



Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Spring Semester 2026

10,422: Social Acceptance of Climate Solutions in a Polarized World

ECTS credits: 4

Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

decentral - Written work, Digital, Individual work individual grade (50%)

Examination time: Term time

decentral - Active participation, Analog, Individual work individual grade (10%)

Examination time: Term time

decentral - Presentation, Analog, Individual work individual grade (40%)

Examination time: Term time

Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[10,422,1.00 Social Acceptance of Climate Solutions in a Polarized World](#) -- English -- [Wüstenhagen Rolf](#)

Course information

Prerequisites

No formal prerequisites, but an interest in contemporary discussions about polarization, climate change and/or renewable energy is welcome.

Learning objectives

The course will give participants a platform for reflection on climate change, including past attempts by policymakers at international, national and sub-national levels to limit emissions, as well as responses by business and civil society. Course participants will investigate determinants of implementing successful climate solutions, and explore whether increasing polarization in society is part of the problem and/or part of the solution.

Content

The world is more polarized than ever before in recent history. 2025 has been yet another year with extreme weather events and is set to be the second consecutive year where global temperatures have increased by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels. Many people appreciate the need to accelerate climate change mitigation, but at the same time, important public figures on both sides of the Atlantic deny the need for climate action. Global attempts to deliver on a timely transition to a low-carbon economy have yet to live up to the urgency of the climate crisis. At the national level, countries like Norway and China are witnessing a fast diffusion of electric vehicles, while governments and industry associations elsewhere show less enthusiasm. Some investors are divesting from coal, others are reluctant to change. Meanwhile, central banks warn that growing carbon risk in financial markets could lead to stranded assets (aka the carbon bubble). While a majority of young citizens see wind turbines as symbols of modern technology, others feel threatened by them. The rise of social media, once hailed as an enabler of democratization, appears to make consensus building in society and politics even more difficult.

How can governments and businesses make progress towards decarbonization of our energy and transport systems in this environment? How and when does polarization translate into policy risk, and how can this be managed? What are the positive drivers of change, and how can they be leveraged for innovation? And what can political leaders, firms and other decision-makers do to secure social acceptance of climate solutions?

Structure and indications of the learning and teaching design

The seminar starts with a kick-off meeting in week 3 including an introduction of the topic. Each participant will be asked to suggest a topic that relates his/her thesis to the focus of the seminar.



After the kick-off, participants prepare a short abstract of their seminar topic, on which they receive written feedback by the lecturer. Revised versions of the abstract are to be shared with all participants to facilitate discussion at the following block seminar.

In the middle of the semester, we will meet for a block seminar. Each participant will present his/her seminar topic in a session of approx. 90 minutes (30 min plus 5-10 min feedback by another participant+50 min discussion).

After the block seminar, participants will prepare a written seminar paper (8-10 pages), which is due at the end of the semester.

Literature

Hoffman, Andrew J. (2015): How Culture Shapes the Climate Change Debate, Stanford University Press.

Hardisty, D. J., Johnson, E. J., & Weber, E. U. (2010). A Dirty Word or a Dirty World?: Attribute Framing, Political Affiliation, and Query Theory. *Psychological Science*, 21(1), 86-92.

Rinscheid, A., Wüstenhagen, R. (2018): Divesting, Fast and Slow: Affective and Cognitive Drivers of Fading Voter Support for a Nuclear Phase-Out, *Ecological Economics*, 152, 51-61.

<https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2019/02/why-the-polarization-in-u-s-on-climate-change/>

<https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/rethinking-polarization>

Additional information

Students who plan to take this course as an *optional* course and *without an examination* should not register via the bidding system. They should register directly with the lecturer.

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. Enrolment in a course is binding: students have to attend the course and take the exam. The grade will be shown on the scorecard.

Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/3)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Written work
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Written work
Examination mode	Digital
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Asynchronous
Examination location	Off Campus
Grading type	Individual work individual grade
Weighting	50%
Duration	--

Languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

Remark

Term paper



Examination-aid rule

Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids

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2. Examination sub part (2/3)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Active participation
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Oral examination
Examination mode	Analog
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Synchronous
Examination location	On Campus
Grading type	Individual work individual grade
Weighting	10%
Duration	--

Languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

Remark

Peer feedback on another presentation (10 min.)

Examination-aid rule

Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids

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3. Examination sub part (3/3)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Presentation
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Oral examination
Examination mode	Analog
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Asynchronous
Examination location	On Campus
Grading type	Individual work individual grade
Weighting	40%
Duration	--

Languages



Question language: English

Answer language: English

Remark

Presentation of seminar topic (30 min.)

Examination-aid rule

Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids

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Content

The presentation and the paper cover the individual seminar topic chosen by the student at the beginning of the semester, linking his/her dissertation topic to the topic of the seminar. The third element of the grade is the oral feedback on another student's presentation.

Literature

See above. Further literature will be presented at the kick-off meeting.

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 13 (Monday, 23rd March 2026) 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, 22nd January 2026);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 12 (Monday, 16 March 2026);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 14 (Monday, 30 March 2026);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised examinations: two weeks before ending with de-registration period in CW 15 (Monday, 06 April 2026).