



## Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Spring Semester 2021

### 6,320: Spring Project: Telecommunication Companies and Internet Shutdowns

ECTS credits: 4

#### Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

Decentral - Group examination paper with presentation (all given the same grades) (35%)

Examination time: term time

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#### Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[6.320.1.00 Spring Project: Telecommunication Companies and Internet Shutdowns](#) -- Englisch -- [Freyburg Tina](#)

#### Course information

#### Course prerequisites

It is recommended that the spring project is taken after all other courses have been effectively completed. In any case, one or both of the methods-related lectures in the BIA programme, i.e. the Qualitative Methods lecture and/or the Quantitative Methods lecture should have been attended successfully.

#### Learning objectives

##### Knowledge & Understanding

During this course successful students will:

- acquire knowledge and understanding of the role of telecommunications companies in intentional disruption of the provision of internet services across Africa;
- gain a more realistic understanding of the internet as tool of repression or liberation, linking insights across the core disciplines of "international affairs".

##### Transferable Skills

After successful completion of this course students will be able to effectively carry out their own small collaborative research project. This includes the following skills and competences:

- to give an overview of existing scientific literature on a chosen topic;
- to formulate a research question;
- to develop their own research design;
- to adequately select and apply social science methods to answer this question;
- to research and analyse the empirical material required for this; and
- to formulate the results of their studies in a clear, logical and precise manner.

#### Course content

Whether 'the internet'-familiar shorthand for information and communication technologies (ICT) in general- presents a tool for repression or liberation has been a 'hot topic' of academic and policy debate worldwide. Academic contributions in the political science largely view the internet not only as a technical "black box" but also as a resource, that governments (or any other



political actor) have at their free disposal. Yet, the space provided by the internet for accessing and sharing digital information and communication is not neutral but built on a physical infrastructure owned by a variety of public and private actors, foreign and domestic, that reflect a multitude of interests.

In one of our ongoing research projects, we argue that ownership of the internet infrastructure, in particular internet service providers (ISP) is critical to understanding a state's capacity to control the internet since most direct forms of control require ISP to comply with government requests. How does the internationalisation and privatisation of markets affect a state's capacity to maintain control of the digital flow of information and communication? What difference does telecommunications ownership make in terms of political liberalisation, economic development, and citizens' ability to use ICT for the purpose of protest? And, when do courts decide that a government's request to manipulate access to internet services was unlawful? We want to answer these and similar questions in this course.

In this course, students conduct their own research project on a selected question in the field of telecommunications politics. To this end, they form small groups in which they formulate a research question, develop a research design suitable to answer it, and implement it. The course leads the students step by step through this work process and provides for close supervision and support.

## Course structure

The course takes place as a weekly seminar. The focus is on a regular exchange between the working groups and the lecturer on questions and challenges that arise when working on the selected topics. Questions about the general steps in a research project are dealt with in plenary.

- The first part of the course is devoted to developing the research design (question, theory, method).
- The second part of the course deals with the empirical implementation of this design (collection and analysis of data, discussion of the results).

Students are expected to attend the weekly sessions and to contribute actively. This includes reading the literature, working on the individual research steps, exchanging ideas with the lecturer as well as participating in the plenary discussions and providing feedback to other groups.

## Course literature

The seminar literature will be announced in the first session and complemented based on the research interests of the participants. It will be made available to students via Canvas.

## Additional course information

**Tina Freyburg** works as Full Professor for Comparative Politics at the HSG and is currently head of the interdisciplinary master's program International Affairs & Governance. In teaching and research, she represents a modern understanding of comparative political science, which recognises the increasing interconnectedness of politics, economies and societies in a globalised and digitised world. For example, she is currently researching internet shutdowns in Africa, focusing on the role of telecommunications companies. More information can be found at [ipw.unisg.ch](http://ipw.unisg.ch)

In the case of the President's Board having to implement new directives due to the **SARS-CoV-2 pandemic** in Spring term 2021, the course information listed above will be changed as follows:

- The course is conducted online via the platform zoom;
- There will be no recordings of the course;
- The lecturer informs via Canvas on the changed implementation modalities of the course;
- There are no changes necessary to the course content or the assessment strategy, with the exception that presentations might need to be provided as audio-recorded.

## Examination information



## Examination sub part/s

### 1. Examination sub part (1/2)

#### Examination time and form

Decentral - Group examination paper with presentation (all given the same grades) (35%)

Examination time: term time

#### Remark

research design: 2'000 words max.

#### 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 which is a published template in StudentWeb.

The documentation of sources (quotations, bibliography) has to be done throughout and consistently in accordance with the chosen citation standard such as APA or MLA.

For papers in law, the legal standard is recommended (by way of example, cf. FORSTMOSER, P., OGOREK R. et SCHINDLER B., Juristisches Arbeiten: Eine Anleitung für Studierende, newest edition respectively, or according to the recommendations of the Law School).

The indications of the sources of information taken over verbatim or in paraphrase (quotations) must be integrated into texts 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., Lern- und Arbeitsstrategien, newest edition respectively).

For any work written at the HSG, the indication of the page numbers is mandatory independent of the chosen citation standard. 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.

#### Supplementary aids

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#### Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

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### 2. Examination sub part (2/2)

#### Examination time and form

Decentral - Group examination paper with presentation (all given the same grades) (65%)

Examination time: term time

#### Remark

research project: 6'000 words max.

#### 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 which is a published template in StudentWeb.

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## Supplementary aids

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## Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

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## Examination content

Students design and implement research on their own. They are hence asked to demonstrate critical thinking skills, which go beyond presenting information and reproducing knowledge.

In groups of 3 max. they need to submit:

(1) a first examination paper (max. 2'000 words) in which they present the design of the research project that they seek to implement in the second half of the term. Submission date: April 11th, 5pm.

(2) a second examination paper (max. 6'000 words) in which they present the whole research project, including the empirical analysis and the discussion of the results. Submission date: June 15th, 5pm.

In addition, over the course of the seminar, students are expected to present and discuss the respective milestones and challenges of their research projects. Students will receive feedback on their presentations and discussions which shall help them when working on their research projects.

## Examination relevant literature

Material covered is provided through Canvas.



### Please note

Please note that only this fact sheet and the examination schedule published at the time of bidding are 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 (CW21) at the latest. In the case of centrally organised mid-term examinations, the documents and materials up to CW 12 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 04 (Thursday, 28 January 2021);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 12 (Monday, 22 March 2021);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 12 (Monday, 22 March 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 14 (Thursday, 8 April 2021).