



## Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Autumn Semester 2021

### 7,356: Strategies of Social Science Inquiry

ECTS credits: 6

#### Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

Decentral - Group examination paper with presentation (all given the same grades) (70%)

Examination time: term time

Decentral - Presentation (individual) (10%)

Examination time: term time

Decentral - examination paper written at home (individual) (20%)

Examination time: term time

#### Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[7.356.1.00 Strategies of Social Science Inquiry](#) -- Englisch -- [Seelkopf Laura](#), [Freyburg Tina Margarete](#)

[7.356.2.01 Strategies of Social Science Inquiry: Exercises, Group 1](#) -- Englisch -- [Freyburg Tina Margarete](#)

[7.356.2.02 Strategies of Social Science Inquiry: Exercises, Group 2](#) -- Englisch -- [Seelkopf Laura](#)

#### Course information

#### Course prerequisites

There are no specific course prerequisites. Ideally, students are familiar with basic qualitative and quantitative research techniques and are attending the course '7354: Data Analytics and Causal Inference' in parallel.

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

#### Learning objectives

This course is designed to help students put research ideas into sound research plans and implement these. In so doing, it seeks to enhance key analytical and critical skills that are transferable beyond academic study to a wide range of careers. The ability to identify assumptions, weight alternatives, make informed research-design decisions, and evaluate competing evidence is crucial not only to effectively understand and evaluate academic research but also to generally understand how knowledge is produced and to critically consume information and argument.

The following learning objectives should be attained after successful completion of the course:

1. Students have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the connections between research design choices with (1) research questions and goals, on the one hand, and (2) the validity/reliability or credibility and relevance of research results, on the other hand;
2. Students demonstrate proficiency in critically evaluating and discussing the research design choices of other projects and researchers;
3. Students show the ability to apply comprehensive knowledge of the key components of research designs when making and justifying design choices for their own project.

#### Course content

This course provides hands-on advice on how to make choices in designing scientific research projects in International Affairs as



well as how to make those choices amongst a variety of different prominent methods of data collection and analysis. It engages with some fundamental epistemological and methodological questions from a variety of perspectives, as well as with more practical issues related to the formulation of a research question, the choice of a research approach, and the development of different steps in the research plan.

Using research on the effectiveness of foreign aid from various perspectives of MIA core disciplines, we discuss how different methodological assumptions underlying research are manifested in designing research projects and in analyzing and presenting the data collected in the context of this design.

Based on this discussion, students conduct their own research project on a selected question in the field of foreign aid. To this end, they form small groups of 3 to 5 members 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 and indications of the learning and teaching design

The course has two components: lecture sessions (90 min.) and exercise groups meetings (45 min.), which both take place on a weekly basis. Students are expected to attend the weekly sessions of both the lecture and the exercise groups and to contribute actively. This includes reading the literature, working on the individual research steps, participating in the plenary discussions and providing feedback to other student teams.

**The lecture sessions** are devoted to introducing and discussing pivotal questions related to research design in a step-by-step approach (Learning objectives 1 and 2). Each week, we will first discuss a chapter of the Powner textbook and then critically assess how Powner's recommendations are implemented in each of the selected journal articles. The lecture sessions allow students to (1) learn about what decisions they need to make, what options they have, and what should inform their choices; and (2) to get acquainted with good (and not so good) choices made by established scholars in the area of International Affairs and to practice how to critically evaluate the chosen designs.

**The exercise group meetings** are devoted to the empirical implementation of each of the steps by the student teams when working on their group projects (Learning objectives 1 and 3). The focus is on a regular exchange between the student teams and the lecturer as well as among the student teams on questions that arise when designing a research project and implementing it. The exercise group meetings allow students to get their hands dirty and to make and justify their own choices when designing and implementing their own collaborative research project.

## Course literature

We concentrate on two types of readings: (1) The textbook chapter authored by Leanne Powner (2015, *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide*, Sage), plus (2) a selection of key journal articles on foreign aid (the course's thematic focus).

In addition, and when working on their individual research projects, student teams may want to refer to the following two textbooks:

- Panke, D. (2018). *Research Design and Method Selection. Making Good Choices in the Social Sciences*. Sage [available as hard copy at HSG library]
- Toshkov, D. (2016). *Research Design in Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan [available as e-book at HSG library]

## 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 currently serves as the academic director for the MA programme "International Affairs and Governance." In her research she explores the chances and challenges that emerge for democracy in a globalized and digitalized world. [ipw.unisg.ch]

**Laura Seelkopf** is Assistant Professor of International Political Economy at the School of Economics and Political Science, University of St.Gallen. Her substantive research interests lie at the intersection of international political economy, comparative politics, and public policy. Currently, her research focuses on two main topics: taxation and social policy.

**COVID-19 note:** This course is scheduled to be taught face-to-face in the fall semester. In case that teaching is disrupted by another wave of the coronavirus pandemic, both the lecture sessions and the exercise group meetings will take place according to university guidelines (i.e., online via Zoom). The examination strategy would remain unchanged.



## Examination information

### Examination sub part/s

#### 1. Examination sub part (1/3)

##### Examination time and form

Decentral - Group examination paper with presentation (all given the same grades) (70%)

Examination time: term time

##### Remark

Group examination paper with presentation

##### Examination-aid rule

Term papers

Written work must be written without outside help according to the known citation standards, and a declaration of authorship must be attached, which is available as a template on the StudentWeb.

Documentation (quotations, bibliography, etc.) must be carried out universally and consistently according to the requirements of the chosen/specified citation standard such as e.g. APA or MLA.

The legal standard is recommended for legal work (cf. by way of example: FORSTMOSER, P., OGOREK R., SCHINDLER B., Juristisches Arbeiten: Eine Anleitung für Studierende (the latest edition in each case), or according to the recommendations of the Law School).

The reference sources of information (paraphrases, quotations, etc.) that has been taken over literally or in the sense of the original text must be integrated into the text in accordance with the requirements of the citation standard used. Informative and bibliographical notes must be included as footnotes (recommendations and standards e.g. in METZGER, C., Lern- und Arbeitsstrategien (latest edition)).

For all written work at the University of St.Gallen, the indication of page numbers is mandatory, regardless of the standard chosen. Where page numbers are missing in sources, the precise designation must be made differently: chapter or section title, section number, article, etc.

##### Supplementary aids

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##### Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

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#### 2. Examination sub part (2/3)

##### Examination time and form

Decentral - Presentation (individual) (10%)

Examination time: term time

##### Remark

Presentation of the examination paper

##### 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

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## 3. Examination sub part (3/3)

### Examination time and form

Decentral - examination paper written at home (individual) (20%)

Examination time: term time

### Remark

examination paper written at home

### Examination-aid rule

Term papers

Written work must be written without outside help according to the known citation standards, and a declaration of authorship must be attached, which is available as a template on the StudentWeb.

Documentation (quotations, bibliography, etc.) must be carried out universally and consistently according to the requirements of the chosen/specified citation standard such as e.g. APA or MLA.

The legal standard is recommended for legal work (cf. by way of example: FORSTMOSER, P., OGOREK R., SCHINDLER B., Juristisches Arbeiten: Eine Anleitung für Studierende (the latest edition in each case), or according to the recommendations of the Law School).

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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 have a two-fold role as participants in the course: (1) They study and discuss existing research, and (2) they produce research on their own. In both roles, students are asked to demonstrate critical thinking skills, which go beyond presenting information and reproducing knowledge.

[1]**Decentral -Examination paper written at home(20%)** Learning objectives 1 and 2 are assessed through an individually written review of a journal article (max. 1'000 words) that must provide a critical, constructive and realistic critique of the article, and include propositions of alternative design choices. This examination paper is an individually written critique of either the same journal article that was assigned to their student team or another journal article that was subject to course discussions.

[2]**Decentral -Presentation(10%)** Learning objectives 1 and 2 are assessed through the presentation and the discussion of the individual paper. Each week, each student team is expected to discuss how the steps addressed in the Powner chapter of the week are implemented in the journal article that was assigned to their team. The discussions in class, together with the feedback on their input, shall help students write the individual review paper.

[3]**Decentral - Group examination paper with presentation (all given the same grades) (70%)** Learning objectives 1 and 3 are



assessed through (1) a poster presentation in which each student teams outlines and discusses their design choices (20%), and (2) a research paper (max. 6'000 words, excl. bibliography and appendices, 50%) in which the student teams present their whole research project, including literature review, theoretical framework, empirical analysis, and discussion of the results. Over the course of the seminar, students are expected to present and discuss the respective milestones and challenges of their team projects in the weekly exercise group meetings. Each student team is further expected to present the design of the research they seek to implement in the second half of the term at a mini-conference (last session prior to the break). The feedback from both the lecturers and the other students shall help students implement the research projects.

Over the course of the seminar, students are expected to present and discuss the respective milestones and challenges of their team projects in the weekly exercise group meetings. Each student team is further expected to present the design of the research they seek to implement in the second half of the term at a mini-conference (last session prior to the break). The feedback from both the lecturers and the other students shall help students implement the research projects.

## Examination relevant literature

Textbooks are available via the library, additional material covered is provided via Canvas throughout the course.

### 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, 26 August 2021);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 42 (Monday, 18 October 2021);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 42 (Monday, 18 October 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 45 (Monday, 8 November 2021).