

RESEARCH CLINIC

General information

Supervisor:	Dr. Kai Hebel
Title of clinic:	Measuring Power
Number of students:	Six (max)
Major (<i>if applicable and approved by the Major Convener</i>):	World Politics
(Pre)requisites (<i>if applicable</i>):	Very good reading skills beyond English are an asset, especially Arabic (please indicate in application)

Researchers and politicians alike agree that power is a key – if not the key – concept in politics. However, what power is and how it can be measured remains widely contested. This research clinic will approach these fundamental debates by investigating a particularly prominent conception of power: ‘soft power’. Popularised by Harvard professor Joseph Nye, soft power is about co-optation, i.e. about ‘getting others to want the outcomes that you want’. Whereas ‘hard power’ relies either on coercion, e.g. the use of military force, or on payment, e.g. the use of economic incentives, soft power relies on different means: ‘framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction’.

Interestingly, governments and other political actors invest billions and billions each year to boost their soft power even though there is no agreement on how it can be measured. It remains unclear, therefore, whether these major investments yield adequate returns. A good example is Qatar, a country that has spent extraordinary sums of money to increase its international image, not least by hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2022 at an estimated cost of \$220 billion. This research clinic will measure soft power by investigating whether Qatar’s hosting of the football mega-event has increased its (soft) power. In doing so, students will actively learn how to theorise and measure the fundamental concept of power and how to evaluate governmental policies.

Students’ tasks and activities

Students will meet with me over the course of Blocks 1 and 2. Research tasks will be distributed in conversation with the students. A particular focus will be on measuring soft power through online newspaper coverage, so the research clinic should be of particular interest to students of politics as well as of journalism.