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## Seminars STV2547 Political Science Approaches to Climate Action

This memo contains information about the organization and purpose of the seminar series in STV2547 – Political Science Approaches to Climate Action. It provides students with essential information on topic selection, term paper requirements, seminar presentations, and grading guidelines. Additionally, it provides examples of topics related to climate governance and policy issues, as well as resources for further information.

### 1. Purpose and organization of seminars

STV2547 students are introduced to a broad variety of political science readings on how policy, politics, and governance affect our ability cope and deal with climate change. In the seminars, the students will discuss the many ways political science can inform climate action.

The purpose of the seminars is fourfold:

1. Help students relate the concepts and theories presented in the lectures to real-world climate governance and climate action issues.
2. Provide students training in how to write good academic texts about climate action in political science.
3. Increase students' understanding of the differing political science sub-categories, and how they can inform meaningful climate action.
4. Foster learning, collaboration, and community among students.

Coping with climate change affects most societal sectors and levels of decision-making. Since one course cannot cover all issues related to climate politics and governance, students in this course are asked to select one specific topic for in-depth scrutiny. While students can choose similar topics, all students need to develop their own analysis of their topic.

Students will attend five seminars. In the first seminar all students will present the topic of their term paper. The appendix to this memo provides a non-exhaustive list of ideas for term paper topics. Students are allowed to change their chosen topics without endorsement of their seminar leader. Yet, good term papers require working on a chosen topic for an extended period. Hence, students are strongly discouraged from changing topics late in the course.

In the subsequent four seminars students present drafts of the term papers, with two students providing feedback each time. All students are required to present twice (first presenting their topic orally and then presenting a written draft of the term paper), as well as commenting twice on other students' drafts. Students must attend three out of five seminars. All submissions and seminars are in English, but students may ask questions in a Nordic language and ask for translation. Students can choose topics related to all levels of government (international, regional, national, and local), and about all political units in the world. Norwegian topics are equally good as other topics. A broad variety of climate governance issues may be explored, relating to specific sectors, such as energy and transport, or cross-cutting issues, such as emissions reduction targets or carbon pricing.

### Seminar 1 Topic presentations and organization of the following seminars

The first seminar is mandatory. At the first seminar students will briefly present a climate-related topic that they will focus on when they write their term paper. Students are encouraged to opt for a topic

that can be assessed considering from a broad array of political science approaches: international relations, public policy and administration, comparative politics, and political theory. In the end, the students only need to rely on two of these in their term paper. Hence, the students have ample time to decide which political science theory or approach that they want to apply in their final term paper. The information in table 1 is a guide. It only provide some examples, and students are allowed to focus on other issues than those covered there. Further information and clarifications will be provided in the first lecture and the first seminar of the course.

All topic presentations shall contain:

- A description of the topic's climate relevance.
- A description of the topic's political science relevance.
- Ideas about how the topic can be analyzed from two or several political science sub-disciplines.
- 2-4 suggestions for possible political science research questions related to the topic.

The topic presentations will be given in smaller groups, followed by plenary discussions.

## 2. Seminars 2-5: Draft term paper presentations

In the subsequent four seminars, students present drafts of the term papers, with two students providing feedback each time. All students shall present their work orally (max. 5 minutes), as well as in written form on Canvas two working days before the seminar. The draft term papers need to contain the following:

- Title
- Topic
- Research question(s)
- Theories, concepts, and/or analytical frameworks from 2 political science sub-disciplines, relating to readings from the course
  - o Justification for the proposed analytical choices
- Empirical material (where to find the facts used)

The draft shall be 1-1.5 pages long (single spaced). Students that are concrete about all the elements in the list above will tend to get the best and most valuable constructive feedback to their draft term papers on the seminar mid-way in the course. Remember that receiving good and detailed feedback does not mean that your original proposal was bad. There is always room for improvements.

See more information about term papers in Section 3 of this document (this section also serves as grading guidelines).

Formulating an appropriate and sufficiently specific research question is key for successful term papers. Students are advised to avoid overly ambitious and broad research questions, reflecting the relatively short time frame they are given to write the paper. Students are encouraged to develop research questions that combine elements from two political science disciplines. The research questions could draw on elements from Table 1, which provides some indicative suggestions for research question elements based on the course readings.

**Table 1. Examples of research questions on climate action in political science sub-disciplines**

|   | <b>Descriptive questions</b>   | <b>Elements related to causation or evaluation</b>   |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Political theory</b>                 | <p>What characterizes a topic (e.g. the policy portfolio, targets or governance mode) with respect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accountability?</li> <li>- Transparency ?</li> <li>- Effectiveness?</li> <li>- Justice</li> <li>- Legitimacy</li> </ul>              | <p>How should we evaluate a topic (e.g. the policy portfolio, targets, or governance mode) in light of different normative criteria?</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Do international or regional or climate organizations suffer from democratic deficits?</p> <p>How fair is the distribution of burdens and benefits in a specific climate policy arrangement fair, and why?</p> <p>How may certain normative democratic theories help create more robust climate policies?</p> <p>Do more just climate policies lead to more effective arrangements?</p> |
| <b>Public Policy and Administration</b> | <p>What type of policy instruments dominate within a climate issue area?</p> <p>How is authority divided between national authorities, municipalities and cities?</p> <p>Who has been involved in influencing, deciding and/or implemented policies or target within the issue area?</p> | <p>Which actor groups have had more influence over a certain agenda, policy-decision or implementation process?</p> <p>Which traditions, cultures or practices has informed the development of policy portfolios and/or targets within the issue area?</p>   |
| <b>Comparative Politics</b>             | <p>How does the way climate issues are addressed vary across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Countries</li> <li>- Regions</li> <li>- Other political systems (cities, municipalities)?</li> </ul>  | <p>Do and how do political institutions and actors influence climate policy adoption and implementation, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Degree/type of democracy?</li> <li>- Political parties?</li> <li>- People’s attitudes/opinions?</li> <li>- Levels of corruption?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>International Relations</b>          | <p>Which countries are leaders and laggards in international climate cooperation? How has this changed over time?</p>  | <p>What explains the position of country/alliance X in international climate cooperation?</p>  |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <p>How do Non-Governmental Organizations attempt to induce climate action at the global level?</p> <p>Is climate cooperation a distributive conflict or collective action problem?</p> <p>Which countries' national interests are reflected in the Paris Agreement?</p> | <p>Why do states choose to ratify international climate agreements or not?</p> <p>How effective is the Paris Agreement?</p> <p>What kind of international climate agreements are most effective?</p> |
|--|---|--|

### 3. Term papers – grading guidelines

#### Title

Crafting a compelling title for an academic paper is essential, as it should effectively convey the central conclusions drawn. While maintaining a scientific tone, aim for originality and catchiness that captures the essence of your work. A well-structured and focused paper is often indicated by an interesting title that leaves a positive first impression on the reader.

Remember that the title serves as a glimpse into the substantial content of your paper. Strive to strike a balance between academic rigor and engaging appeal, drawing readers in with an intriguing title that reflects the paper's core ideas. By doing so, you can set the right tone and expectations for your term paper, fostering interest and curiosity among your audience.

#### Introduction

The introduction shall give the reader answers to the following questions:

- What is the topic and research question?
- Why is this topic important?
  - o How is it relevant to a specific scholarly debate and/or societal issue?
- What is the core argument?
- Who and which are the key actors in the paper?
- How is the paper structured?

A good introduction convinces the reader that the term paper relates to a topic that is important for political science studies of climate action. There are different ways of doing this, for instance framing your case, theme, or conclusions as puzzling, counter-intuitive, surprising, in contrast to other scientific work on the topic, or of great value to ongoing societal debates.

Regard the introduction as a commercial, or blurb, for the rest of the paper. Thus, you should not be overly self-critical here. On the other hand, you should not promote a different product than what you actually deliver.

#### Research question

The research question shall guide the term paper's direction and choices. Any empirical, theoretical, or methodological information that does not contribute to answering the research question is irrelevant. The research question should ideally be expressed as one succinct question, but can contain

(preferably very few) sub-questions. The research question should be descriptive, explanatory, or evaluating in style, or a combination of the three. You need to show that it is relevant to discussions in two subdisciplines of political science.

The earlier in the process you develop a clear research question, the easier it will be for others to provide feedback and for you to improve it. While feedback from peers is often constructive, you will ultimately decide for yourself whether it is worthwhile to listen to it and revise your research question accordingly. In any event, a successful term paper often requires several iterations and continuous revisions of the research question.

Good research questions are (generally) not:

- Hypothetical
  - o Example: How would the US respond if China introduced more effective climate governance?
- Counterfactual
  - o Example: If Norway had become an EU member back in 1994, how would its domestic climate governance have looked like now?
- Predictive of the future (for instance it should not be scenarios).
  - o What political strategies could ensure agreement about phasing out Norwegian oil exploration in due time before 2050?
- Impossible to assess scientifically (many questions can be answered scientifically)
  - o None of the examples given above can be answered scientifically.
- Unmanageable in the confines of the limited time and resources available to write a term paper
- Factually incorrect or grammatically/semantically flawed.

Please be very clear about which question(s) that is *the* research question(s) for the term paper. It is particularly important to do not present a whole range of questions that overlap with or are similar to the key question of your paper.

#### Analytical framework drawing from two political science sub-disciplines

Political science concepts, analytical frameworks, and theories may help you to perform descriptions (they can be applied to classify, develop dimensions, help you to measure degrees etc.), explain the relative importance of specific factors and/or actors, or more normatively assess whether something is good or bad (they may provide you with criteria that can be applied to perform such assessments). Please specify and operationalize the theory in an as precise and tangible way as possible. The development of expectations and/or hypothesis may be one element of this process. The specification of observable empirical implications based on your theory is another.

You may use several different strategies when showing that the two approaches contribute to the analysis. You may regard theories from the two subdisciplines as:

- Competitive: you expect that one has a higher explanatory power than the other.
- Supplementary: you expect that both contribute to shed light on the topic).
- Complementary: you expect that the topic can only be understood when both are considered.
- Integrative: you expect that the topic can only be understood if the theories are combined in a specific way.

You may want to situate your paper within climate governance discussions, but do not use too much time to elaborate on concepts and theory that you do not actually apply analytically.

The theory applied in the paper should be presented briefly in the introduction, more thoroughly later, and guide the assessment as well as the concluding sections of the paper.

## Methods

There is no space for lengthy methodological discussions, but please provide the reader with a minimum of information about the analytical choices made and how they affect the validity of the paper's findings.

## Empirical material

The paper's empirical material should enable the author to answer the research question. However, there are limits to what can be done within a term paper. Students should aim for the empirics to be broad enough to cover the topic the paper sets out to explore. If you for instance aim to cover the media debate about a specific policy issue, you should not only base your debate on one newspaper. If you only aim to cover how a specific issue has been discussed in one city, it will however make more sense to only draw on Bergens Tidende. All students need to limit the empirical scope, otherwise you will not be able to finish in time. This is a challenging trade-off for a term paper. Please explain how you gathered data and empirical information for the paper.

You may draw on:

- Empirical information from prior research (research articles or books).
- Existing databases or statistical material.
- Primary and secondary documents from governmental and non-governmental organizations, including media coverage (newspaper articles, debates, etc.).
- Interviews (rarely used given the constraints of a term paper).
- Participation at conferences or events (directly or through web-sessions)

## Analysis and conclusion

Each student is responsible for organizing their paper according to their research question. For example, one may choose to present theory and empirical information in separate sections, although other organizing principles can be equally effective. However, it is crucial to demonstrate the following abilities in your paper:

1. Articulate the relationship between theory and empirical information in a coherent and systematic manner.
2. Clearly differentiate between theory, empirical data, analysis, and conclusion.
3. Provide unambiguous and concise conclusions that directly address the research question.

## References

Term papers should apply a standard scientific citation style (e.g., APA, Chicago) consistently and follow conventional referencing practices throughout the text (including the reference list). All empirical material and theoretical ideas should be supported by references. See more about sources here: [Use of sources and citations - University of Oslo \(uio.no\)](#)

## Structure and language

An excellent term paper is not only informative but also engaging to read. It begins with a captivating title and an introduction that draws the reader in, setting clear expectations. Throughout the paper, the student fulfils these promises, ensuring that the text's structure remains comprehensible.

It is essential that the paper's various sections harmoniously complement each other, forming a cohesive and coherent whole. To achieve this, provide the reader with seamless guidance as they transition from one part of the paper to another. In doing so, remember to culminate all the ideas and arguments in a well-crafted conclusion.

To maintain a smooth flow in the paper, avoid excessive use of sub-sections and the overuse of bullet points. Instead, opt for clear and logical progression that allows ideas to unfold naturally.

A well-crafted term paper requires dedicated effort. Numerous revisions of the text will be necessary. Strengthening your paper will likely involve seeking input from your fellow students or peers and incorporating their feedback into your revisions. The seminar on draft papers serves as a formalized venue for feedback, but it is encouraged to share your work in other settings too, such as colloquium groups.

While collaboration and feedback are invaluable, you ultimately bear the sole responsibility to ensure the quality and content of the final paper. We encourage students to embrace this process of iterative refinement, engaging with the text diligently, and incorporate constructive input to produce excellent term papers.

#### 4. More information about climate related sectors and policy issues

Climate action is required across all societal sectors, and many different political strategies and instruments have been put forward. Political science approaches can be used to assess overarching governance, such as climate targets and carbon pricing, and sector specific measures, for instance relating to energy and transport. Students are free to pick their own topic, whether you want to focus on issues that already have gained significant scientific attention or new research areas.

Thus far energy and transport have gained the most attention as sectors that require substantial climate action. We have gathered some resources for climate information about these two sectors:

##### Energy

- IEA, World Energy Outlook: [World Energy Outlook 2022 – Analysis - IEA](#)
- EU, European Environmental Agency: [Energy \(europa.eu\)](#)
- Energy facts for Norway (in Norwegian): [Energifaktanorge.no - fakta om norsk energi og vannressurser - Energifakta Norge](#)
- Renewables support:
  - o [IRENA – International Renewable Energy Agency](#)
  - o [Comparative Renewables Policy: Political, Organizational and European \(routledge.com\)](#)

##### Transport

- OECD, transport: [Transport and environment - OECD](#)
- EU, European Environmental Agency: [Transport and mobility \(europa.eu\)](#)
- The National Transport Plan of the Norwegian Government: [Nasjonal transportplan – NTP - regjeringen.no](#)

When it comes to overarching climate governance, climate targets and carbon pricing have been discussed excessively. We have gathered some resources for climate information about these two issue areas:

Climate targets:

- Assessment of NDCs by the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP): [Emissions Gap Report 2022 \(unep.org\)](#)
- EU targets: [Climate \(europa.eu\)](#)
- Miljødirektoratet om Norges klima- og miljømål: [Norges klima- og miljømål - Miljøstatus \(miljodirektoratet.no\)](#)

ETS and carbon pricing:

- [Pricing Carbon \(worldbank.org\)](#)
- [Kvotemarked: EU og verden – Energi og Klima](#)

Students shall apply more sources than those listed here, these are only meant as sources for inspiration.