



Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Autumn Semester 2020

7,383: Understanding Public Policy

ECTS credits: 4

Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

Decentral - Presentation (in groups - all given the same grades) (30%)

Examination time: term time

Decentral - Group examination paper (all given the same grades) (15%)

Examination time: term time

Decentral - Presentation (in groups - all given the same grades) (5%)

Examination time: term time

Decentral - examination paper written at home (individual) (25%)

Examination time: term time

Decentral - Active participation (25%)

Examination time: term time

Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[7,383,1.00 Understanding Public Policy](#) -- Englisch -- [Lopez de Barros Thaler Philipp](#)

Course information

Course prerequisites

This course is open to all students with an interest in public policy and contemporary challenges in policy-making.

A good level of English is a prerequisite. A background in political science as well as prior attendance of classes in decision-making, public administration, or the analysis of specific policy fields (e.g., health, education, energy, migration) can be an advantage, but is not required.

Learning objectives

In this course, students will study and discuss patterns and challenges of public policy-making; get to know concepts and theories to structure and understand the policy process; learn to apply the acquired knowledge to real-world policy cases; and synthesize their ideas in a policy brief.

By the end of this course students will have acquired a comprehensive and structured understanding of the policy process as well as the challenges in public policy-making. They will be able to analyze and critically reflect upon characteristics and processes in different policy areas.

Course content

Should abortion be legal or banned? How can domestic public transport be organized more efficiently? Should soft drugs like marijuana be legalized? Should health services for the poor be free of charge? How can we eradicate corruption? Should religion play a role in education? Who is held accountable if we fail to meet our own climate goals? Should the state promote research on stem cells? What is the appropriate retirement age for the pension system? And should same-sex couples be allowed to marry?

Policy-makers around the world have to find answers to these and similar questions. Some of them may be straightforward, others are complex or controversial-yet all of them fall in the realm of public policy. Public policy, as Thomas Dye put it prominently, is "anything a government chooses to do or not to do"(Dye, 1972: 2). In other words, it comprises the set of rules and procedures that govern our societies, affecting the lives of individuals and communities.



In this course, students will become acquainted with the main concepts and theories that help understand how public policy is created. Themes that will be discussed include an introduction to policy and policy-making; (ir)rationality in policy-making; the role of institutions, structure and environments; collective action problems; multi-level governance; theories and conceptualizations of the policy process; global public goods; ethics and public policy; and policy learning and transfer. Throughout the course, students will apply the acquired knowledge to real-world cases that illustrate general features, particularities and challenges of public policy-making.

The course will be taught by Prof. Dr. Philipp Thaler, Assistant Professor of Energy Governance at the Institute for Political Science at the University of St. Gallen. He holds a PhD in Political Science with a major in public policy and has researched extensively on energy and climate policy as well as the European Union. His research has appeared in leading international journals, including the *Journal of European Public Policy, Politics and Governance*, and the *Journal of European Integration*, as well as in a book published with Edward Elgar Publishing. Besides his research in academia, he has worked on issues of energy governance and market regulation at energy and climate think tank E3G, the European Commission and as a consultant in the private sector.

Reference:

Dye, T. R. (1972). *Understanding public policy*. Prentice-Hall.

Course structure

This course is structured along 11 sessions. The first session is a double session, in which the lecturer will introduce his perspective on public policy and policy-making. The first session also includes a broader introduction to the course, where topics for group presentations will be assigned (see below). Each of the following sessions consists of a discussion of the readings as well as a student presentation or group work which links each week's theme to a contemporary case of public policy.

For all sessions, **active student participation** is essential. Each student is expected to have completed the required readings in order to contribute actively to class discussions.

For **presentations**, a student team will prepare a 25-minute group presentation (in case not enough students are enrolled in the course, presentations will have to be held individually). The teams are formed and the topic of the presentation is assigned in the introductory session to the course. Each presentation will address one of the seminar questions by using the required readings as well as a minimum of 10 additional references. Teams are encouraged to apply the concepts and theories of the course and make use of empirical data in their presentation. Other criteria for grading include originality, coherence of the argument, analytical precision, and presentation quality. Files are due three days prior to their presentation in class and must be shared with other participants by uploading electronic versions on the e-learning platform. Before, outlines of the presentations can be shared with the lecturer for comments. The **presentation will be discussed** (5 minutes) by another, pre-assigned student team. This discussion shall only be oral and not entail visual aids. Elements of a good discussion will be presented to the students in the introductory session. After these comments, remaining questions will be addressed in a discussion among all students of the course.

Following the presentation, each presentation team has to summarize the presentation into a **group policy brief** (1200 words) within one week. This policy brief has to be written jointly by the entire group (in case not enough students are enrolled in the course and presentations will have to be held individually, also this policy brief will have to be written individually). Outstanding work will be edited by the lecturer and uploaded as a **blog post on the MIA website**. Students may choose not to have their name mentioned in the blog post. Elements of a good policy brief will be presented to the students in the introductory session.

Group work sessions start with a brief discussion of the literature (20 minutes), followed by work in small groups on specific topics and related policy questions (40 minutes). At the end of these sessions, groups present and discuss each other's work (30 minutes). Students' individual contributions to the group work and the discussions will be part of their grade for active participation.

At the end of the course, each student is required to write a short (1200 words) **individual policy brief**, which is to be submitted at the end of the last week of classes. This policy brief will cover a contemporary public policy issue.

The presentation represents 30%, the group policy brief 15% of the final grade, and each team member will receive the same grade. The comment following another group's presentation represents another 5% of the grade and is also a team grade. Active classroom participation represents 25% of the grade and is based on individual performance. The individual policy brief represents 25% of the grade.

Course literature



The course book for this course is:

Cairney, Paul. 2020. *Understanding Public Policy. Theories and Issues*. 2nd ed. London: Red Globe Press.

Students are highly encouraged to acquire this book (2nd edition!). It can be purchased online or via HSG's Skriptekommission. 3 copies of the book are available in the HSG library (one of which is in the Semesterapparat): MD 7600 C136. Due to copyright laws, scans of this book cannot be made available on the e-learning platform. Students should therefore make sure to have access to all chapters of the book.

Further course literature will be made available on the e-learning website.

Additional course information

In the case of the President's Board having to implement new directives due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in AS2020, the course information listed above will be changed as follows:

- The course is conducted online via the platform Zoom
- The recordings of the course are available for 30 days
- The lecturer informs via StudyNet and/or e-mail on the changed implementation modalities of the course

The examination information listed below would be changed as follows:

- The group presentations and all discussions are conducted online and are being recorded
- The different examination parts and their weight to the final course grade remain the same

Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/5)

Examination time and form

Decentral - Presentation (in groups - all given the same grades) (30%)

Examination time: term time

Remark

Group/individual presentation on seminar topic

Examination-aid rule

Presentations

In presentations, aids for visual presentation can be used. These aids can be specified or restricted by the lecturers.

Supplementary aids

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Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

2. Examination sub part (2/5)

Examination time and form

Decentral - Group examination paper (all given the same grades) (15%)

Examination time: term time

Remark

Group policy brief



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

3. Examination sub part (3/5)

Examination time and form

Decentral - Presentation (in groups - all given the same grades) (5%)

Examination time: term time

Remark

Discussion of group presentation

Examination-aid rule

Presentations

In presentations, aids for visual presentation can be used. These aids can be specified or restricted by the lecturers.

Supplementary aids

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Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

4. Examination sub part (4/5)

Examination time and form

Decentral - examination paper written at home (individual) (25%)

Examination time: term time

Remark

Individual policy brief

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

5. Examination sub part (5/5)

Examination time and form

Decentral - Active participation (25%)

Examination time: term time

Remark

Active participation in class discussions

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 in a subsidiary fashion.

Supplementary aids

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Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

Examination content

Content of faculty and student presentations; content of student discussions; content of students' written individual and team work (policy briefs); practitioner debate; contemporary issues of public policy discussed in class or assigned for home study.

Examination relevant literature

All background and mandatory course literature (updated throughout the course) as well as lecture notes. Students are expected to find additional literature for their group presentations (at least 10 references) and written work.



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 (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, 20 August 2020);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 42 (Monday, 12 October 2020);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 42 (Monday, 12 October 2020);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised examinations: two weeks before the end of the registration period in CW 44 (Thursday, 29 October 2020).