



Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Spring Semester 2026

10,657: Colloquium: Between field work and theorizing

ECTS credits: 4

Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

decentral - Written examination, Analog, Individual work individual grade (70%)

Examination time: Term time

decentral - Presentation, Analog, Individual work individual grade (30%)

Examination time: Term time

Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[10,657,1.00 Colloquium: Between field work and theorizing](#) -- English -- [Achermann Dania](#) , [Kesselring Rita](#)

Course information

Prerequisites

Parallel to the process of bidding, the lecturers welcome an info mail regarding your intended participation (February 2, 2026) as well as a one-pager with the title and short abstract of your dissertation, as well as expectations and needs regarding the course goals (max. 300 words).

Learning objectives

Participants

- understand the role of theory and data/empirical material in their discipline;
- can connect their data/evidence and analysis to theories;
- are able to critically reflect on theories' strengths and shortcomings with the help of their own data and analysis;
- are able to work on their own draft texts based on the feedback by the lecturers and peer-feedback.

Content

In publications, researchers typically explain their research focus with the help of a literature review and by "speaking to" a body of theoretical scholarship. This course invites PhD students from the social sciences and the humanities to reflect on the role of theory and the relationship between theory and data in their research projects. The "field" as the realm of data gathering is understood in a broad sense, including geographical sites, archives, texts, cultures, images, language etc. Theories are not just a frame to be used "off-the-shelf" and applied to specific cases. On the one hand, they influence our own view on research objects/data/topics. On the other hand, they are an instrument to understand them. Eventually, once the researcher has reached an analytical and interpretive level, theories also become a conversation partner to test one's findings. But finally, a scholar should also be able to emancipate from existing theories to make an original, confident and independent argument.

Ideally, theory-making is a reiterative and even sensory process that starts with understanding one's empirical material. Therefore, in this course, will discuss the relevance of theory in research in general and in the PhD students' projects in particular. Furthermore, the course supports the doctoral candidates on the road from empirical data to analysis, interpretation and abstraction to develop theories of their own. On this journey, the participants will work on their own projects and interact with each other. The lecturers, an anthropologist and a historian, offer a multi-perspective approach by representing both humanities and social sciences perspectives.

Structure and indications of the learning and teaching design



The colloquium consists of three sessions. In the first, introductory session, the lecturers will provide short inputs on data, theories and the role they play in the humanities and social sciences. Course participants will introduce themselves and their PhD projects. Furthermore, the course structure and tasks will be discussed and clarified.

Before the two-days-session, participants will hand in a draft (8-10 pages, not graded) in which they are working on the theoretical parts of their thesis. Each participant will read a colleague's text to be able to serve as its discussant. (It is recommended to have a look at all the colleague's drafts.)

In the two-days-block, we will discuss the mandatory readings. The block is structured into three guiding questions:

- Part 1: Epistemology and theory of science: to which "thought collective" do you belong? Why? What are its basic assumptions and research questions? What and whom does it include/exclude?
- Part 2: Data and theories: Reflection on empirical material and theories in one's PhD project
- Part 3: Theory-building or: the beauty of serendipity: What is at stake here? What does your work tell us?

During the two days session, each course participant will present their draft (15min), which will be followed by the discussant's comments (5 min) and the in-depth discussion of the draft among all course participants and the lecturers (40-0 min, depending on the number of participants and thus, time available).

The presentation (30% of the grade) of the draft has the goal to share with the group thoughts on the choice of theories, the role of theory, and the contribution to theory-making.

Based on the draft and the discussion, the course participants will revise/finalize the draft chapter/paper (written paper, 70% of the grade) and will receive written feedback by one of the lecturers.

Literature

Suggested literature:

Charmaz, Kathy. Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis. SAGE Publications, 2006.

Fleck, Ludwik. Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact. The University of Chicago Press, 1981 (translated from German original from 1935 by Frederick Bradley and Thaddeus J. Trenn).

Haraway, Donna J. „1. Playing String Figures with Companion Species“. In Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene. Duke University Press, 2016.

Kuhn, Thomas S. The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change. 1st ed. University of Chicago Press, 1977.

Larkin, Brian. „The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure“. Annual Review of Anthropology 42, Nr. 1 (2013): 327–43.

Additional information

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Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/2)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Written examination
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Written exam



Examination mode	Analog
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Synchronous
Examination location	On Campus
Grading type	Individual work individual grade
Weighting	70%
Duration	--

Languages

Question language: English

Answer language: German, English

Remark

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Examination-aid rule

Open Book

Students are free to choose aids, apart from the following restrictions:

- pocket calculator models which are not part of the Texas Instruments TI-30 series, as well as any programmable electronic devices that are capable of communication such as electronic dictionaries, notebooks, tablets, smartphones, headsets, additional screens, etc. are not admissible;
- there is an option for faculty members to explicitly define exceptions under supplementary aids.

Procuring any aids, as well as ensuring their working order, is the exclusive responsibility of students.

Supplementary aids

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2. Examination sub part (2/2)

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	30%
Duration	--

Languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

Remark

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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.



Content

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Literature

Individual literature and course literature.

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).