gordon  
Faculty of Social Sciences**  
Tel Aviv University

work effectively independently as well as in teams, and are willing to take the initiative and clearly communicate with other (academic) staff.

As a digital ethnographer, you will develop novel methodologies for exploring various online communities in experimental and educational settings to support the work of the Centre for Digital Methodologies and the School of Social and Policy Studies. Your own project is likely to revolve (but not limited to) online discourse, influencer economy, conspiracy theories, or digital culture. You will perform iterative research with online individuals and communities drawing from web and social media data, but also posit research questions through ethnographic lens that will facilitate the collection of said data. You will interact with various departments to launch and support interdisciplinary research initiatives. The skill sets we will be happy to see include:

- Familiarity with the digital worlds of YouTube, Instagram and TikTok, their influencer cultures, and their governance challenges
- Netnographic research experience, alongside content and discourse analysis
- Interviews and/or focus group experience
- Familiarity with academic environment (e.g., previous RA/TA position) are an advantage

Here is a useful site with general Information about following a PhD in Israel:

<https://www.findaphd.com/study-abroad/asia/phd-study-in-israel.aspx>

The faculty of social sciences: <https://en-social-sciences.tau.ac.il/>

For details, please contact Alex Gekker: [gekker@tauex.tau.ac.il](mailto:gekker@tauex.tau.ac.il)