



## Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Spring Semester 2025

### 8,635: Gesellschaft/Society: Empathy and Cooperation

ECTS credits: 3

#### Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

decentral - Written examination, Analog, Individual work individual grade (25%, 90 mins.)

Examination time: Term time

decentral - Written work, Digital, Individual work individual grade (75%)

Examination time: Term time

#### Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[8,635,1.00 Gesellschaft/Society: Empathy and Cooperation](#) -- English -- [Breithaupt Fritz](#)

#### Course information

#### Course prerequisites

None

#### Learning objectives

After completion of the course, Students have

- Knowledge of different forms of empathy;
- A better understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses in regard to empathy;
- Ability to weigh pros and cons of different forms of empathy in different situations;
- Understanding of what factors impact empathy and cooperation;  
Knowledge about empathy in professional situations, especially in leadership;
- Better grasp of research methods in regard to conducting empirical research;
- Familiarity with creative delivery forms, such as role-games.

#### Course content

The course will introduce you to the current state of research on empathy and "mind-reading", as well as core studies on cooperation and conflict resolution in several fields (cognitive science, cultural theory, psychology, evolutionary biology, management studies). The goal of the course is to make this research applicable to your practical situations and professional careers. Your task will be to examine what triggers, promotes, or blocks human empathy or cooperation in specific situations of your interest. The content will also allow creative forms of delivery, such as role playing games.

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

The course will first follow a syllabus of core studies on empathy and cooperation from a variety of fields (Day 1, Day 2). After an overview of fundamental concepts of empathy and cooperation, we will focus on situations of particular interest to the participants (Day 3). We will spend significant part of that day to develop research projects for participants to conduct. For example, a student (or team of students) may wish to study differences in performance of teams lead by people with high or low affective empathy (or cognitive empathy) in specific settings. Or students may study preventions of burn-out in health care professionals. Or participants may want to investigate how different parenting styles impact certain forms of empathy. Or students may want to examine online cooperation versus face-to-face cooperation, etc. Based on students' interests, the professor will report some basic research findings in the areas of these areas of interest (Day 3). Finally, we will focus on



research skills for participants to conduct this basic research. Students will develop and design studies to test empathy or cooperation in specific domains and get feed-back in class (Day 4). This work can be done individually or in groups and involves an oral and a written component. Throughout the days, we will do some practical exercises and play some interactive games. There will be professor-lead presentations, but wherever possible, we will use more interactive and student-focused approaches.

Core concepts include: Empathy Universe, affective empathy; Theory of Mind (cognitive empathy; perspective taking); Empathy Altruism Hypothesis; Evolutionary theories of cooperation; Social intelligence; Dark sides of empathy; narrative empathy

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

As introduction: Mark H. Davis, Sara Konrath, Fritz Breithaupt, et al. "Mapping the Empathy Universe: Toward a Common Lexicon of Empathy-Related Constructs" (2024, under review).

Breithaupt, Fritz, *The Dark Sides of Empathy*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2019: chapter 2 [available in German in FB, *Die dunklen Seiten der Empathie*, Berlin: Suhrkamp 2017, Chap. 2]

De Cremer, David, and Daan Van Knippenberg. "How do leaders promote cooperation? The effects of charisma and procedural fairness." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 87, no. 5 (2002): 858.

Decety, Jean (2020), *Empathy in Medicine*. In: *The American Journal of Medicine*, 133.

Dunbar, Robin. *Grooming, Gossip and the Evolution of Language*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, sel. (chapter 9).

Holt, S., & Marques, J. (2012). Empathy in leadership: Appropriate or misplaced? An empirical study on a topic that is asking for attention. *Journal of business ethics*, 105(1), 95-105.

Konrath, S., Davis, M., Breithaupt, F., & Martingano, A.J. "The kids are all right: The decline, and rise, of kindness in American young adults." *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 2023.

Singer, Tania, and Anita Tusche. "Understanding others: Brain mechanisms of theory of mind and empathy." In *Neuroeconomics (Second Edition)*, pp. 513-532. 2014.

Tomasello, Michael, *Why we Cooperate*, MIT 2012, Chapter 1.

## Additional course information

Fritz Breithaupt, Cognitive science and German Studies, (PhD 1997, Johns Hopkins University) is Provost Professor at Indiana University in Bloomington, and was a full-time visiting professor in autumn 2016 at the HSG and has been teaching every year since 2016 at the HSG. Among his research topics are empathy, narrative thinking, and the history of money. He is director of the Experimental Humanities Lab ([www.experimentalhumanities.com](http://www.experimentalhumanities.com)). His recent book, *Das narrative Gehirn/El cerebro narrativo/The narrative Brain* (2022, 2023, 2024), is the official Science Book of 2023 in Austria for biology and medicine. He is a frequent guest in the media (Der Spiegel, die ZEIT, Sternstunde Philosophie, NPR, etc.).

## Examination information

### Examination sub part/s

#### 1. Examination sub part (1/2)

##### Examination modalities

Examination type	Written examination
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Written exam
Examination mode	Analog
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Synchronous
Examination location	On Campus



Grading type	Individual work individual grade
Weighting	25%
Duration	90 mins.

## Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

## Remark

Based on readings. Day 4

## Examination-aid rule

Closed Book

The use of aids is prohibited as a matter of principle, with the exception of pocket calculator models of the Texas Instruments TI-30 series and, in case of non-language exams, bilingual dictionaries without any handwritten notes. Any other aids that are admissible must be explicitly listed by faculty members in the paragraph entitled "Supplementary aids" of the course and examination fact sheet; this list is exhaustive.

Procuring any aids, as well as ensuring their working order, is the exclusive responsibility of students.

## Supplementary aids

None

---

## 2. Examination sub part (2/2)

### 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	75%
Duration	--

### Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

### Remark

--

### 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

--



## Examination content

1. There will be a **90 minute exam** (closed book) that covers the material of the class (**25%**). Questions will be both multiple choice and short written answers. The purpose of the final is to make the learning material "stick." The exam will cover the 8 required articles and chapters of the course.<sup>8</sup> The exam will focus on the 8 core texts, each approx. 20 pages long, plus the PowerPoints focussed on these 8 chapters. The goal of the test is better recall of the materials.
2. Students will write a **paper** on their personal theory of empathy triggers or elements that promote cooperation in specific situations. The length of the papers will vary, but usually be around 10-12 pages, double-spaced, in length or approx. 10,000-12,000 characters (**75%**). We will extensively discuss possible topics and methods on Day 3 and Day 4 of the block seminar. There are two options for writing the paper:
  - Students can **conduct empirical research** with participants, such as surveys or testing responses to test stimuli (recommended). The paper should include an introduction with the research question, a methods sections that explains what was done, a results section and a final discussion. If surveys were used, they should be added to an appendix.
  - Students can write a **theory paper** that discusses possible applications or theoretical considerations for empathy and cooperation.

## Examination relevant literature

There will be a total of 8 research texts of approximately 20 pages each that will be covered in the exam. All of these texts will have been covered in class discussions. All of the texts will be available on StudyNet by March 10. Additionally, there will be some information from the Powerpoints in class that will be covered in the exam. The Powerpoints will be added to StudyNet at the end of each day.

## 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).