

## **Empirical Analysis of International Human Rights Law**

In the fall semester 2021, Prof. Altwicker will offer a seminar at the University of St. Gallen (HSG).

### **About the course**

What can we know empirically about international human rights law? Why are some states better human rights compliers? Are all human rights equal? Can decisions by international human rights courts be predicted?

This course has two major aims: First, the course approaches questions of international human rights law from an empirical perspective. To this end, it provides an overview of basic concepts and institutions of international human rights law, and influential studies dealing with questions of evidence-based international human rights law will be discussed. Second, the course provides an introduction to the innovative, emerging field of empirical legal studies. It aims to demonstrate how basic statistical methods (descriptive statistics, hypothesis testing, linear regression, logistic regression and text mining) can be gainfully applied to study international human rights law from an empirical perspective. The necessary methods will be taught in the course: statistical or programming skills are not a prerequisite.

There are three spots available for UZH students. The slots will be filled on a competitive basis upon application (deadline 31 March 2021, see below). The seminar is open to students at the Master's level and will be credited with 6 ECTS upon successful completion (see below). In addition, the participants have the opportunity to write a Master's thesis, credited separately with 12 ECTS.

### **Learning Objectives**

The course follows a rigorous integrated, hands-on, interdisciplinary approach. All students will participate (in groups) in hands-on problem solving using basic statistical methods in R. At the successful completion of the course, students should:

- have acquired / deepened their knowledge and understanding of key concepts and institutions of international human rights law;
- have learned about a range of quantitative methods and their application in the field of empirical legal studies;
- be able to read and to critically evaluate research articles dealing with empirical approaches to international human rights law;
- be able to employ simple quantitative methods in the human rights field using the appropriate software, to assess the validity of their results and the limitations of empirical approaches to human rights law.

### **Course structure**

The course consists of six 4-hour sessions. The first session consists of an introduction to the course, a 45-minute lecture on international human rights law and a 45-minute lecture on empirical legal studies. Each of the following sessions start with a brief introduction to a topic of international human rights law, statistical methods and their implementation in R. This lecture is followed by individual presentations of students (max. 15 minutes) and an in-class discussion.

## Course literature

Textbook used for the law-part of the lectures:

- Moeckli, D./Shah, S./Sivakumaran, S. (eds), International Human Rights Law, 3rd ed., OUP 2018.

Textbook used for empirical legal studies-part of the lectures:

- Epstein, L./Martin, A.D., An Introduction to Empirical Legal Research, OUP 2014.

Textbook used for the statistics-/ R-part of the lectures:

- Monogan, J.E., Political Analysis Using R, Springer 2015,
- Field, A./Miles, J./Field, Z., Discovering Statistics Using R, Sage 2012 (new edn. forthcoming 2021) (particularly suitable for students with no prior statistical training).

A list of the required readings as well as additional reading will be made available before the beginning of the course. In addition, it is required for all participants to download R and R Studio before the course begins. The download procedure (including download links) is described here <https://moderndive.netlify.app/1-getting-started.html>. For a video on the installation see <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheLearnR/featured>. If you want to practice R before the course starts, the following websites (among others) provide online tutorials: <https://www.statmethods.net/> or <http://www.sthda.com/english/wiki/what-is-r-and-why-learning-r-programming>. If you are an absolute beginner in the field of statistics, the following book is a good read: Wheelan, C., Naked Statistics: Stripping the Dread from the Data, Norton, 2014. Students are expected to bring a laptop (with R/R Studio ready) to each session.

## Examination time and form

The grade will be based on two parts:

- (1) An **individual term paper** on one of the assigned empirical papers and in-class presentation (60%). Each student submits an analysis paper on a journal article (dealing with the empirical analysis of international human rights law) (max. 3'000 words incl. footnotes). The papers need to provide a summary of the article and a critical examination of the data, methods used, results and discussion.
- (2) A **group paper** using empirical methods in a legal context and in-class presentation (all group members given the same grade / max. 3'00 words including footnotes) (40%).

## Application by UZH students

There are three slots available for UZH students (Masters' level only). Please send your application (max. ½ page) by email to [lst.altwicker@rwi.uzh.ch](mailto:lst.altwicker@rwi.uzh.ch) (deadline 31 March 2021). If selected, you will be made an offer, upon confirmation of which your participation is binding. In your application, please specify the reasons why you are interested in this seminar and (if applicable) any prior knowledge in statistics/programming. Funding for travel costs is available for UZH students.

## Further Information

For questions regarding the seminar, please contact Florian Geering ([florian.geering@rwi.uzh.ch](mailto:florian.geering@rwi.uzh.ch)) or Prof. Altwicker ([tilmann.altwicker@rwi.uzh.ch](mailto:tilmann.altwicker@rwi.uzh.ch)).