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IAS

HEIDELBERG
CENTER FOR
IBERO-AMERICAN
STUDIES



UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

M.A. Communication and Society in Ibero-America HCIAS-Course Catalog Winter Term 2024-2025

1. Fundamental Competencies

Lecture: Latin American Politics

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Alejandro Ecker

This lecture introduces students to the key theoretical concepts and the main empirical questions of Latin American politics. It provides students with a broad understanding of the political systems and the social and economic challenges in the macro-region of Ibero-America. Against the backdrop of the enormous political and social diversity in the region, this lecture explores the causes and functioning of different institutional structures and their impact on politics and society. The lecture is structured into four overarching topics. The first thematic block is devoted to the political and economic development of Latin America. The second thematic area covers issues of citizen representation and competition between political parties. The third overarching topic is the change in societal values and the causes and consequences of migration for the region. Finally, the fourth thematic block discusses the influence of political actors and institutions on the capacity of states in Latin America. The lecture enables students to develop their own research questions based on the acquired knowledge of the region. The discussion of different methodological approaches enables them to critically engage with the relevant empirical-analytical literature. Furthermore, students learn to classify individual scientific contributions in higher-level debates and to efficiently elaborate the central statements of scientific texts.

Seminar: Migratory Infrastructures: Policies, Networks and Humanitarianism

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Yaatsil Guevara González

What is a migration corridor? What is transit migration and forced migration? What can we call a migration infrastructure? How do migration corridors operate? This course is aimed at students who are interested in exploring the issues of transit migration and forced migration. Starting from the analysis of the concept of infrastructure, we will analyze how migration policies, networks that facilitate/impede migration and humanitarianism converge in the flows of human mobility. Based on literature of case studies, we will scrutinize how materialities, human actors and migratory regimes converge in this type of mobility. Although most of the case studies

that will be analyzed focus on migration corridors in the Americas, other corridors around the world may also be examine.

Lecture: The Making of Migration Crises in Ibero-America

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Yaatsil Guevara González

This lecture has three main objectives:

- 1) To provide an initial approach to the topics of forced migration and migration corridors in the Americas, from a historical perspective. To this end, the lecture will analyze different examples of “migratory crises” that have taken place in the Americas since the beginning of the 20th century.
- 2) To reflect on how to approach the concept of “crisis” from media and political discourses’ perspectives. To this end, the lecture will present examples of discourses, news and narratives that (de)legitimize the concept of “migratory crises.”
- 3) The lecture seeks to bring students closer to Ibero-American geopolitics. To this end, examples of contemporary migratory flows that have marked the way of conceiving mobility in the Ibero-American region will be presented; from the massive flows of Chinese migration to the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, or the Spanish forced migration fleeing Franco's regime to the Americas, to the more contemporary flows of African or Asian migrations to South America.

Seminar: Resources, Space, and Power

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Rosa Lehmann

In this seminar, we engage with theoretical approaches to space, resources and power (including its material and discursive dimensions). The seminar is structured along different concepts (extractivism, spatial fix, frontier, and others), commodities (e.g. silver, bananas), production systems (e.g. plantation, mine) and infrastructures. The regional focus of the course is Latin America.

Seminar: Comunicación y Sociedad en Iberoamérica

Prof. Dr. Francisco Moreno-Fernández

El seminario presenta los fundamentos de las prácticas y procesos comunicativos tomando como referencia la realidad social iberoamericana. La comunicación se descompone en sus diferentes factores, que se interpretan desde una perspectiva sociocognitiva, lingüística y comunicativa. Los contextos iberoamericanos sirven de marco para comprender cómo interviene cada factor de la comunicación y cómo contribuyen a su adecuación y eficacia en contextos sociales concretos. El conocimiento sobre cómo funciona cada factor y sobre cómo todos ellos interactúan entre sí contribuye a una mayor comprensión y a un mejor dominio de las técnicas comunicativas, especialmente en dominios públicos.

Practical: Communication and Public Spheres in Ibero-America

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Pablo Porten-Cheé

This seminar studies the public sphere, comprised of the media, civil society, and politics, and looks at their relationships from a communication science perspective. The seminar, therefore, introduces a selective conceptual vocabulary that is regarded as instrumental to understanding the communicators of political information, such as journalists or today's 'users'. Further, the practical focuses on characteristics that typically guide the content of the media and political information and serve to uncover structures of the communication itself. Moreover, the effects of communication are discussed applying approaches from media effects research. The practical sets an emphasis on the context in which communication takes place in three dimensions: Firstly, it focuses on the Ibero-American context, and regional case studies inform about public sphere mechanisms around actors, media content, and reception in the macro-region. Secondly, the public spheres are studied under conditions of deeply changed media environments shaped by the production and use of digital media. Thirdly, the practical addresses current debates on societal processes, such as the polarization of the public sphere, that are suspected to be fueled by virulent online communication (e.g., hate speech). The seminar mainly builds on quantitative research literature, but previous knowledge of quantitative research is not required. A short introduction to reading quantitative papers is provided.

2. Methodological Skills

Seminar: Qualitative methods

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Rosa Lehmann

In this course, students will gain knowledge on approaches and methodologies in the social sciences and engage with qualitative research methods and techniques.

Lecture: HCIAS Master's Degree Lecture Series: Approaches, Methods, and Resources in Ibero-American Studies

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Yaatsil Guevara González

The HCIAS-Master's Degree Lecture Series presents research projects on, in, and with Ibero-America from diverse perspectives in the fields of the Humanities and Social Sciences. This series aims to provide an overview of current state of the art research and innovative inquiries on issues of particular relevance to Ibero-American societies, setting a special focus on methodological approaches. The lecture series includes speakers from the Heidelberg Center for Ibero-American Studies (HCIAS) as well as from international partner universities and research institutions.

The HCIAS-Master's Degree Lecture Series is open to all interested students, doctoral candidates, and researchers of Heidelberg University.

3. Advanced Competencies

Seminar: Ámbitos de la comunicación pública en Iberoamérica

Prof. Dr. Francisco Moreno-Fernández

Dr. Héctor Álvarez Mella

La comunicación pública es el conjunto de procesos de creación, circulación, recepción y retroacción de la información que configura los debates y temas públicos. Después de discutir los conceptos fundamentales de la comunicación pública, el curso se ocupa de sus distintos ámbitos de aplicación en Iberoamérica desde una perspectiva teórico-práctica e intercultural. Por un lado, se presentarán las herramientas teórico-metodológicas necesarias para entender la comunicación científica, la comunicación política, la comunicación intercultural y la comunicación publicitaria. Por otro, se discutirán los retos de estos cuatro ámbitos de la comunicación considerando su contribución a los debates públicos. Se hará especial hincapié en las estrategias para el análisis, la creación y la gestión de discursos y espacios de comunicación entre instituciones, organizaciones y ciudadanos.

Seminar: Citizens and Digital Media

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Pablo Porten-Cheé

Today's citizens and democracies experience multiple threats and challenges that can be linked to phenomena on digital and social media. On the one hand, hate speech, disinformation, and polarization harm how we talk to each other and find public consensus. On the other hand, an information overflow in online environments makes it difficult to gain the attention of citizens and mobilize them for political action. But at the same time, the expansion of the public sphere into the online environment has also widened the reach of the messages citizens send to others. This seminar introduces topics and approaches from communication science (and partly political science) that aim to foster our understanding of how citizens use digital media to shape today's democracies. The topics and approaches consider how individual political participation has changed due to the application of digital media. Further, the seminar also emphasizes how citizens can effectively apply digital media for political action in text-writing practices. Finally, changing norms, attitudes, and values that present important boundary conditions for citizens' engagement in democracies through digital media are also addressed.

The seminar mainly builds on quantitative research literature, but previous knowledge of quantitative research is not required. A short introduction to reading quantitative papers is provided.

Seminar: Emancipatory Ruralities

Dr. Judith Müller

This course explores the concept of rurality, examining its meaning, as well as challenges and potentials ascribed to it. The focus will moreover be on the analysis of social movements related to food and agriculture, as well as the phenomenon of rural populism.

4. Key Transversal Skills

Seminar: Quantitative methods: Machine Learning for the Social Sciences

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Alejandro Ecker

This course gently introduces students to machine learning models for social science research. It aims to equip them with the necessary tools to understand, evaluate, and build their own machine learning models. Starting from established and more familiar statistical methods (e.g., linear and non-linear regression models), students first learn about important differences and commonalities with machine learning models, and are introduced to fundamental concepts such as cross-validation, supervised versus unsupervised learning and model tuning. The following sessions then provide a comprehensive exploration of supervised and unsupervised machine learning techniques, ranging from basic models to more advanced methods, with a focus on interpretability. These include, inter alia, k-nearest-neighbour classifier, Decision Trees/Random Forests, Support Vector Machines, dimension reduction techniques and clustering methods. Throughout the course, students are provided with exemplary code using the R statistical environment and hands-on exercises to apply their learned skills directly.

Practical: Practicing Quantitative Data Analysis with SPSS

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Pablo Porten-Cheé

Many of the questions we ask in social sciences require collecting and analyzing quantitative data. This practical introduces into basic data analysis with the statistical software package SPSS. After beginning with a brief methodological introduction (e.g., on formulating hypotheses) and basic statistics, the practical provides how-to-knowledge on creating SPSS codes, allowing modification and analysis of social science data sets. Analysis sessions, for example, include comparing means (t-tests) or testing relationships between two or more variables (correlation analysis, regression analysis). The course is structured as a “block seminar” that combines input and practice sessions and allows students to create and run their own SPSS codes in monitored self-practice sessions. Students of this practice can apply acquired basic SPSS skills in future empirical term papers or theses. Previous knowledge of quantitative data analysis is not required.

Workshop on Science Communication

Dr. Michele Catanzaro (Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona)

In this workshop we will understand the role, meaning, and importance of science journalism. We will learn techniques to write an effective science communication, by analyzing examples of successful and unsuccessful communication of science and by hands-on exercises of text production. We will also touch upon the practicalities of the work of science journalists. The workshop will be carried out in English. The teacher, Michele Catanzaro, has a PhD in Physics, is a lecturer in science journalism at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and has been working as a science journalist for international outlets for over two decades. He was Nature-Marsilius Invited professor at the University of Heidelberg in 2023.