

Master's Thesis Supervision Plan

Academic Year 2024-2025

MIA/MPP/MDS

1. Supervisor information

Name	Prof. Dr. Christian Flachsland
Professor	Professor of Climate Policy
Office	3.20
E-Mail	flachsland@hertie-school.org
Faculty Assistant	Alwine Hoppe (hoppe@hertie-school.org)
Office Hours	Please email my assistant.

2. Supervision Profile

General Academic Field: *How would you summarise your academic background?*

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.

Main Research Areas: *On what research areas are you especially keen to supervise students?*

- 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;
- Governance of climate policy, employing e.g. policy integration frameworks
- 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.

Methods Expertise: *What type of research methods can you advise on?*

- 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.

Supervision Style: *What is distinctive about your approach to supervision?*

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

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.

Additional notes on plagiarism [optional!]

3. Master's Thesis Colloquium

Overview:

Session	Session Title	Date (approx.)
1	Initial Proposal	late November
2	Revised proposal	early December
3	Literature Review and Contribution	February
4	Thesis Outline and Methodology	mid-March
5	Preliminary findings	late March

6	Final Presentation	April
---	---------------------------	-------

Sessions:

Session 1	
Initial Proposal	
Aim	Present and discuss your initial thesis proposal
Assignment	<p><i>To be submitted 24h ahead the latest (one single PDF)</i></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" of your initial thesis proposal <p>To be delivered in class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 min "elevator pitch" presentation of your proposal (along the lines of the "structured thesis proposal" document) 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: Helpful Hints for Writing a Political Science Dissertation", p.97-113. → <i>While van Evera writes to inform PhD thesis development, similar basic issues play out with a Master Thesis.</i>
During the session	<p>Input by advisor + discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a good thesis? • Research process • Timeline and deadlines • Q&A <p>Student presentations (4 minutes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevator pitch initial thesis proposal <p>Individual feedback by advisor and colloquium</p>

Session 2 Revised proposal & preparing literature review
--

Aim	Reflect the progress you have made, in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has your structured proposal evolved, and why? • What are your data and how will you access or assemble them? • Which challenges have you identified? • What steps are you going to implement prior to the next session?
Assignment	<p><i>To be submitted 24h ahead the latest (one single PDF)</i></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) <p>To be delivered in class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief 4 minute input reporting on the development of your proposal
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van Evera, Stephen. 1997. Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science. 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. • USC The Literature Review • Watch on Youtube: Zotero
During the session	<p>Brief student inputs (~4 minutes), each student stating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has your structured proposal evolved, and why? • What are your data and how will you access or assemble them? • Which challenges have you identified? <p>What steps are you going to implement prior to the next session? Individual feedback by advisor and colloquium</p> <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? • Interviews: Formal guidance

Session 3 Literature Review and Contribution	
Aim	Present & discuss literature review, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured summary of the existing literature • Identification of gaps in the literatures • Specification of your contribution

Assignment	<p><i>To be submitted 24h ahead the latest (one single PDF)</i></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. • Your literature review presentation slides • List of issues/challenges you would like to discuss with me (1 page) <p>To be delivered in class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of your literature review & challenges/issues you are experiencing
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USC The Literature Review • Watch on Youtube: Zotero
During the session	<p>Student presentations (5 minutes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of your literature review & challenges/issues you are experiencing <p>Individual feedback by advisor and colloquium</p>

Session 4 Thesis Outline and Methodology	
Aim	Present draft thesis outline and methodology, discuss any challenges you are experiencing
Assignment	<p><i>To be submitted 24h ahead the latest (one single PDF)</i></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 draft section, including methodological references (1-2 pages) • Draft slides for your in-class presentation • List of issues you would like to discuss with me (1 page) <p>To be delivered in class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-10 minute input on draft thesis outline, methodology, challenges
Readings	-

During the session	Student presentations (5-10 minutes input per student) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft thesis outline & methodology • Challenges you are experiencing Individual feedback by advisor and colloquium
--------------------	--

Session 5 Preliminary findings	
Aim	Present preliminary results. At this point you should have done the bulk of your research.
Assignment	<i>To be submitted 24h ahead the latest (one single PDF)</i> <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 To be delivered in class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 min input on preliminary findings
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	Student presentations (7 min per student) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary findings Individual feedback by advisor and colloquium

Session 6 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	<i>To be submitted 24h ahead the latest (one single PDF)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured summary, clean (1 page) and with changes tracked (1 page) • Presentation slides To be delivered in class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 min thesis presentation

Readings	-
During the session	<p>Student presentations (10 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present your thesis (all of it) <p>Individual feedback by advisor and colloquium</p> <p><i>All students are required to attend the entire session</i></p>