

Modeling Political Decisions for Sustainability: Forecasting EU Climate Policy

Fall (Winter) Term 2026/27

Professor Detlef F. Sprinz, Ph.D.

Purpose and Contents

This seminar will introduce students to the Predictioneer's Game, an applied model of multi-party decision-making. Subsequently, students will apply their modeling skills to specific political decisions on sustainability. The domain of application for the decision forecasts will be a yet to be resolved issue of the 2040 EU climate goal. The language of instruction is English.

Learning Goals

Knowledge & Understanding

- background on political decision-making in medium-to-large-large actor settings,
- understand the core inputs & outputs of a prediction model, and
- decision-making on EU climate policies, esp. carbon removals.

Applying, Analyzing & Evaluating

- undertake predictions of multi-actor negotiations for a hitherto unresolved challenge of sustainability policy,
- develop, among students and facilitated by the instructors, on standardized position and potential influence (input) scales as relevant to utilizing a policy prediction software, and
- research, execute, and evaluate your own simulation model runs.

Competences

- Students develop their own research strategy in the context of policy prediction tools, e.g., for subsequent use in their Master thesis as well as in a business and environmental NGO, government, or international (non-)governmental context, and
- work individually as well as in groups on a diverse set of assignments.

Logistics

Time: → *Course Overview* (below)

Course website: Open.UP → <https://openup.uni-potsdam.de/enrol/index.php?id=772> (Non-University of Potsdam students need to register a guest account with their *university* email)

Zoom: → Open.UP

Location: → *Course Overview for locations* (most sessions take place at Griebnitzsee, Building 6):

Please regularly check → Open.UP for additional announcements.

Prerequisites: Master, M.A., M.S., or doctoral student status, or special student status in Political Science, Public Administration, MAIB, Economics, MANIA, MPM, Sociology, Business Administration, Education, and HPI; exceptions at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Registration: → <https://puls.uni-potsdam.de>, Course: 121922.

Students *without* access to PULS send a brief email to the instructor (→ detlef.sprinz@uni-potsdam.de, include “MPD4S – W2026/27” in the subject line) and indicate (1) first & last name, (2) email (University of Potsdam email preferred), (4) field und semester of studies, (4) why they cannot access PULS, and (5) why they wish to take this course.

Deadline for Dropping the Course: 10 Nov. 2026

Credit Points: 6/7 or 9/10 (ECTS)

Capacity: 20

Contact Details:

detlef.sprinz@uni-potsdam.de (always include “MPD4S – W2026/27” in the subject line)

www.sprinz.org

Office Hours: by appointment (preferably: please inquire after class or during breaks)

Practicalities

This course requires usage of Open.UP (a version of Moodle) and Zoom for our remote communication and interaction. In addition, we may use other digital tools.

We will use Open.UP for contents management (self-enrollment, see above) and Zoom for video (as needed). You will need a computing device running Windows OS to run the software (“Predictioneer’s Game”) used for predicting negotiation outcomes. Apple Mac computers can be configured to run under Windows OS.

The Dean of Studies of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences kindly supports the purchase of licenses for the Predictioneer’s Game.

Code of Conduct

All students are assumed to be familiar with and will abide by the rules of proper academic conduct as specified by the University of Potsdam and your home institutions. You are required to familiarize yourself with those of the respective universities and your specific academic programs.

For courses offered jointly with other universities and joint academic programs, their rules apply in addition to those of the University of Potsdam. You are expected to undertake all your individual assignments independently. For group assignments, resulting products shall be authored exclusively by all group members.

Failure to comply with such rules may lead to the consequences stipulated in → https://www.uni-potsdam.de/fileadmin/projects/ambek/Amtliche_Bekanntmachungen/2026/Ausgabe_04/ambek-2026-04-101-127.pdf (German, §17) and → https://www.uni-potsdam.de/fileadmin/projects/studium/docs/03_studium_konkret/07_rechtsgrundlagen/BAMAO_Lesefassung_EN.pdf (only includes the 9th Amendment rather than the 10th Amendment, English, §17).

If you use artificial intelligence (AI), esp. large language models, you will have to note that in a form that will be specifically designed for the papers and presentations of this course. You are encouraged to use AI, but you are also responsible for its use, adverse effects of your learning, and potential errors that AI may produce. If you use AI for your assignments, you will be required to append your submissions of presentation files or papers with a separate reflection paper on AI use. The reflection paper is normally one page (per person) in length. The document “Guidelines: “AI and Examination at the University of Potsdam”” (→ https://www.uni-potsdam.de/fileadmin/projects/zfq/Lehre_und_Medien/KI/Guidelines_AI_and_Examinations_en_14.07.2026_V2.0_with_Documentation_Table.pdf) provides information on general policy as does the University of Potsdam’s webpage on “AI in Higher Education” (→ <https://www.uni-potsdam.de/en/zfq/lehre-und-medien/online-lehre-2020/ai-in-higher-education>).

All (personal) information and material that you encounter in conjunction with this course, on →Zoom, or on →Open.UP shall be exclusively used for course-related purposes; they are not part of the public domain. As we will have guest speakers and an issue of current politics as the domain of application, “Chatham House Rules” apply:

“When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.”

(<https://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chatham-house-rule>, last accessed: 11 Oct. 2026).

Whenever you use outside services, incl. software, you agree to abide by their respective End User License Agreement or equivalent. You have to read the EULA (End User License Agreement) of the Predictioneer's Game software, and you accept it automatically when submitting the simulation paper. You also automatically accept all rules of academic conduct for the entire course by submitting your first written assignment, whether this is a paper, presentation file, written test, quiz, or similar.

During our seminar sessions, I expect you to concentrate solely on this course, not other activities.

Students are expected to attend all sessions. If you are sick or have a communicable disease, incl. seasonal influenza, please stay at home and consult your medical doctor. If possible, connect by Zoom (if available). If you miss an assignment, you must provide a medical doctor's certificate or written documentation of other extraordinary circumstances. Otherwise you receive zero points for the assignment.

In case you request accommodations ("Nachteilsausgleich"), please inform the instructors to this effect and provide the necessary documentation by 05 Nov. 2026. By default, I assume you request 6 or 7 ECTS. In case you wish to receive 9 or 10 ECTS (with a considerably higher work load than for 5 or 6 ECTS), you must inform the instructor by 05 Nov. 2026.

In case observation of religious obligations interferes with academic deadlines, please notify the instructor well ahead of the deadlines.

For proper citation, please consult →
<https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/writing/yale-college-writing-center-resources> (English).

Course Requirements and Grading

Students are expected to attend *all* classes as well as read *all* required readings and watch all videos (if applicable) *before* class so as to allow for informed discussions.

This course comprises a portfolio of assignments.

<i>Requirements</i>	<i>Weight</i>
Fulfill tasks and tests on Open.UP	20%
(Individual) actor paper	15%
(Individual) actor paper presentation	15%
(Group) simulation paper presentation	25%
(Group) simulation paper	25%

Course Overview¹

Module #	Date & Time	Topic	Learning goals students	Homework (in advance of the class meetings) & Activities
1	15 Oct. 2026, 9:15-10:45h, 3.06.S19	Course Overview	Understand the goals and topic of the course	Read detailed syllabus & admission policy Students prepare course-related questions
2	22 Oct. 2026, 9:15-10:45h, <i>via Zoom</i>	The Predictioneer's Game: Logic & Overview	Basic understanding of overall functions and functioning of the Predictioneer's Game	Familiarize yourself with Open.UP Watch a set of videos by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita (BdM) Readings according to syllabus
3	22 Oct. 2026, 12:30-14:00h, <i>via Zoom</i>	The Predictioneer's Game: Input Data	Detailed understanding of the input data (conceptual)	Watch a set of videos by BdM Readings according to syllabus
	29 Oct. 2026	Reading Week		
4	05 Nov. 2026, 9:15-10:45h, 3.06.S19	The Predictioneer's Game: Output Data	Detailed understanding of the output files (conceptual) Interpreting outputs Learn veto rule	Watch a set of videos by BdM Readings according to syllabus Read centrally provided output files
optional	05 Nov. 2026, time t.b.d.	attend 11. Jahreskonferenz der Stiftung KlimaWirtschaft, Berlin	Register individually at → klimawirtschaft.org	
5A	12 Nov. 2026, 9:15-	Q&A on the Predictioneer's	Improve model understanding and	Post your advance

¹ The schedule is indicative, incomplete, and subject to short-term changes. Check the course site on →Open.UP for updates and announcements as the instructor may include additional online events or change course times in line with the availability of guest speakers.

	10:20h	Game (Modules 2-4)	resolve open issues	questions to the forum on →Open.UP
5B	12 Nov. 2026, 10:30-10:55h, 3.06.S19	Quiz (→Open.UP)		Bring proper digital devices with you to class
6	12 Nov. 2026, 12:30-14:00h, 3.06.S19			Readings according to syllabus
7	19 Nov. 2026, 9:15-10:45h, 3.06.S19			Readings according to syllabus
8	19 Nov. 2026, 12:00-13:30h, 3.06.S26	The Predictioneer's Game: Running the Software	Get Predictioneer's Game running	Install Predictioneer's Game prior to class Submit Predictioneer's Game input file to →Open.UP Readings according to syllabus
9	26 Nov. 2026, 9:15-10:45h, 3.06.S19			Readings according to syllabus
10	26 Nov. 2026, 12:30-14:00h, 3.06.S19			Readings according to syllabus
11	03 Dec. 2026, 9:15-10:45h, 3.06.S19	Developing the Prediction Scales	Interactive development of the input scales, esp. position scale (& potential influence)	Readings according to syllabus Students submit initial ideas on the position & influence scales to →Open.UP
12	03 Dec. 2026, 12:30-14:00h, 3.06.S19			Readings according to syllabus; Students sign up for

				Assignment #1
13	10 Dec. 2026, 9:15-10:45h, 3.06.S19			
	10 Dec. 2026, 12:30-14:00h, 3.06.S19	flexible reserve		
14 & 15	17 Dec. 2026, 9:30-10:45 & 12:30-14:00h, 3.06.S19	Presentations: Individual Actor Papers I & II		Submission of actor papers and presentation files to →Open.UP by 16 Dec. 2025 (see Assignment #1 for details)
16	07 Jan. 2027, 9:15-10:45h, <i>via Zoom</i>	Workshop: Q&A on Group Projects	Consultations by Simulation Group with the Instructor	Submit general and project-specific questions →Open.UP
17 & 18	14 Jan. 2027, 9:00-13:00h <i>at PIK-Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research</i>	Presentations: Individual & Group Predictions	Student Presentations	Submission of presentation files to →Open.UP by 13 Jan. 2026 (see Assignment #2 for details)
19	15 Jan. 2027, 13:00-14:00h	Course Review		
	29 Jan. 2026			Assignment #2 Papers Due (see Assignment #2 for details)

Additional modules may be scheduled at the discretion of the instructor.
Please check announcements on →Open.UP for updates.

Textbooks

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 2009. *The Predictioneer's Game: Using the Logic of Brazen Self-Interest to See and Shape the Future*. New York: Random House

Helpful background readings on EU climate policy include

Debelke, Jos. ed. 2024. *Delivering a Climate Neutral Europe*. London: Routledge, doi.org/10.4324/9781003493730

Rayner, Tim et al. 2023. *Handbook on European Union Climate Change Policy and Politics*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, doi.org/10.4337/9781789906981

All other readings can be found on →*Open.UP*.

Assignments

All Assignments

Assignments will be posted to →*Open.UP* well ahead of the deadline. Submission deadlines are indicated in the →*Assignments*.

Read the instructions carefully! All papers include your student ID number(s), assignment number (see overview), and word count on the first page. At a minimum, leave one inch margins from all four edges of A4-sized sheets. Footnotes shall be kept to a minimum. All text is 1.5-spaced, 11-12 point font (except for tables and graphs due to formatting). Paper length will be strictly enforced (the word count includes literally everything). Papers exceeding the word count by 10% or more will receive zero points. Papers shall be submitted – both in Word (check your word count!) **and** PDF format – via →*Open.UP* by the due date and time (→*Assignment*). Extensions will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances, following timely written petition to the instructor.

In case you use AI for any of the oral or written assignments, you will have to declare so (incl. whether you do NOT use AI). In case you use AI, you will have to submit a reflection paper of one page per person on the use of AI. The reflection paper does not count to the word limit and is graded.

In case of group assignments, all author ID numbers have to be listed, including a short description who contributed what (or that everyone contributed to everything *equally*). Equal effort is expected from all students.

In case you cannot submit assignments due to medical reasons, you must submit a medical doctor's certificate to the instructor. Otherwise, the assignment is graded as zero points.

The allocation of individual students to actor papers and to simulation groups is at the discretion of the instructor.

Assignments will be posted to →*Open.UP* and are outlined below.

Actor and Simulation Papers & Presentations

Actor papers will be up to 1,250 words in length, simulation papers will be up to 2,500 words in length per group member (for 9-10 ECTS: individual assignment with a maximum of 5,000 words). Details on the paper format and the submission procedure will be provided in the formal assignments. All papers and presentation files are due the day prior to the presentation + Q&A session in class. Papers and presentation files are submitted via →*Open.UP*. Papers have to include student IDs and a brief description who did what (papers only), the topic, and the word count on the cover page. AI declarations (more generally: “Eigenständigkeitserklärungen”/declarations of academic honesty have to be submitted with *each* oral presentation and written paper submission.

We will elaborate the relevant position scale for the prediction paper (Assignment #2) in class (see Course Overview), using working groups.

For the actor papers, please provide a brief historical overview of the actor, its central positions over time on the particular issue under investigation, and score the actor with respect to potential influence, position, salience, flexibility, and veto status (as introduced in Modules 2-4). Each of these scores has to be justified and sources fully referenced. Your presentations will be subject to Q&A by your peers (see Course Overview) and by the instructor.

For the simulation paper, you will have to determine which actors to include (beyond the actors already covered by actor papers), potentially revise the scoring offered in individual actor papers, and devise a strategy for employing the Predictioneer’s Game, including robustness checks (variations of the input structure, e.g., on parameter values where point values cannot be reliably ascertained). Please appendix the input file(s) for the simulations as .txt file(s) and provide full references for all sources. The simulation papers will be subject to Q&A by your peers (see Course Overview) and by the instructor.

Modules

Module 1: Course Overview

Course Overview

Module 2: The Predictioneer's Game: Logic & Overview

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 2009. *The Predictioneer's Game: Using the Logic of Brazen Self-Interest to See and Shape the Future*. New York: Random House, ch. 3

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 2010. Judging Judgment. *Critical Review* 22 (4):355-388. doi: 10.1080/08913811.2010.541686

Sprinz, Detlef F., Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Steffen Kallbekken, Frans Stokman, Håkon Sælen, and Robert Thomson. 2016. Predicting Paris: Multi-Method Approaches to Forecast the Outcomes of Global Climate Negotiations. *Politics and Governance* 4 (3):172-187. doi: 10.17645/pag.v4i3.654

Watch instructional video clips on →Open.UP

Module 3: The Predictioneer's Game: Input Data

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 2009. *The Predictioneer's Game: Using the Logic of Brazen Self-Interest to See and Shape the Future*. New York: Random House, ch. 4

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 2011. A New Model for Predicting Policy Choices. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 28 (1):65-87. doi: 10.1177/0738894210388127

Sprinz, Detlef F., Tabea V. Schaefers, Freya Lenk, and Maximilian Krott. 2024. Forecasting Forest-Related Political Decisions in a Climate-Constrained World – The Remuneration of Forest Ecosystem Services in Germany. *Forest Policy and Economics* 169:103231. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2024.103231>

Watch instructional video clips on →Open.UP

Reading Week

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 2009. *The Predictioneer's Game: Using the Logic of Brazen Self-Interest to See and Shape the Future*. New York: Random House, ch. 9

Module 4: The Predictioneer's Game: Output Data

Sprinz, Detlef F., and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita. 2015. *Predicting Paris: Forecasting the Outcomes of UNFCCC COP-21 With the Predictioneer's Game*. Potsdam and New York City: PIK - Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and New York University. doi: 10.13140/RG.2.1.3722.1840

Read output files for Module 4 (→Open.UP).

Watch instructional video clips on →Open.UP

Module 5A: Q&A on the Predictioneer's Game (Modules 2-4)

Post your advance questions to the forum on →Open.UP.

Module 5B: Quiz (covering Modules 2-4)

In-Class Quiz

Note: Please bring a laptop or similar device with you for the in-class test. The electronic quiz on the Predictioneer's Game in Module 6B can only be accessed after having watched *all* audio and video files provided in preparation of Modules 2- 4. Please be aware and prepare accordingly in order to avoid any technical issues when the quiz is taken in-class.