

**Lukas Isermann, M.A.**

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**Ausgewählte Themen der Politischen Soziologie:  
Man Is Such a Fool, Why Are We Saving Him? The Politics of Climate Change**

FSS 2024

**Time and Place:** Wednesdays, 15:30-17:00  
**Start:** February 14, 2024  
**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Content:**

Climate change is the challenge of the millennium for societies around the world and the political debate around the issue is expectably heated, yet political action lacks the necessary momentum to stop the climate from tipping. In this advanced undergraduate seminar, we will examine how citizens' attitudes and experiences – from their ideological standpoints to the weather in their neighborhoods – influence their perceptions of climate change, their support for related policies and, ultimately, the national climate policies of their countries. Moreover, we will explore channels of (mis)information about climate change to learn how climate change attitudes emerge. Drawing on different theoretical and empirical approaches, we will study how individual and societal variations shape the present policy response to climate change. In addition to providing an introduction to the topic, this seminar will focus on the research designs and methods employed in order to broaden students' methodological understanding and equip them with the skills necessary to design their own studies (e.g., the B.A. thesis). In the course of the semester, students will develop their own research project, participate in the peer-review process, conduct their own empirical analysis and submit their research paper. Participation therefore requires knowledge of the methods covered in both semesters of the “Basismodul Methoden und Statistik” and experience with statistical software.

**Language:**

This seminar will be held in English, but students may choose to submit written assignments in either English or German.

**Special Needs:**

If you require support in order to ensure your success in my course for any reason, please feel free to contact me! I will gladly make reasonable accommodation to facilitate a better learning experience for everyone.

**Recommended for:** B.A. Politikwissenschaft, 4th Semester

**ECTS-Points:** 6

## Requirements

All papers start with a blank page – and this blank page can be pretty scary. In this seminar, you will learn how to go from that blank page to a finished paper including all the elements required for a bachelor thesis. In addition to introducing the topic, the required readings illustrate different theoretical approaches and research designs, serving as an inspiration for your own work. To better understand the (dis-)advantages that these different approaches and designs offer, you will prepare a short **literature excerpt** summarizing the research question, theoretical argument, hypotheses, methods, and conclusions of the assigned text for each session. This literature excerpt basically formalizes notes that should be taken during the reading of any paper and can thus be submitted in bullet point form. Ideally, your excerpts should help you understand the required readings as well as the structure of academic papers. You have two **jokers** that you can use throughout the semester if you cannot do the literature excerpt for any reason other than sickness.

During the semester, you will develop (1) a research question, (2) a theoretical argument with corresponding hypotheses, and (3) a research design that tests your hypotheses. Thus, most of the work for your term paper will already be done at the end of the semester. To make sure that all of you achieve the best possible outcome, you will participate in a three-round **peer review process**.

- (1) In the first round, you will formulate your own research question and provide constructive feedback on two other students' research questions. In turn, you will receive feedback from me and two other students to help you improve your own research question.
- (2) In the second round, you will write a first draft of your theoretical argument and derive corresponding hypotheses, then review another student's draft. Subsequently, you will receive constructive comments from me and another student on your own draft.
- (3) In the third round, you will present your research design to your peers, i.e. you will explain how you will test your hypotheses with empirical data. Following your presentation, the other students will provide feedback and suggest improvements, as you will do for their research designs. You will receive additional written feedback from me after submitting your recorded presentation, your data, and your preliminary syntax.

At the end of the semester, you will submit a **term paper** which theoretically and empirically addresses an original research question. Since you will have already developed your research proposal, including the research question, theoretical argument, hypotheses, and research design, over the course of the seminar, the term paper is simply an extension of your proposal.

## Evaluation

All assignments need to be passed to qualify for the final exam, i.e. the submission of the literature excerpts and the participation in all three rounds of the peer review are required to register for the term paper and receive ECTS-points. Readings and presentations are available from ILIAS. You can register for the ILIAS group in the student portal (<https://portal2.uni-mannheim.de>). Messages concerning the seminar will also be sent via ILIAS. Please make sure to **regularly** check your university email account (xxxx@mail.uni-mannheim.de) for messages.

## Assignments and Deadlines

### 1. Literature excerpts

Literature excerpts should summarize the research question, the main theoretical argument, the hypotheses, the method of analysis, and the conclusion of assigned readings. Importantly, you should also include your own critical thoughts on these aspects. Literature excerpts must be submitted via ILIAS before the beginning of the session, i.e. until 15.30.

### 2. Peer Review: Round 1

- Submit your research question as a PDF-document via ILIAS until **February 29, 2024, 23:59**.
- Provide constructive feedback for two other students' research questions (approx. 200 words each) and submit your feedback in separate PDF-documents via ILIAS until **March 06, 2024, 15.30**.

### 3. Peer Review: Round 2

- Submit the draft of your theoretical argument (approx. 3-5 pages, including 1-3 hypotheses) as a PDF-document via ILIAS until **April 04, 2024, 23:59**.
- Review another student's theory draft (approx. 1-2 pages) and submit your review as a PDF-document via ILIAS until **April 10, 2024, 15:30**.

### 4. Peer Review: Round 3

- Present your research design, including the data you use, your method of analysis, and the operationalization of your main variables, to your peers in Session 10 on **May 08, 2024**.
- Submit your recorded presentation, your data, and your preliminary syntax via ILIAS until **May 15, 2024, 15:30**.

### 5. Term Paper

Term papers must be submitted as a PDF-document via ILIAS or email until **July 07, 2024, 23:59**. Please include your data and syntax for my reference and remember to sign the declaration of authorship (a scanned copy suffices).

- Approx. 5,000 words (without title page, table of contents, figures, tables, and references)
- Times New Roman, size 12, 1.5 line spacing, justified text
- Submissions after the deadline will not be accepted!

## Session Plan

### 14.02.2024 Session 1: People's Climate Change Beliefs

McCright, Aaron M., Sandra T. Marquart-Pyatt, Rachael L. Shwom, Steven R. Brechin & Summer Allen. 2016. Ideology, capitalism, and climate: Explaining public views about climate change in the United States, *Energy Research & Social Science* 21: 180-189.

McCright Aaron M., Riley E. Dunlap & Sandra T. Marquart-Pyatt. 2016. Political ideology and views about climate change in the European Union, *Environmental Politics* 25(2): 338-358.

### 21.02.2024 Session 2: The Root of All Inaction

Ziegler, Andreas. 2017. Political orientation, environmental values, and climate change beliefs and attitudes: An empirical cross country analysis, *Energy Economics* 63: 144–153.

Tjernström, Emilia & Thomas Tietenberg. 2008. Do differences in attitudes explain differences in national climate change policies? *Ecological Economics* 65(2): 315-324.

**Homework:** Find a puzzle that interests you and do some preliminary reading on it.

### 28.02.2024 Session 3: How to Turn the Tide

Rode, Jacob B., Amy L. Dent, Caitlin N. Benedict, Daniel B. Brosnahan, Ramona L. Martinez & Peter H. Ditto. 2021. Influencing climate change attitudes in the United States: A systematic review and meta-analysis, *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 76: 101623.

**Homework:** Develop a research question.

You will receive the research questions of two other students via ILIAS. Give them feedback and suggest improvements using the criteria for good research questions discussed in Session 2.

### 06.03.2024 Session 4: Shades of Green

Lacasse, Katherine. 2015. The importance of being green: The influence of green behaviors on Americans' political attitudes toward climate change, *Environment and Behavior* 47(7): 754-781.

**Homework:** Write a first draft of your theory section explaining your main theoretical argument and deriving your hypotheses.

**13.03.2024    Session 5: A Care in the World**

Spies-Butcher, Ben & Adam Stebbing. 2016. Climate change and the welfare state? Exploring Australian attitudes to climate and social policy, *Journal of Sociology* 52(4): 741-758.

**20.03.2024    Session 6: God Created the Heaven and the Earth**

Arbuckle, Matthew B. 2016. The interaction of religion, political ideology, and concern about climate change in the United States, *Society & Natural Resources*: 1-18.

**Homework:** You will receive another student's theory draft via ILIAS. Review their work and offer suggestions for improvements.

**27.03.2024    Easter Break**

**03.04.2024    Easter Break**

**10.04.2024    Session 7: It's a Hoax! The Chinese Invented It!**

Kulin, Joakim, Ingemar Johansson Sevä & Riley E. Dunlap. 2021. Nationalist ideology, rightwing populism, and public views about climate change in Europe, *Environmental Politics* 30(7): 1111-1134.

Häkkinen, Kirsti & Nazar Akrami. 2014. Ideology and climate change denial, *Personality and Individual Differences* 70: 62-65.

**17.04.2024    Session 8: Speaking People's Minds**

Severson, Alexander W. & Eric A. Coleman. 2015. Moral frames and climate change policy attitudes, *Social Science Quarterly* 96(5): 1277-1290.

➤ Amazon MT // experiment, OLS

Wolsko, Christopher, Hector Ariceaga & Jesse Seiden. 2016. Red, white, and blue enough to be green: Effects of moral framing on climate change attitudes and conservation behaviors, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 65: 7-19.

**24.04.2024    Session 9: Like Lemmings**

Kousser, Thad & Bruce Tranter. 2018. The influence of political leaders on climate change attitudes, *Global Environmental Change* 50: 100-109.

Van Boven, Leaf & David K. Sherman. 2021. Elite influence on public attitudes about climate policy, *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 42: 83-88.

**01.05.2024 Labor Day**

**08.05.2024 Session 10: Unblurring the Lines Between Reality and Fiction**

Van der Linden, Sander, Anthony Leiserowitz, Seth Rosenthal & Edward Maibach. 2017. Inoculating the public against misinformation about climate change, *Global Challenges* 1: 1600008.

➤ **Present your research designs**

**Homework:** Incorporate the feedback you received from your peers in your research design before submitting it to me.

**15.05.2024 Session 11: The Road to Hell Is Paved with Good Intentions**

Boykoff, Maxwell T. 2007. From convergence to contention: United States mass media representations of anthropogenic climate change science, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 32: 477-489.

O'Neill, Saffron, Hywel T. P. Williams, Tim Kurz, Bouke Wiersma & Maxwell Boykoff. 2015. Dominant frames in legacy and social media coverage of the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, *Nature Climate Change* 5: 380-385.

**22.05.2024 Session 12: Fragmented Realities in a Hall of Mirrors**

Williams, Hywel T.P., James R. McMurray, Tim Kurz & F. Hugo Lambert. 2015. Network analysis reveals open forums and echo chambers in social media discussions of climate change, *Global Environmental Change* 32: 126-138.

**29.05.2024 Session 13: Seeing Is Believing**

Egan, Patrick J. & Megan Mullin. 2012. Turning personal experience into political attitudes: The effect of local weather on Americans' perceptions about global warming, *The Journal of Politics* 74(3): 796-809.

➤ **Final Debate**