



## Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Spring Semester 2025

### 8,626: Gesellschaft/Society: Living the City - The Study of the Built Environment

ECTS credits: 6

#### Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)  
decentral - Portfolio, --, -- (100%)  
Examination time: Term time

#### Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[8,626,1.00 Gesellschaft/Society: Living the City - The Study of the Built Environment](#) -- English -- [Kesselring Rita](#)

#### Course information

#### Course prerequisites

For this course, students are expected to be curious about other people and be prepared to speak with strangers and participate in their everyday life for a brief period. They should also be interested in qualitative research methods as practiced in the social sciences and anthropology in particular.

#### Learning objectives

Students

- are able to describe their experiences of using qualitative-ethnographic research methods;
- Students are capable of speaking about urban space and human agency in an informed manner with their peers;
- Students have seen and experienced urban space through the eyes and positionalities of other residents;
- Students have a sound understanding of qualitative-ethnographic research methods.

#### Course content

The course teaches qualitative-ethnographic research methods hands-on at the example of the relationship between the urban built environment and people.

The built features in the world are constitutive of our being-in-the-world. In this course, we explore how the built environment constitutes social relationships, how people shape the environment and how perceptions of the environment influence our actions. To do so, we look at concrete features in the world such as houses, roads, electricity and borders. Our discussions will focus on how to bring together human agency and the built environment without losing out on an agentic understanding of what shapes our practices.

Besides a critical engagement with the literature, the course requires students to experiment with and explore ways of capturing the relationship between people and the built environment. In a blended-learning format, they will try out the four key methods of qualitative-ethnographic research – observation, participation, conversation and interview. Our field to do so will be the urban built environment / the city of St. Gallen.

#### Course structure and indications of the learning and teaching design

The course is guided by a back-and-forth movement between 1. reading / reflection about urban space and how to capture urban life methodologically and 2. actual trying-out of qualitative-ethnographic methods. As part of the course, students will



try out the following four research methods in the city of St Gallen (or in a town of their choice): observation, participation, open-ended conversation and structured interview. Each of these exercises will result in a short report (transcription, reflection, description, etc.). In some weeks, the course adopts a blended learning approach. Peer-to-peer feedback and reflection in the plenary constitute an important part of the course (i.e. attendance is crucial).

Contextual Studies are considered part of **Contact Learning**; thus, taking part properly implies **regular attendance**. It is the students' own responsibility to ensure that there is **no timetable clash** between the courses they have chosen. A detailed course outline and all relevant documents will be made available on **StudyNet**. Only the current timetable as published on **Courses** does apply.

## Course literature

Choplin, Armelle. 2020. "Cementing Africa: cement flows and city-making along the West Africa corridor (Accra, Lomé, Cononou, Lagos)". *Urban Studies* 57 (9): 1977–1993.

Duneier, Mitchell. 1999. "Introduction" and "The Magazine Vendors" in *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrer Strauss & Giroux; pp. 3-16; 43-80.

Ingold, Tim, und Jo Lee. 2006. „Locating the Field“. In *Fieldwork on Foot: Perceiving, Routing, Socializing*. London: Routledge; pp. 67-85.

Kesselring, Rita, et al. 2020. *Ethnographic Vignettes: social change and social encounters in Solwezi, Northwestern Zambia*. Basel Papers on Political Transformations, 20/21. Basel: Institute of Social Anthropology.

Larkin, Brian. 2013. "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure". *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42 (1): 327–43.

## Additional course information

Rita Kesselring is Associate Professor of Urban Studies. She has extensive ethnographic research experience in Southern Africa with a focus on Zambia and South Africa. Her work covers a variety of themes such as urbanization, mining, local administration, corporate governance, legal redress, civil society, global interdependencies, and urban dwelling and placemaking.

## Examination information

### Examination sub part/s

#### 1. Examination sub part (1/1)

##### Examination modalities

Examination type	Portfolio
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Mixed form
Examination mode	--
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	--
Examination location	--
Grading type	--
Weighting	100%
Duration	--

##### Examination languages

Question language: English  
Answer language: English

##### Remark

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##### Examination-aid rule

no regulation necessary



- For written examinations at home (term paper), courses without credits, etc., no specific rules for examination aids are required.
- The regulations of the University of St. Gallen and the rules of academic work (sources and aids must always be identified) are applicable in a subsidiary fashion.
- All written work must be accompanied by a declaration of authorship.

## Supplementary aids

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## Examination content

The portfolio consists of:

- Three Individually **written research reports** based on the ethnographic methods tasks (**pass/fail**)
- **Written report on participation** (30% of the total grade)
- **Seminar paper** (13000 characters incl. blanks (+/- 10%), excl. cover page, declaration of authorship, potential appendices) (70% of the total grade)

## Examination relevant literature

Mandatory readings as detailed in the program (course-literature) to be shared in the first week of the course.

### 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).