



Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Spring Semester 2025

8,352: Strategies of Social Science Inquiry

ECTS credits: 6

Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

decentral - Written work, Digital, Group work group grade (10%)

Examination time: Term time

decentral - Written work, Digital, Group work group grade (90%)

Examination time: Term time

Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[8,352,1.00 Strategies of Social Science Inquiry](#) -- English -- [Emmenegger Patrick](#)

[8,352,2.01 Strategies of Social Science Inquiry: Exercises, Group 1](#) -- English -- [Emmenegger Patrick](#)

[8,352,2.02 Strategies of Social Science Inquiry: Exercises, Group 2](#) -- English -- [Emmenegger Patrick](#)

Course information

Course prerequisites

Students are expected to be familiar with qualitative and quantitative methods, and to have some basic knowledge of research design.

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, weigh 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 arguments.

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 questions developed by the course participants (in groups), 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. To this end, they form groups 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 three components: lecture sessions (12), feedback meetings with the lecturer (3 per group), and self-study. The lecture sessions take place on a weekly basis, the exercise sessions according to a group-specific schedule (one meeting before the break, two meetings after the break). Students are expected to attend the weekly lecture sessions, to participate in the exercise meetings, and to contribute actively. This includes reading the literature, working on the individual research steps, participating in the plenary discussions, presenting their own research project (as work in progress), and providing feedback to other student teams.

The first six weeks of the lecture sessions are devoted to the principles of good research designs. However, for the most part, this course follows the principle of Confucius: "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." (Although I do hope that at least parts of these initial meetings stick nonetheless.) This is to say that from week 1, students are encouraged to develop, in groups, their research projects. The exercise meetings before the break are reserved for self-study (weeks 1 to 3) and group meetings with the lecturer to discuss their projects (weeks 4 to 6).

In the second half of the course (after the break), all groups will present their work (understood as work in progress) in the lecture session and receive feedback from assigned discussants (from other student teams), the lecturer, and all other participants (weeks 7 to 12). In addition, in the exercise sessions (weeks 7 to 12), all groups will meet twice with the lecturer to discuss their research projects.

Course literature

All course relevant literature will be made available on StudyNet. This course builds on the following books:

Gerring, John (2012). *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gerring, John and Dino Christenson (2017). *Applied Social Science Methodology: An Introductory Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hancké, Bob (2009). *Intelligent Research Design: A Guide for Beginning Researchers in the Social Sciences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Posner, Leanne C. (2015). *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Additional course information

Patrick Emmenegger is a Professor of Comparative Political Economy and Public Policy. For information on his research, please visit his website at <https://www.pemmenegger.com>.

Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/2)

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	Group work group grade
Weighting	10%
Duration	--

Examination languages

Question language: English
Answer language: English

Remark

Feedback

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 (2/2)

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	Group work group grade
Weighting	90%
Duration	--

Examination languages

Question language: English
Answer language: English

Remark

Group Paper with Presentation

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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Examination content



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

(1) Group Paper with Presentation (90%):

The groups are expected to develop a research paper (max. 8'000 words, excl. abstract, bibliography, and appendices) 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 lecture, the student teams are expected to present their ongoing work in one of the lecture sessions (sharing a detailed handout with all course participants before the corresponding meeting) and discuss their work with the lecturer in three separate exercise meetings. The feedback from both the lecturer and the other students shall help students implement the research projects.

(2) Feedback (10%):

Good research is a collective exercise. All course participants are expected to prepare detailed comments and constructive feedback on another student team's research project (based on their handout and their presentation). Additionally, they prepare a handout with their comments and feedback, which they can share with the student team (and the lecturer).

Examination relevant literature

All relevant course readings will be made available on StudyNet at latest by May 20, 2025.

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, 25 March 2025) 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, 23 January 2025);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 12 (Monday, 17 March 2025);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 14 (Monday, 31 March 2025);
- 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, 07 April 2025).