

SYLLABUS

COURSE: Introduction to the European Union: Institutions, decision-making, and legal framework

CREDITS: 3 ECTS

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The aim of this course is to give an overview and a clear understanding of the political, institutional, and historical dimensions of the EU and of European integration.

The lectures will provide a general and multifaceted overview on the political-institutional developments of the EU and its history. Decision-making will be discussed looking at the inter-institutional interaction dynamics and at the formal and informal processes behind them. In particular, the following aspects will be discussed: the integration process over time, the most recent institutional developments, the EU's theoretical foundation and the main related concepts, the Union's institutional, political, and economic nature, and the tension between "widening" and "deepening". Group discussion is favoured.

A part of the course is devoted to the understanding and problematization of some of the most controversial contemporary issues such as the ongoing refugee crisis, prospects for further political integration, and enlargement.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, student will have a solid understanding of the nature, foundation, history, and overtime institutional developments and policy-making process of the EU. They will have developed a critical perspective on the major achievements of European integration and will be able to problematize the most relevant EU-related issues.

Upon successfully completing the course, the students will:

- Be familiar with the historical development of the process of European integration
- Have specific knowledge about the composition, functions, and tasks of the key EU institutions
- Have a good understanding of the EU policy-making and of the inter-institutional dynamics

- Critically read the institutional and political developments EU and discuss the future trajectories
- Contextualize the EU within the debate on federalism, inter-governmentalism, functionalism, etc.
- Be able to discuss the most recent and most relevant pan-European issues
- Understand (and problematize) the democratic and political process in the EU

LIST OF LECTURED TOPICS

1. The EU integration process: historical and theoretical overview

- Introduction to the course
- Historical overview of the process of European integration
- Focus on recent dynamics
- Grand theories of European integration (federalism, neo-functionalism, liberal inter-governmentalism)

2. EU institutions: composition, functioning, role in the decision-making process

- The European Commission
- The Council of the EU and European Council
- The European Parliament
- Other institutions
- The role of the Member states

3. The practice of EU integration: EU policies (internal dimension)

- Conferral, subsidiarity, proportionality
- EU policy cycle
- Justice and Home affairs
- Regulatory and re-distributive policies
- Focus on current issues: refugee crisis

4. The practice of EU integration: EU policies (external dimension)

- Common Foreign and Security Policy (introducing the European External Action Service)
- Enlargement
- European Neighbourhood Policy and Eastern Partnership
- Competing models of regional integration

LEARNING PROCESS

Students' independent work is a key and fundamental element of the course. It is fundamental for a successful and proficient learning process and - as such - it will be evaluated and assessed during every meeting. Students are expected to work independently between sessions. This is crucial both in order to better interiorize the notions and experiences acquired during the preceding session (i.e. individual reflection on the results of the class discussion and application

of the introduced research methods) and to prepare the informative background necessary to successfully participate to the successive meeting (preparations for the discussions in class).

ASSESSMENT METHODS

FINAL TEST: It consists of a mix of open and closed (multiple-choice) questions addressing the main dimensions discussed during the course.

CRITICAL REVIEW: It is a written assignment of around 1000 words on one suggested article/reading. In the first part of the text the student highlights the main contributions and argumentative points of the article and in the second part he/she expresses his/her considerations in the light of the classes discussions and of the compulsory readings.

The components of the final evaluation will weight in the definition of the final grade according to the following percentages and distribution of points:

Final test – 60%

Critical review – 40%

SPECIFICATIONS

1. Students are expected to attend all course meetings and to come to class well prepared to discuss the readings.
2. Plagiarism is not tolerated and can lead to failing the course. More details are available at www.plagiarism.org

TEXTBOOK

John McCormick (2015). *European Union Politics*. Palgrave MacMillan

Additional articles and readings for the seminars and lectures will be made available in due time