

European Institutions and Policies

Bachelor 1st year, Spring term 2024-2025
English track

Contact information

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1. Description

During the last decade, the EU faced different crises: an economic crisis, a new crisis of its migration regime, Brexit, the democratic backsliding taking place in Hungary and Poland, the COVID 19 pandemic and more recently the Russian war in Ukraine. All those crises rise questions about the integration project, its resilience, and its risks. To address them, it is important to understand and to evaluate the resources that the EU can mobilize to deal with those challenges. To do so, we need to look back at the history of the EU, to understand its institutional structures and legal framework, as well as the dynamics of decision-making.

The aim of the course is to provide students with an introduction to the political system of the European Union, its institutions, actors, judicial system, and law, tracing historical evolutions and highlighting contemporary challenges. This includes not only in-depth analysis of (inter) institutional dynamics in Brussels, but also the relations with national governments, bureaucracies, and agencies in the member states as well as with representatives of third countries. The course places a particular focus on the EU's response to – or its 'governance' of – the multiple crises which the Union has been facing in recent years. It presents theoretical perspectives on how to make sense of an increasingly crisis-driven European integration process.

2. Objectives

At the end of this course, students will develop their understanding of European dynamics, and namely of political evolutions since World War II. They will become familiar with the main theories of European integration and the way in which the relationship between the supra-national and national level has been explained by social sciences. They will also be able to apply the theoretical perspectives to empirical cases, to explain the dynamics of European policymaking, as well as of the disintegration and crisis.

3. Learning outcomes

3.1. Professional skills

1. Gain a thorough understanding of the institutional architecture of the European Union and of the nature of its decision-making processes, as well as an awareness of the legitimacy, effectiveness and transparency of EU institutions, both individually and collectively.
2. Identify, explain, contrast, and defend a variety of key concepts and theories of European integration.
3. Apply these concepts and theories to contemporary political phenomena and take a stance in debates on key challenges to European integration using scientific evidence.
4. Articulate a range of justifications and limitations of European integration.
5. Fostering the ability to make theoretical (philosophical, institutional, sociological) arguments on the European Union supported by scientific evidence.

3.2. Cross-cutting skills

1. Capacity to apply the theoretical landmarks to real situations.
2. Critical thinking and the capacity to communicate and work as part of a team.
3. Independently process and review core theoretical texts and reproduce the central argument of such texts both verbally and in written format.
4. Capacity to efficiently use the specific information needed in solving complex tasks.

5. Method

Each course is divided in three parts: a lecture, a class discussion of a theoretical text and a seminar (presentation). The three parts work together to create an integrated learning environment. The lectures, which will be kept at a very basic level, will mainly be focused on the theoretical concepts of European integration and European decision-making. To supplement the lectures, every week students must read the assigned texts and engage in a discussion with their fellows and the lecturer. For each seminar, a group of students will deliver a presentation on a predefined topic linked to the lecture. A list of topics will be provided beforehand, and students will choose their presentation topic during the first class. The seminars seek to strengthen student's ability to make oral presentations, while making effective use of theoretical concepts in a way that adds an empirical perspective to the class. In addition, during the second part of the semester, students will watch a plenary sitting of the European Parliament and will afterwards write a short analytical note, which will take the form of a blog post.

Below is a rough approximation of the expected study load of this course.

5.1. Number of teaching hours/week		2	of which	5.2 Lecture	1	5.3 Seminar	1
5.4 Total number of teaching hours within the program		24	of which	5.5 Lecture	12	5.6 Seminar	12
5.7 Student workload for individual study		83	4.8 Total student workload/ semester				107
DISTRIBUTION OF INDIVIDUAL STUDY WORKLOAD	Individual study of textbooks, handbooks/reader, bibliography and notes						24
	Homework (preparing seminar presentations and reading activities)						16
	Blog post						8
	Evaluations / exams						35
	Other activities						-

Assignments and Grading

The final grade is composed based on the following categories:

- Written Exam determines 60% of the final mark.
- Other Exam determines 40% of the final mark.

Within the **Written Exam** category, the following assignments need to be completed:

- The **written exam** will consist of a ‘closed book’ exam of 2 hours. This means that no study resources such as books, treaties, study notes, internet access via smartphone or tablet etc. can be used. Students will have the choice between an essay question related to the notions, concepts, theories exposed during lectures and a text commentary. The aim of the exam is to test the ability of the students to link different aspects of the course and basic knowledge of the key ideas discussed throughout the lectures and in the seminars.

Within the **Other Exam** category, the following assignments need to be completed:

- **Reading activity** with a relative weight of 10 which comprises 10% of the final mark. To supplement the lectures, every week students must read the assigned texts and write a one-write note summarizing the mandatory reading(s) (except for students already responsible for the presentation of the day). Notes will be collected and graded randomly.

Reading and note-taking should be guided by the following questions:

- a) What is the thesis, the main idea developed by the author in the text?
- b) What are the key arguments presented in the text?
- c) What specific evidence, examples or illustrations has the author used to support or prove these arguments?

During the class: Students should be able to address the aforementioned questions. They must also actively participate in the discussion.

- **Oral Presentations** with a relative weight of 20 which comprises 20% of the final mark. For each seminar 1- 2 students will deliver a presentation on a predefined topic linked to the lecture. Students have 10 minutes to make their presentation and they will afterwards engage in a 10-minute discussion with the lecturer and the class. Students should take a position on the question asked and support it with at least three arguments and/or examples found in your readings. The evaluation will consider both the content and the form of the presentations. An evaluation form will be made available on Moodle.
- **Practical Exercise /Blog Post** with a relative weight of 10 which comprises 10% of the final mark. During the second part of the semester, students will watch a plenary sitting of the European Parliament and will afterwards write a short analytical note, which will take the form of a blog post.

Course material

A syllabus that is distributed on Moodle will outline the articles or book chapters to be read for each session. The mandatory reading(s) must be read in preparation for the class.

Recommended readings also include:

- ◆ Cini, Michelle and Borragan, Nieves Pérez-Solórzano (eds) (2022). *European Union Politics*. 7th edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ◆ Dür, Andreas and Hubert Zimmermann (eds.) (2021). *Key controversies in European Integration*, 3rd edition, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- ◆ Hix, Simon & Høyland, Bjørn (2022). *The Political System of the European Union*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- ◆ Hodson, Dermot, Uwe Puetter, Sabine Saurugger, and John Peterson (eds) (2021). *The Institutions of the European Union*. 5th edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schedule, readings and presentation topics

First block: Introduction and Background

Week 1: Introduction	24/01/2025
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Lecture: Outline of the course and a brief conceptualization of the European integration, its institutions and the political system of the EU. The main objectives and requirements of the course will also be explained in detail. Students will choose the topic of their presentation.

Readings: No reading. The lecturer will expose methodological guidelines for text readings, oral presentations and essay.

Week 2: Old and New Theories of European Integration	31/01/2025
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Lecture: What are the key theoretical perspectives on European integration?

Mandatory reading:

Hooghe, Liesbeth & Gary Marks (2019). Grand theories of European integration in the twenty-first century. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26 (8), 1113-1133.

Presentation 1: How to theorise crisis-related pressures in relation to the EU?

- Ferrara, Federico & Hanspeter Kriesi (2022). Crisis pressures and European Integration. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 29 (9), 1351-1373.

- Jones, Erik & Daniel R. Kelemen, Sophie Meunier (2021). Failing Forward? Crisis and patterns of European integration. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28 (10), 1519-1536.

Second block: The European Union's Institutional Architecture

Week 3: Law-making and the EU Policy Process

07/02/2025

Lecture: How is the EU legislating? How are EU institutions cooperating?

Mandatory reading:

Mühlböck, M. and Rittberger, B. (2015) 'The Council, the European Parliament, and the paradox of inter-institutional cooperation', *European Integration online Papers* (EIoP), 19(4), 1–20.

EC, How the EU really works, pp.3-8

Presentation 2: Is EU law-making democratic?

- Reh, C. (2014) 'Is informal politics undemocratic? Trilogues, early agreements and the selection model of representation', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 21(6), pp. 822–841.
- Farrell, H. and Héritier, A. (2003), Formal and Informal Institutions Under Codecision: Continuous Constitution-Building in Europe. *Governance*, 16 (4) : 577-600.

Week 4: The EU's Executive Powers

14/02/2025

Lecture: Who holds the EU's executive powers and how is their institutional functioning?

Mandatory readings:

Nugent, Neill & Mark Rhinard (2016). Is the European Commission Really in Decline? *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54 (5), 1199-215.

Bocquillon, P. and Dobbels, M. (2013) 'An elephant on the 13th floor of the Berlaymont? European Council and Commission relations in legislative agenda setting', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 21(1), pp. 20–38.

EC, How the EU Works 2014 pp.12-13 and 19-22

Presentation 3: Should the Commission be a technocracy or a political body?

- The Economist (2020). The contradictions at the heart of the European Commission. Sept 3rd 2020 edition.
- Peterson, John (2016)? Juncker's political European Commission and an EU in crisis. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 55 (2), 349-367.

- Christiansen, T. (1997) 'Tensions of European governance: politicized bureaucracy and multiple accountability in the European Commission', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 4(1), pp. 73–90.

Week 5: Plenary debate European Parliament

18/02/2025

Week 6: The EU's legislative power

21/02/2025

Lecture: How does the European Parliament and the Council of the EU work?

Mandatory reading:

Fromage, Diane (2018) The European Parliament in the post-crisis era: an institution empowered on paper only?, *Journal of European Integration*, 40(3), pp. 281–294.

Novak, Stéphanie (2013). The Silence of Ministers: Consensus and Blame Avoidance in the Council of the European Union. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 51(6), 1091-1107.

EC, How the EU Works 2014 pp.9-11 and 14-18

Presentation 4: The “Spitzenkandidaten” process - What has been the role of Spitzenkandidaten in European Parliament elections? What speaks for, what against such a system?

- Hobolt, Sara (2014). A vote for the President? The role of Spitzenkandidaten in the 2014 European Parliament elections, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 21(10), 1528-40.
- Crum, Ben (2023): Why the European Parliament lost the Spitzenkandidaten-process. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 30(2), 193-213.

Week 7: The EU Court of Justice and Law Enforcement in the EU
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28/02/2025

Lecture: How are competences shared between the EU and Member States? What is the role of the EU Court of Justice?

Mandatory reading:

Alter, K. (1998). Who Are the “Masters of the Treaty”? European Governments and the European Court of Justice. *International Organization*, 52(1), 121-147

EC, How the EU Works 2014, pp. 24-25

Presentation 5: Can national parliaments effectively control the principle of subsidiarity?

- Fabbrini, Federico & Katarzyna Granat (2013). ‘Yellow card, but no foul’: The Role of the National Parliaments under the Subsidiarity Protocol and the Commission Proposal for an EU Regulation on the Right to Strike. *Common Market Law Review*, 50(1), 115–44.

- Tacea, Angela (2021). From Legal to Political Reasoning: National Parliaments' Use of Reasoned Opinions in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 59 (6), 1573-1589.

No class

07/03/2025

Third block: Dynamics of European policymaking

Week 8: Internal Security and Migration Management

14/03/2025

Lecture: What is the EU's approach to migration management? How does the EU deal with internal security challenges such as organised crime and counterterrorism?

Mandatory reading:

Trauner, Florian & Ariadna Ripoll Servent (2019). Justice and Home Affairs in the European Union. In: Edward J. Mullen (ed.) *Oxford Bibliographies in Social Work*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Presentation 7: Is the EU effective in fighting terrorism?

Bures, Oldrich (2018). EU counter-terrorism: glass half-full or half empty? In: Ripoll Servent, Ariadna and Florian Trauner (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Justice and Home Affairs Research*, London: Routledge, 157-168.

Jeandesboz, Julien (2018). EU Home Affairs and Technology. How to make sense of information and data processing. In: Ripoll Servent, Ariadna and Florian Trauner (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Justice and Home Affairs Research*, London: Routledge, 180-191.

Week 9: European Union Privacy and Data Protection Policy

21/03/2025

Lecture: What level of protection is the EU providing to its citizens when data are transferred within or outside of Europe? How is the EU balancing the need for privacy and security of data with the need of businesses and administration to access data?

Mandatory reading:

Paul De Hert and Vagelis Papakonstantinou (2018). Data Protection Policies in EU Justice and Home Affairs: A multi-layered and yet unexplored territory for legal research. in: Ariadna Ripoll Servent, Florian Trauner (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of Justice and Home Affairs Research*. Routledge.

Presentation 6: Has the EU managed to enhance trust in the online environment?

- González Fuster, G. (2014), *The Emergence of Personal Data Protection as a Fundamental Right in the EU*, Law, Governance and Technology Series, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.
- Parker, Geoffrey and Petropoulos, Georgios and Van Alstyne, Marshall W., Digital Platforms and Antitrust (May 22, 2020). 2021 Winner of Antitrust Writing Award, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3608397>

- Robin Mansell (2014). Here Comes the Revolution – the European Digital Agenda, Chapter 12. in Pauwels & Loisen. *The Palgrave Handbook of European Media Policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

No class	28/03/2025
No class	04/04/2025

Week 10: Rule of law and democratic standards in the EU	11/04/2025
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Lecture: Why has the EU a ‘rule of law’ challenge? To what extent do certain EU member states backslide in terms of democratic standards – and why is this a problem for the EU?

Mandatory reading:

Kelemen, Daniel (2020). The European Union’s authoritarian equilibrium. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27 (2), 481-499.

Presentation 8: What are the consequences of „capturing“ independent courts in terms of rule of law and European integration?

- Kelemen, Daniel., & Laurent Pech (2019). The Uses and Abuses of Constitutional Pluralism: Undermining the Rule of Law in the Name of Constitutional Identity in Hungary and Poland. *Cambridge Yearbook of European Legal Studies*, 21, 59-74.

Week 11: External relations and defense cooperation	18/04/2025
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Lecture: Are EU external relations coherent? Who is representing the EU abroad?

Mandatory reading:

Aggestam, L. and Johansson, M. (2017) The Leadership Paradox in EU Foreign Policy, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 55(6), pp. 1203–1220.

Presentation 9: Is the EU Foreign Policy Effective or Futile?

Gehring, Thomas & Kevin Urbanski, Sebastian Oberthür (2017). The European Union as an Inadvertent Great Power: EU Actorness and the Ukraine Crisis. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 55(4), 727-743.

Week 12: Conclusions	25/04/2025
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Lecture: Which Europe? Scenarios on the Future of the EU. Final discussions and Exam revision.

Mandatory reading:

Laffan, Brigid (2019). Future Scenarios of the European Union. *Oxford Bibliographies in Social Work*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.