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| Name: | Christian Flachsland |
| | Professor of Sustainability |

Advisor Information

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| Office Hours | tba |

Research & Advising Profile

General Academic Field

I am an interdisciplinary social scientist working on climate, energy and sustainability policy and governance. I preferably supervise theses in these topic areas. The closer your topic is to my research interest, the better my supervision will be. If your topic is only remotely connected to my fields of expertise, I will be able to grade your thesis, but I won't be able to support you in a meaningful way. Please have a look at my [publications](#) to get an impression of the type of work I do.

Specific Expertise

- Institutional analysis and design of climate policy instrument mixes, in particular carbon pricing systems (taxes, emissions trading systems) and institutions for climate governance
- Political economy of climate and energy policy, in particular theoretical frameworks for the political economy of energy transitions, policy sequencing, public opinion and climate/sustainability policy, norms, formation of policy coalitions;
- The role of discourse and narratives in climate and energy policy, in particular in the German Energiewende;
- International climate policy, in particular EU climate and energy policy, the UNFCCC regime, international flexibility mechanisms, and international climate finance; and
- Science-policy interface, both in the context of Global Environmental Assessments such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) or the UNEP Global Environment Outlook (GEO), and the national climate advisory bodies such as the UK Committee on Climate Change.

Methodology

- I mainly employ qualitative methods but often engage in quantitative projects in collaboration with other researchers specialized in the respective methods. I routinely work in interdisciplinary projects with economists, political scientists, lawyers, and philosophers. I often employ an institutional economics analysis and design perspective, but also engage in theory development and use interviews, text coding, and interpretive approaches such as discourse analysis.
- I supervise theses using qualitative methods, and theses employing quantitative approaches if these involve cooperation with practice partners specialized in and substantively supporting work with the respective method.

Practice partners

I strongly encourage students to work with practice partners. I have made very good experiences e.g. with collaborations with researchers at the MCC, but there are other good options such as the HEEN network. Please clarify and confirm the cooperation possibility with the practice partner before submitting your thesis proposal.

Supervision Style

We will meet in six sessions during the supervision process. Each session represents a milestone for which you will be asked to provide certain assignments (see below). Most sessions will be collective colloquium sessions, some feature individual meetings.

The supervision takes place during these sessions. Additional feedback during office hours or by email will be given on very specific questions, more general feedback will be given only in exceptional circumstances. I will read and comment your assignments and your presentations during the colloquium sessions. I never read drafts; when I read your thesis, I am reading it to grade it. I strongly encourage students to work in pairs.

Examples of Previously Supervised Thesis Topics

- The Political Economy of Coal in Bulgaria: The Captured Energy Transition
- Unveiling the Political Economy of Coal in Colombia. An analysis of entrenchment mechanisms, strategies, and lock-in
- The Climate Policy Agenda of Right-Wing Parties - Examining the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ)
- Germany's Coal Commission - Complementing Democracy or Bypassing it?
- Punching Above Their Weight? Small Island States in the Negotiations of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change
- Obstacles and Response Options to Keeping Temperature Increase Below 2°C: a Survey of Expert Perceptions. (Practice partner MCC)
- Protecting Indonesia's forests. Does it matter who manages the land? (Practice partner MCC)
- Horizontal Distributional Effects of Carbon Pricing Policies in Germany. A Micro-Simulation Approach. (Practice partner MCC)

Recommended General Readings

Geddes, Barbara. 2003. Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics. University of Michigan Press

Proposed Projects

| Project Title | Practice Partner (if applicable) |
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| The politics of the German climate policy package in 2019 | |
| The emergence of the German hydrogen strategy | |
| Climate discourse analysis using parliamentary data and/or news media | |
| Border Carbon Adjustments to enable ambitious climate policy | |
| Industry expectations on emission neutrality | |
| A systematic review of literature on climate policy mixes | |
| Ex post analysis of EU ETS price projections. | Michael Pahle (PIK) |

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is an infringement of § 11 Good Academic Conduct, 2a: "Infringements of the standards of good academic conduct include for instance to use wordings, ideas or other intellectual work of others in an academic work without clearly indicating the author. The obligation to indicate the authorship of others shall apply irrespective of whether or not the sources used are protected by copyright" (See: Exam Rules, § 11 Good Academic Conduct for more information).

It is vital to keep track of your sources and to cite all material properly.

The Library will offer a session available to all students on resource management and proper citation.

Attendance

Students receive 8 ECTS for the Master's thesis colloquium. Attendance for supervision—whether in the form of a colloquium or an individual meeting—is compulsory. Students are expected to be present, prepared, and engaged in each session, and to adhere to deadlines set for assignments.

In case of an excused absence, students must notify their supervisor. Absence must be compensated with an additional assignment.

Students on an academic exchange programme in the Fall Semester are given the opportunity of supervision via Skype.

Participation & Milestones

The colloquium schedule below spells out your tasks in preparing each session. You will be provided templates and documents informing you on how to proceed on each task, and we will discuss these in the colloquium.

Thesis proposal: For the first session, you are asked to bring an initial structured thesis proposal (template provided) that presents your topic, research question, motivation, core argument, methodology, data availability, relevant literature and novelty. You will keep on working on this document throughout the process, step-by-step transforming it into a structured summary of your thesis that you submit along with your thesis.

Readings: All readings need to be read before the respective session.

Assignment submission: You will be asked to prepare written material (texts, slides). *All material must be submitted 24 hours ahead of the sessions* via Moodle, in one single PDF. Late submissions will lead to grade deductions and will not be read.

Changing topic: You are expected to refine, sharpen and focus your research topic. However, you are not supposed to change topic. After the second colloquium session, no change of topic will be accepted.

Colloquium & Meeting Information

| | Colloquium Dates | Session Title |
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| Meeting times (suggested) | Session 1: November/December 2020 | Initial Proposal |
| | Session 2: November /December 2020 | Revised proposal |
| | Session 3: early February 2021 | Literature Review and Contribution |
| | Session 4: mid-February/early March 2021 | Thesis Outline and Methodology (individual meetings) |
| | Session 5: late March 2021 | Preliminary findings |
| | Session 6: early/mid-April 2021 | Final Presentation |

Formalities

All formalities (deadlines, requirements, word limits etc.) can be found in the "Master's Thesis Guidelines" (on Moodle).

Colloquium Sessions

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| Session 1: xx.xx.2020 Initial Proposal | |
| Aim | Present and discuss your initial thesis proposal. |
| Assignment | <p>To be submitted 24h ahead (one single PDF):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured thesis proposal (1 page, template provided) 3-5 slides for your in-class 4 min "elevator pitch" <p>To be delivered in class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 min "elevator pitch" presentation of your proposal using the submitted slides |
| Readings | <p>Introductory readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> King, Gary; Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba. 1994. <i>Designing Social Inquiry</i>. Princeton: Princeton University Press, "Chapter 1 : The Science in Social Science", p.3-33. Van Evera, Stephen. 1997: <i>Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science</i>. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, "Chapter 3: What is a Political Science Dissertation?" p.89-95. Van Evera, Stephen. 1997: <i>Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science</i>. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, "Chapter 4: |

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| | <p>Helpful Hints for Writing a Political Science Dissertation", p.97-113.</p> <p>→ While van Evera writes to inform PhD thesis development, similar basic issues play out with a Master Thesis.</p> |
| During the session | <p>Input by advisor + discussion (~30 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a good thesis? • Research process • Timeline and deadlines <p>Student presentations (~70 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 min presentation by student (with slides) • 3 min questions and feedback |

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| Session 2: xx.xx.2020 | |
| Revised proposal | |
| Aim | <p>Reflect the progress you have made, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has your proposal evolved, and why? • What is your methodology, why do you prefer it over alternatives? • How do you define and operationalize your key concepts? • Which challenges have you identified? |
| Assignment | <p>To be submitted 24h ahead (one single PDF):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated structured proposal, both a clean version (1 page) and with changes tracked • Time plan (Gantt chart, 1 page) • List of issues you would like to discuss with me (1 page) |
| Readings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van Evera, Stephen. 1997. <i>Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science</i>. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, "Chapter 1 – Hypotheses, Laws, and Theories – A User's Guide", p.7-27. • Adock, Robert and David Collier. 2001. Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research. <i>American Political Science Review</i> 95(3): 529-546. |
| During the session | <p>Discussion (50 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn for your thesis from the readings so far? • Why is your thesis relevant? • What kind of thesis do you write (in terms of Van Evera Ch.3)? • Why do you choose your methodology, and not another? <p>Separate session (50 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific questions on individual topics • Questions by students, and advisors • No presentation / slides |

| Session 3: XX.XX.2021 Literature Review and Contribution | |
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| Aim | <p>Literature review, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured summary of the existing literature • Identification of gaps in the literatures • Specification of your contribution |
| Assignment | <p>To be submitted 24h ahead (one single PDF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated structured proposal, clean (1 page) and with changes tracked (1 page), and updated Gantt chart • 2-3 page literature review: you should summarize the state of the literature in a structured way, mention the most important existing contributions and how your work relates to them, and identify the gap(s) in the literature that you intend to fill. Use "author (year)" references. • List of issues you would like to discuss with me (1 page) • Your presentation slides <p>To be delivered in class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 min presentation of lit review, gaps, your contribution, 3-5 slides |
| Readings | <p>USC The Literature Review</p> <p>Watch on Youtube: Zotero</p> |
| During the session | <p>Input by advisor (~20 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review: what is it good for and how is it done? <p>Student presentations (~80 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 min student presentation: literature review. How does this motivate your research, what are gaps, how do previous studies relate to your work? (with slides) • 3 min questions and feedback |

| Session 4: XX.XX.2021 Thesis Outline and Methodology | |
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| Aim | Present draft thesis outline and discuss challenges; present and describe the methodology applied |
| Assignment | <p>To be submitted 24h ahead (one single PDF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured summary (1 page, template provided – different from the structured proposal) and updated Gantt chart • Thesis outline (table of contents), detailed at least to the second level and including word count per section (1 page) • Methodology (1 page), including methodological references • List of issues you would like to discuss with me (1 page) |

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| Readings | - |
| During the session | <p>One-to-one session between student and supervisor. Slots will be communicated ahead of time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 min per student • I will give feedback on the material you submitted and we will go through your issue list |

| Session 5: xx.xx.2021 | |
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| Preliminary findings | |
| Aim | Present preliminary results. At this point you should have done the bulk of your research. |
| Assignment | <p>To be submitted 24h ahead (one single PDF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured summary, clean (1 page) and with changes tracked (1 page) and updated Gantt chart • List of issues you would like to discuss with me (1 page) • Your presentation slides |
| Readings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rougier, Nicolas B., Michael Droettboom and Philip E. Bourne. 2014. - Ten Simple Rules for Better Figures. <i>PLoS Comput Biol</i> 10(9): e1003833. P.1-7. • Novartis. 2017. Graphics Principles Cheat Sheet |
| During the session | <p>Student presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 min input per student • 5 min per student feedback by class and advisor on presentation and issue list |

| Session 6: xx.xx.2021 | |
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| Final Presentation | |
| Aim | Present draft thesis. At this point your thesis should be virtually finalized and only require minor refinement. This is the last possibility to receive feedback. |
| Assignment | <p>To be submitted 24h ahead (one single PDF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured summary, clean (1 page) and with changes tracked (1 page) • Presentation slides <p>To be delivered in class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 min presentation of master thesis, 7-12 slides |
| Readings | - |

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| During the session | <p>Student presentations (150 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 min presentation of draft thesis • 5 min discussion and feedback • All students are required to attend the entire session |
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