Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Autumn Semester 2021

10,400: Philosophical and Methodological Foundations of Social Science Analysis

ECTS credits: 6

Overview examination/s
(binding regulations see below)
Decentral - examination paper written at home (individual) (50%)
Examination time: term time
Decentral - Presentation (individual) (50%)
Examination time: term time

Attached courses
Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer
10,400.1.00 Philosophical and Methodological Foundations of Social Science Analysis -- Englisch -- Dingwerth Klaus

Course information

Course prerequisites
This is a course for students enrolled in the DIA program. Students from other doctoral programs should seek the permission of the course instructor prior to enrolling in this class.

Please note: Students who plan to take this course as a regular course or as an optional course with an examination should register via the bidding system. Students who plan to take this course as an optional course and without an examination should not register via the bidding system but contact the lecturer directly. Enrollment in a course is binding; students have to attend the course and take the exam.

Learning objectives

- Participants understand on which philosophical assumptions their work as well as the work of their peers is based.
- Participants understand the methodological implications these assumptions have for their research.
- Participants understand the strengths and weaknesses of different philosophical positions and critically reflect upon the foundations of social scientific work.
- Participants are in a better position to evaluate research, both within and across disciplines.

Course content

What distinguishes "science" from "non-science"? What, more specifically, does it mean to do "social science"? And on which philosophical and methodological foundations do different approaches in / to the social sciences rest?

Researchers are expected to satisfy quality standards derived from the philosophy of science. At the same time, they are embedded in the practice of their profession. The aim of the seminar is to confront the normative positions on doing science, including their philosophical basis and methodological implications, as they are being upheld in the social sciences with positive positions on how we are observed actually doing scientific work. At the end of this course, participants will have an improved understanding of the philosophical assumptions their work (and the work of their peers) is based and of the methodological implications these assumptions have for their research.

Course structure and indications of the learning and teaching design

The course is taught in six weekly 4-hour sessions during the first half of the term.
As to the substantive structure, I imagine each session to have three parts. In a first part, we will introduce and discuss a classical “-ism” in the philosophy (and methodology) of social science. A second part will be dedicated to introducing and discussing a classical topic in the philosophy (and methodology) of social science. The third part will give participants an opportunity to reflect upon their own projects - or, if they prefer, to reflect on social scientific study or research programme - from a philosophy of science perspective.

A tentative structure could e.g. be:

1. Introduction: The Philosophy of Social Science / Post-Truth Society?
2. Positivism / Theories, Laws & Explanations (or Causal Explanation)
3. Rational Choice / Methodological Individualism
4. Critical Rationalism / Causal Mechanisms
5. Interpretivism / Case Studies
6. Post-Modernism / Objectivity and Truth in the Social Sciences
7. or: A Feminist philosophy of science / Facts and Values in the Social Sciences

Course literature


In the field of International Relations, Martin Hollis and Steve Smith’s *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Clarendon Press, 1991) is a widely cited work on the difference between positivist and interpretive approaches to studying world politics. More recently, Patrick Thaddeus Jackson’s textbook *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and its Implications for the Study of World Politics* (Routledge, 2011) has also drawn attention to the philosophy of science.

As each of the major books focuses on slightly different aspects, I will seek to put together a reading list that (a) covers major aspects/debates in the field and (b) addresses some of the more specific issues participants mentioned in response to my survey of student needs before the term. I will make the core readings available on Canvas by 13 September 2020.

Candidates should master the literature suggested on the syllabus but, in particular for their own papers, also orient themselves within a given subject area by consulting both historical and contemporary contributions to the relevant debates.

Additional course information

In the case of the President’s Board having to implement new directives due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in AS2021, the course information listed above will be changed as follows:

- The course is conducted online via the platform Zoom;
- The recordings of the course will not be saved;
- The lecturer informs via Canvas on the changed implementation modalities of the course.

The examination information listed below would be changed as follows:

- While short presentations will remain a part of our class discussions, they will no longer be part of the course examination;
- Instead, the examination part "examination paper written at home (individually)" is weighted a 100%;
- The assignment as well as the deadline for the examination "examination paper written at home (individual)" will remain the same.
Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/2)

Examination time and form
Decentral - examination paper written at home (individual) (50%)
Examination time: term time

Remark
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Examination-aid rule
Term papers

Written work must be written without outside help according to the known citation standards, and a declaration of authorship must be attached, which is available as a template on the StudentWeb.

Documentation (quotations, bibliography, etc.) must be carried out universally and consistently according to the requirements of the chosen/specified citation standard such as e.g. APA or MLA.

The legal standard is recommended for legal work (cf. by way of example: FORSTMOSE, P., OGOREK R., SCHINDLER B., Juristisches Arbeiten: Eine Anleitung für Studierende (the latest edition in each case), or according to the recommendations of the Law School).

The reference sources of information (paraphrases, quotations, etc.) that has been taken over literally or in the sense of the original text must be integrated into the text in accordance with the requirements of the citation standard used. Informative and bibliographical notes must be included as footnotes (recommendations and standards e.g. in METZGER, C., Lern- und Arbeitsstrategien (latest edition)).

For all written work at the University of St. Gallen, the indication of page numbers is mandatory, regardless of the standard chosen. Where page numbers are missing in sources, the precise designation must be made differently: chapter or section title, section number, article, etc.

Supplementary aids
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Examination languages
Question language: English
Answer language: English

2. Examination sub part (2/2)

Examination time and form
Decentral - Presentation (individual) (50%)
Examination time: term time

Remark
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Examination-aid rule
Practical examination
No examination-aid rule is necessary for such examination types. The rules and regulations of the University of St. Gallen apply

Fact sheet version: 1.0 as of 19/07/2021, valid for Autumn Semester 2021
in a subsidiary fashion.

Supplementary aids

Examination languages
Question language: English
Answer language: English

Examination content
Participants will provide two introductory input twice - one on an approach we discuss, and one on a topic we highlight (weight 50%). The input will be based on the key readings plus maybe 1-2 additional texts selected by the students.

In addition, course participants write a paper in which they relate their own scholarly work to (some aspect of) the philosophical traditions we discuss in the seminar or in which they answer a more specific question drawn from the area of the philosophy and methodology of the social sciences (weighted 50%).

The final version of the paper of max. 5’000 words is due on December 19, 2021.

Examination relevant literature
Candidates should master the literature suggested in the syllabus. In particular for their term papers, they should also orient themselves within a given subject area by consulting both historical and contemporary contributions to the relevant debates.

Please note
Please note that only this fact sheet and the examination schedule published at the time of bidding are is binding and takes precedence over other information, such as information on StudyNet (Canvas), on lecturers’ websites and information in lectures etc.

Any references and links to third-party content within the fact sheet are only of a supplementary, informative nature and lie outside the area of responsibility of the University of St.Gallen.

Documents and materials are only relevant for central examinations if they are available by the end of the lecture period (CW51) at the latest. In the case of centrally organised mid-term examinations, the documents and materials up to CW 42 are relevant for testing.

Binding nature of the fact sheets:
• Course information as well as examination date (organised centrally/decentrally) and form of examination: from bidding start in CW 34 (Thursday, 26 August 2021);
• Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 42 (Monday, 18 October 2021);
• Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 42 (Monday, 18 October 2021);

Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised examinations: two weeks before the end of the registration period in CW 45 (Monday, 8 November 2021).