



Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Spring Semester 2025

8,371: The Political Economy of the Car

ECTS credits: 4

Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

decentral - Written work, Digital, Individual work individual grade (40%)

Examination time: Term time

decentral - Presentation, Analog, Group work group grade (50%)

Examination time: Term time

decentral - Active participation, Analog, Individual work individual grade (10%)

Examination time: Term time

Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[8,371,1.00 The Political Economy of the Car](#) -- English -- [Rinscheid Adrian](#)

Course information

Course prerequisites

There are no formal requirements. An interest in political economy, public policy and the transformation of the car industry is important. A driver's license is not needed.

Learning objectives

In this course students will:

- Comprehend the roots of car dominance in today's economies.
- Analyze the role of public policies in steering technological innovation.
- Examine the role of various stakeholders in shaping the future of the automotive sector.
- Understand the relationship between climate change and the transformation of the automotive industry.
- Learn how to write a useful policy paper and critically discuss own and others' policy recommendations in class.
- Investigate and present to the class a specific perspective or problem related to the political economy of the car.

Course content

The course deals with the political economy of the car – that is, the interaction between policy, politics, and economic choices and outcomes relevant for the automotive industry and society more broadly. Conceptually, the course draws mainly from Political Economy and Political Science (innovation policy, comparative politics), but it goes beyond these fields by integrating further perspectives, e.g. from Ecological Economics and the interdisciplinary field of Sustainability Transitions.

The first part of the course introduces relevant perspectives on the (International) Political Economy of the car. To understand why the automobile has become such a dominant feature of today's culture and economy, the relationships between automobility, economic growth and the state are analyzed. The course also deals with the development of global value chains in the car industry, structural dependencies in the international economic system, and regional structures of production. Moreover, to conclude the first part of the course, one of the great challenges of our times, climate change, will be examined with respect to its interlinkages with the automotive industry.

The second part of the course deals more specifically with the current transformation of the automotive sector. As transportation accounts for a quarter of energy-related CO₂-emissions worldwide, decarbonizing this sector is a key component



in global climate change action plans. At the same time, the transportation sector is characterized by deep path dependencies that constrain change.

While the transformation of the automotive sector is underway, there is considerable heterogeneity in actors' preferences (both within and across jurisdictions), policy approaches, and corporate as well as economy-wide outcomes. To gain a solid understanding of the political economy of the car in times of transformation, we will discuss and learn about the following topics in depth:

- The role of the state in driving technological change.
- Innovation policy in leading markets (including China, Norway, Germany and others).
- Corporate strategies and stakeholders' preferences in the transformation of the automotive industry.
- Firm-centered perspectives, including firm-level innovation management, corporate product innovation, and non-market strategies.
- Implications of battery-electric vehicles for global value chains and employment.
- The role of the car in the city of tomorrow.
- The governance of autonomous driving and other emerging mobility solutions.

Course structure and indications of the learning and teaching design

The course is organized as a bi-weekly seminar. The first part (sessions 1 and 2) will be based on input by the lecturer and small group assignments. The aim of the first part is to provide a solid conceptual foundation for understanding major trends and challenges relevant for the automotive sector and society more broadly. In addition, at the beginning of the semester, presentation topics will be distributed to 8 student teams.

The second part (sessions 3 to 6) will be devoted to gaining a thorough comprehension of specific drivers and challenges in the transformation of automotive industries, focusing on the roles of governments, firms, and other stakeholders in various jurisdictions. This will be based on lecturer inputs, students' presentations, and interactive discussions in class. Materials provided by the instructor will be key to preparing for these sessions. Moreover, two guest lecturers will provide hands-on insights about specific topics.

The student presentation will address specific research questions on their assigned topics. Student teams have 45 minutes to deliver their answer to the research questions. They can use the 45 minutes in whatever way they find most productive. Typically, this will include a powerpoint presentation and discussion with fellow students or other interactive formats.

The students will write short policy papers addressing a particular problem relevant for studying the political economy of the car, and discuss their policy papers and implications in class. Policy papers should be directed at a particular target audience, which students are free to choose (e.g., a government, an industry association, an international organization, etc.). In sessions 5 and 6, students will discuss their own policy papers and those written by their peers in a workshop-type format. The lecturer will provide extensive guidance on policy paper writing in the first part of the course.

Course literature

At the beginning of the semester, required readings (typically 2 readings per session) will be made available on Canvas. Students are expected to carefully read the required readings before coming to class. The lecturer will provide additional readings.

Additional course information

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Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/3)

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	Individual work individual grade
Weighting	40%
Duration	--

Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

Remark

Short policy paper to be delivered by end of April

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 (2/3)

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	Group work group grade
Weighting	50%
Duration	--

Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

Remark

Presentation + Discussion of a course topic

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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3. Examination sub part (3/3)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Active participation
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Oral examination
Examination mode	Analog
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Synchronous
Examination location	On Campus
Grading type	Individual work individual grade
Weighting	10%
Duration	--

Examination languages

Question language: English
Answer language: English

Remark

Discussing policy papers in class workshop

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

Presentation in groups (50%): Presentation topics will be defined by the lecturer (based on the contents of the course). Students will be allocated to topics based on their preferences. Criteria for grading include analytical precision and coherence, breadth of consulted sources, integration of interactive and/or creative elements, and originality. Optionally, students can also conduct original research for their presentation. Presentation length must not exceed 45 minutes.

Term paper (40%): The term paper is an individual task. It should be written in the form of a policy paper. Length: 2'000 words, +/- 10%. In the policy paper, students will tackle a relevant question of their own choice, delivering a concise characterization of the problem and deriving targeted and evidence-based recommendations for relevant decisionmakers. Due by 28 April 2025 at 23:59 CET.

Policy paper discussion (10%): During sessions 5 and 6, all policy papers will be discussed in a workshop-type format facilitated by the instructor. For this purpose, 5-8 policy papers at a time will be grouped together and discussed by their authors. Each discussion slot takes 45 minutes. Each student receives a grade for her/his performance during the discussion slot to which her/his policy paper gets assigned.

Examination relevant literature

A general reading list will be published in the digital course room at the beginning of the semester. The specific literature relevant for the policy papers depends on the specific topic.



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).