



Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Autumn Semester 2018

7,391: Democracy and Research Methods

ECTS credits: 4

Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

Decentral - examination paper written at home with presentation (individual) (65%)

Decentral - examination paper written at home (individual) (35%)

Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[7,391,1.00 Democracy and Research Methods](#) -- Englisch -- [Freyburg Tina](#)

Course information

Course prerequisites

No formal prerequisites. Students are expected to have a strong interest in the systematic analysis of social science questions, in particular those related to democracy and democratization. Knowledge of basic statistical methods would be an asset but is no requirement for the successful completion of the course.

Students with special needs are kindly asked to identify themselves to the lecturer so that we can think over together how to best accompany them according to their needs.

Course content

Why are some countries democracies while others are not? What makes some democracies durable while others are fragile? The course introduces the participants to a wide repertoire of concepts, theories, and research strategies in one of the thorniest territory in political science-what explains variation in political 'regime type'-democracy and dictatorship-across time and space? Importantly, we do so with a focus on how answers to this question are produced. That is, the course is equally devoted to evaluating research methods. It takes an integrative approach to the relationship between big themes and empirical-analytical research.

The course combines a survey of democracy research with a critique of major research methods (qualitative case studies, Boolean analysis, and large-sample statistical analysis). The two themes enhance each other: the democratization literature illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of various methodological approaches (relative to absolute standards for good research), and the critique of methods makes sense of the broad and often confusing field of democracy research.

By taking the example of prominent studies in democracy and democratization, the course familiarizes students with strategies for the rigorous and systematic analysis of political phenomena in three ways: First, it teaches how to make and evaluate arguments about social science phenomena. Second, it introduces important research techniques social scientists use in their work. And, third, it demonstrates how to critically evaluate the effective implementation of selected research strategies. The ultimate aim is to prepare students to challenge commonly held knowledge and to stake their own claims in an intellectually rigorous fashion.

The course seeks to enhance key analytical and critical skills that are transferable beyond academic study to a wide range of careers. The successful completion of this course will involve attaining the following learning objectives:

- Demonstration of the ability to elaborate on key concepts (from the democratization literature);
- Knowledge and understanding of the nature of theory, theory-building and theory-testing in (democracy) research;
- Understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of major methodological approaches in the study of social science in general, and in the application to the study of democracy in particular;
- Recognition of meaningful research that adheres to accepted academic practices and ethical standards;
- Critical evaluation of existing (democracy) research with focus on the use of the appropriate method(s) to address a specific research question;
- Policy-relevant knowledge, as well as analytical and research skills, which are valued in employment contexts suitable for academics with background in social sciences.

Overall, the course provides invaluable skills and knowledge for anyone seeking to analyse the state and spread of democracy around the globe. The ability to identify assumptions, weight alternatives, make decisions, build arguments, and evaluate competing evidence is crucial not only to effectively engage in scholarly debate but also to participate as citizen in a democratic society.



Course structure

The course comprises 11 sessions (i.e. weekly meetings à 2 hours each) plus individual studies. Students are expected to attend each class session and participate fully in class discussions.

There is no class on September, 26th. Please use this week (i.e. September 24-27) to make yourself familiar with the books by Coppedge and Toshkov, in particular please do read the introduction chapters of both.

Course literature

The course is largely based on Coppedge, M. (2012) *Democratization and Research Methods*. Cambridge UP, complemented with selected chapters from Toshkov, D. (2016) *Research Design in Political Science*. Palgrave Macmillan. Each week we discuss one chapter and use the material provided to critically assess one relevant scientific journal article. While the journal articles can be downloaded from StudyNet, both the Coppedge and the Toshkov books are available as e-books via the University library.

In order for the seminar discussions to be fruitful it is absolutely essential that students read both the assigned chapter plus the selected journal article in preparation for each meeting. Only then will you be able to follow the discussions and participate actively - which you are expected to do. First and foremost, however, good preparation and active participation are needed to ensure a successful learning experience.

The following books may prove useful to students looking for additional coverage of some of the course topics. There are copies of these books in the library.

- Haerper, Ch. and P. Bernhagen, R. Inglehart and Ch. Welzel (2009), *Democratization*. Oxford UP.
- Boix, C. and S. Stokes (eds) (2009) *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford UP.
- Gschwend, T. and F. Schimmelfennig (eds) (2007): *Research Design in Political Science: How to Practice What They Preach*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Additional course information

Tina Freyburg is Professor of Comparative Politics in the School of Economics and Political Sciences at the University of St.Gallen. She received her Ph.D. from ETH Zurich in 2011. Professor Freyburg currently serves as the academic director for the MA programme "International Affairs and Governance." In her research she explores the chances and risks that emerge for democracy in a globalized and digitalized world.

Please visit her personal website for more information: www.tina-freyburg.eu

Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/2)

Examination time and form

Decentral - examination paper written at home with presentation (individual) (65%)

Remark

short reaction papers plus group presentation

Examination-aid rule

Term papers

- Term papers must be written without anyone else's help and in accordance with the known quotation standards, and they must contain a declaration of authorship.
- The documentation of sources (quotations, bibliography) has to be done throughout and consistently in accordance with the APA or MLA standards. The indications of the sources of information taken over verbatim or in paraphrase (quotations) must be integrated into the text in accordance with the precepts of the applicable quotation standard, while informative and bibliographical notes must be added as footnotes (recommendations and standards can be found, for example, in METZGER, C. (2017), *Lern- und Arbeitsstrategien* (12th ed., Cornelsen Schweiz).



- For any work written at the HSG, the indication of the page numbers both according to the MLA and the APA standard is never optional.
- Where there are no page numbers in sources, precise references must be provided in a different way: titles of chapters or sections, section numbers, acts, scenes, verses, etc.
- For papers in law, the legal standard is recommended (by way of example, cf. FORSTMOSER, P., OGOREK R. et SCHINDLER B. (2018, Juristisches Arbeiten: Eine Anleitung für Studierende (6. Auflage), Zürich: Schulthess, or the recommendations of the Law School).

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 - examination paper written at home (individual) (35%)

Remark

one comprehensive review paper

Examination-aid rule

Term papers

- Term papers must be written without anyone else's help and in accordance with the known quotation standards, and they must contain a declaration of authorship.
- The documentation of sources (quotations, bibliography) has to be done throughout and consistently in accordance with the APA or MLA standards. The indications of the sources of information taken over verbatim or in paraphrase (quotations) must be integrated into the text in accordance with the precepts of the applicable quotation standard, while informative and bibliographical notes must be added as footnotes (recommendations and standards can be found, for example, in METZGER, C. (2017), Lern- und Arbeitsstrategien (12th ed., Cornelsen Schweiz).
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Supplementary aids

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Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

Examination content

The course uses a seminar style approach: On the basis of the required readings and inputs by students, we enter into an open discussion. Each week we start with a critical appreciation of the textbook chapter, including clarification of uncertainties and open questions, and continue with an informed and analytical critique of the corresponding journal article, applying insights taken from the respective chapter.

There is very substantial reading for every class. The reading requires critical thinking (on your own) and deliberation (in class). Careful reading and active participation are essential, i.e. making substantial contributions to the discussions.

Participants will be asked to demonstrate critical thinking skills, which go beyond presenting information and reproducing knowledge. There are two types of assignments:



Examination sub part (1/2): Examination paper written at home with presentation (65%)

(1) During the semester, each student writes *three short reaction papers*, each critically evaluating the weekly assigned journal article in light of the textbook chapter that is subject to the same seminar session (max. 1'500 words). The critical reaction shall only deal with those aspects that are addressed by the textbook chapter. The paper needs to be sent to the lecturer by email as pdf.-attachment by Sunday evening (at the latest).

(2) Each student *presents in a small group* the main points of their joint article review in class (max. 10 min.) to kick-off the discussion. This input cannot be about an article for which any of the group members has submitted a reaction paper. Power point slides can but must not be used. A one-page hand-out outlining the main points is to be sent to the lecturer by email as pdf.-attachment by Sunday evening (at the latest).

Examination sub-part (2/2): Examination paper written at home (35%)

(3) Each student writes *acomprehensive review paper*. The idea is to summarize an existing scientific study and to critically review its research design (research question, hypothesis, data generation, quality of analyses, relevance of study, implications of findings for the wider field). The purpose of this assignment is to make students apply the material we discuss in class, to familiarize them with some more of the empirical literature and to prepare them to effectively implement their own research. A list of articles will be provided from which the article for review needs to be picked. We will discuss the final assignment several times throughout the semester. The review is to be submitted in pdf.-format via StudyNet. The final assignment is due on January 11 at 5 PM.

The final grade is composed of (1) three individually written reaction papers (3 x 15%), (2) the oral discussion of a fourth paper in a small group; all with the same grade (20%), and (3) the critical review of one journal article in light of the textbook chapters and seminar discussions (35%).

Please pay attention to the [guidelines for academic research and writing](#) that can be downloaded from the lecturer's website [www.tina-freyburg.eu] under 'teaching' and that will be made available on StudyNet.

Examination relevant literature

A reading list will be made available on StudyNet prior to the start of the seminar.

Please note

We would like to point out to you that this fact sheet has absolute priority over other information such as StudyNet, faculty members' personal databases, information provided in lectures, etc. When will the fact sheets become binding?

- Information about courses and examination time (central/decentral and grading form): from the start of the bidding process on 23 August 2018
- Information about decentral examinations (examination-aid rule, examination content, examination relevant literature): after the 4th semester week on 15 October 2018
- Information about central examinations (examination-aid rule, examination content, examination relevant literature): from the start of the enrolment period for the examinations on 05 November 2018

Please look at the fact sheet once more after these deadlines have expired.