



Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Autumn Semester 2024

7,368: Qualitative Research Methods for your Master's Thesis

ECTS credits: 4

Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)
decentral - Portfolio, --, -- (100%)
Examination time: Term time

Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer
[7,368,1.00 Qualitative Research Methods for your Master's Thesis](#) -- English -- [Nentwich Julia](#)

Course information

Course prerequisites

This course is ideal for students, who soon start writing an empirical Master's thesis using qualitative research methods or plan any other empirical study using qualitative methods. In the course, the necessary knowledge and central competences about research designs and methods of qualitative social research can be acquired. But of course, having a concrete interest in qualitative methods up front is not a necessary prerequisite for participating in and also benefiting from this course!

Learning objectives

Participants

- become familiar or refresh the fundamentals of qualitative social research including knowledge of basic principles of qualitative-interpretative research and common methods for qualitative data collection and analysis;
- become competent in choosing appropriate approaches to data collection and analysis according to a research design;
- gain first experiences in actually conducting selected methods for data collection and analysis;
- learn how to critically reflect about the potential and limits of the use of qualitative-interpretative research in the political sciences and beyond.

Course content

The seminar introduces Master's students to the basics of qualitative social research and accompanies students in the conception of qualitative research projects related to their Master's thesis research project (or any other qualitative research project). Knowledge about qualitative methods can be easily acquired through reading textbooks or watching videos. However, learning how to conduct a qualitative study is more like learning to ride a bicycle: It is a craft that needs to be learned in practice. This course is taking students on their first bike ride. Students learn how to conduct a qualitative study by actually conducting a study. Step by step they learn how to develop a research design, get familiar with the method of generating as well as analysing and presenting data. They organise their data and choose a method for analysis - and then also analyse the data.

With the hands-on experience in this seminar, students learn how to conduct and analyse interviews, group discussions, observations as well as video analysis. They also run two different methods of analysis, e.g. content analysis, discourse analysis and other. While preparation and analysis is done in class, students need to do the actual research parallel to the seminar. This means that they team up and either conduct an interview, a group discussion, do observations or collect material for audio-visual analysis. Results are presented in class in a conference format. Methodological experiences are reflected in the final session of the seminar. Step-by-step students develop their skills and learn how to do qualitative research.



Course structure and indications of the learning and teaching design

The course follows on from the course 'Qualitative Methoden' (BIA) held at Bachelor level and provides a refresher and an extended, in-depth introduction to doing qualitative research projects. We start with discussing the main concepts and ideas. After this introduction, the focus of the course is on qualitative research methods including different methods for data collection and analysis. Forming a research team, all participants together with the lecturer are conducting a study on the topic "Learning in the University of the Future".

In the first part of the seminar we are getting familiar with different methods of collecting or generating data. Students prepare an input on a method and prepare data collection. They develop interview guidelines and observation schemes and develop designs for observation and video analysis. Step-by-step the research design is developed, discussed and revised in class.

In a second phase and mainly parallel to class and over the semester break, students collect data by actually running interviews, group discussions, observations and video analysis.

In a third phase they are analysing their data in class. Like this, several interpretative methods for analysing data are explored, applied and compared with hands-on experiences with data.

In a fourth phase students prepare and hold a conference-like poster presentation with an in-depth reflection of their methodological experiences, limitations and risks.

Students are expected to read the compulsory literature and make use of the additional material provided on studynet, engage in conducting the empirical study in and outside class. Learning how to conduct an empirical study they need to actively engage in class, e.g. through preparing short presentations on methods, interview guidelines, engaging in training sequences etc. Like this, students will receive continuous feedback on the development of their research design.

Course literature

The course literature will be made available via StudyNet. There will be a compulsory text for each module, so please check the studynet pages already before coming to the first seminar!

Additional course information

none

Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/1)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Portfolio
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Mixed form
Examination mode	--
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	--
Examination location	--
Grading type	--
Weighting	100%
Duration	--

Examination languages



Question language: English

Answer language: English

Remark

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Examination-aid rule

no regulation necessary

- For written examinations at home (term paper), courses without credits, etc., no specific rules for examination aids are required.
- The regulations of the University of St. Gallen and the rules of academic work (sources and aids must always be identified) are applicable in a subsidiary fashion.
- All written work must be accompanied by a declaration of authorship.

Supplementary aids

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Examination content

The portfolio examination consists of three parts:

1. Active participation, pass/fail

Developing and preparing the research project:

- Ten entries into the course glossary (comments or questions on course readings) for ten different course sessions accessible via StudyNet
- Presentation and discussion of a compulsory course reading
- Preparation and discussion of interview guideline and procedure
- Conducting the empirical research project.

2. Poster presentation (70%), group mark

Presentation of the final results of the research project: The poster presentation also explains epistemological positioning, the research design (following Maxwell) with research question, procedure, sampling, data collection and analysis methods, and research ethics.

3. Reflection paper written at home (30%), individual mark

Reflecting on your learnings: A written paper (800 words) critically reflects the experience with the respective methodology, the lessons learned and the limits of the methodology

Examination relevant literature

All relevant examination literature will be made available on StudyNet by 30 September 2024.



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, 22nd August 2024);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 12 (Monday, 18 March 2024);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 42 (Monday, 14 October 2024);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised examinations: two weeks before ending with de-registration period in CW 45 (Monday, 04 November 2024).