



PO352 Europe in the Making: Politics and Power in the European Union
IES Abroad Vienna

DESCRIPTION:

The European Union is a complex and evolving political entity that plays a crucial role in international affairs. This seminar offers an interdisciplinary exploration of European integration by drawing on political theory, the history of international relations, and modern comparative politics. Far from being a linear or uncontested process, European integration remains deeply political and uneven; progress varies widely across policy areas and integration can be both ambitious in vision and difficult in practice. The course critically discusses why integration succeeds in some contexts but faces resistance or stagnation in others.

Based upon a firm understanding of the EU's origins, institutions, and policy processes, students will examine the possible future trajectories of the EU, exploring the ideas behind integration, the realities of institutional complexity, and the challenges posed by Euroscepticism, differentiated integration, and geopolitical shifts. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the functioning of the EU's main actors, the interplay between national and supranational institutions, and current debates on the future of the European project.

Held in the heart of Europe, this course offers students a unique opportunity to study the EU from within its own political, historical, and institutional context. This geographic proximity allows for first-hand engagement with European institutions, actors, and current debates. The course includes theoretical and policy-oriented discussions, site visits, and guest lectures to complement classroom learning and provide real-world perspectives.

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Gerd Valchars, gvalchars@iesvienna.org

CREDITS: 3 credits | **CONTACT HOURS:** 45 hours | **LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION:** English

PREREQUISITES: None | **ADDITIONAL COST:** None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

- Lectures
- In-Class Discussions
- Group Work and Presentations
- Course-Related Site Visits and Guest Lectures

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Course Participation, Debates and Reading Assignments - 10%
- Presentation - 20%
- Reflective Papers - 20%
- Midterm Exam - 25%
- Final Paper - 25%

Course Participation

Class attendance is mandatory, and simply being present during class meeting times is not considered in the assessment. Class participation refers to the extent to which students are involved, active, and prepared when coming to class. This includes reviewing the assigned readings before class meetings, preparing relevant discussion questions for the session, and actively taking part in class discussions and activities.

Presentation

Each student will give a presentation on a specified topic, drawing on the assigned course literature and complemented by relevant additional sources identified through independent research. Presentations must include up-to-date information and reflect current developments related to the assigned topic. Presentations are intended to encourage deeper engagement with a specific topic and to initiate and enrich in-class discussions through critical input and reflection. Presentations are scheduled throughout the semester and may be completed either individually or in groups.



Reflective Papers

Over the course of the semester, students are required to submit two short reflective papers (length: 500 words each). Each paper should engage critically with the assigned readings, and in particular with the content of class presentations and discussions related to the respective topic. The goal of these assignments is to demonstrate thoughtful reflection, connect theoretical insights to class debates, and develop individual perspectives on the themes covered. In addition, these papers are intended to support the development of the final paper by helping students explore relevant themes, clarify their arguments, and refine their academic writing.

Midterm Exam

An in-class, closed-book exam designed to assess students' knowledge of the course material. The exam evaluates the ability to recall and contextualize key events, political institutions, and developments. It includes a combination of short-answer and essay questions based on the assigned readings, lectures and class discussions.

Final Paper

Students are required to submit an academic essay (length: 2,500 words) on a topic of their choice that builds on and extends a key question or theme from the course. The essay must be based on a previously submitted and discussed short abstract, which outlines the research question, theoretical approach, and intended structure. The final paper should demonstrate a critical analysis of the chosen topic, engage with relevant academic literature, and reflect an independent and well-structured argument. The paper is intended to serve as a means to apply and contextualize acquired knowledge, integrate arguments, and, in light of the EU's historical development, critically reflect on current challenges.

Further guidelines regarding length, format, and deadlines will be provided in class.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- contextualize European integration within historical developments,
- describe and critically analyze the EU's institutional setup and its complex system of power sharing,
- examine the rise of Euroscepticism, including its various forms and degrees of critique and rejection,
- identify current challenges to European integration, and
- evaluate different scenarios on the EU's future development.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

IES Abroad Vienna requires attendance at all class sessions. Attendance will be taken every class. Students must attend at least 60% of their class sessions to qualify for a passing grade, regardless of whether their absences have been excused or not. Your attendance is required in-person unless otherwise noted in the syllabus. Students are highly encouraged to communicate absences as soon as possible to their professors and for excused absences using the processes described in the absence policy.

Please refer to the IES Abroad Vienna Absence Policy for a more precise overview of all attendance policies at IES Abroad Vienna as well as an overview of possible grade penalties.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

At IES Abroad Vienna, we hold ourselves to the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity. Any form of academic dishonesty undermines the principles of trust and fairness essential to a thriving learning community. As such, plagiarism and cheating are considered serious violations of our code of conduct, and students found engaging in such activities will face swift and severe consequences, ranging from a failing grade on an assignment, to an academic review and possible expulsion from the program.

USE OF AI:

The use of AI tools is limited to the following purposes: brainstorming, literature research support, language translation, and the refinement and grammatical correction of texts. All permitted uses of AI must be clearly indicated and appropriately documented in the submitted work. Any use beyond these functions – such as content generation, argument development, or full-text composition – is not permitted and may be considered a violation of academic integrity policies.

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Readings, Assignments and Comments
Week 1 15/17 Sep	Who, When, and Why? A Very Short Introduction to the European Union	<u>Readings</u> : • Cini/Pérez-Solórzano Borragán in Cini/Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, ch. 1, pp. 1-12 (2019) • Monnet in Segers/Albrecht, pp. 171-176
Week 2 22 Sep	A Political System in the Making. Milestones and Stumbling Stones: The History of European Integration	<u>Readings</u> : • Phinnemore in Cini/Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, ch. 2, 9-28 • Church/Phinnemore in Cini/Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, ch. 3, pp. 29-49 <u>Presentations</u> : Milestones and Stumbling Stones
Week 3 29 Sep/01 Oct	Theoretical Foundations: Theories on European Integration	<u>Readings</u> : • Tömmel, ch. 1, pp. 10-33 • Nugent, ch. 24, pp. 435-445
Week 4 06/08 Oct	The European Union as a Political System: The Core Institutional Structure and Main Actors	<u>Readings</u> : • Tömmel, ch. 4, pp. 85-114 • Nugent, ch. 16, pp. 275-297
Week 5 13/15 Oct	The Realities of Institutional Complexity: European Law Making & Policy Processes; Recap and Revision	<u>Readings</u> : • Tömmel, ch. 5-6, pp. 115-171
Midterms Week 20-23 Oct		
Week 6 03/05 Nov	Old vs New, Rich vs Poor? Cleavages within the EU	<u>Readings</u> : • Bunse/Nicolaïdis in Jones et al., ch. 18, pp. 249-266 • Lequesne in Jones et al., ch. 19, pp. 267-277 • Schelke in Jones et al., ch. 20, pp. 278-291 <u>Guest Lecture</u> : Raimund Löw (journalist, former ORF correspondent in Brussels, Washington and Beijing)
Week 7 10/12 Nov	Ambitious in Vision, Difficult in Practice: Legitimacy and the EU's Democratic Deficit	<u>Readings</u> : • Smismans in Cini/Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, ch. 9, pp. 124-138 • Tömmel, ch. 12, pp. 287-308 <u>Guest Lecture and Site Visit</u> : Meri Disoski (MP, The Greens), Austrian Parliament (tbc)
Week 8 17/19 Nov	No Done Deal: The Rise of Euroscepticism and the Limits of European Integration	<u>Readings</u> : • Guerra/Trenz in Cini/Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, ch. 15, pp. 219-231 • Pérez-Solórzano Borragán/Cini in Cini/Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, ch. 27, pp. 403-420 <u>Guest Lecture</u> : Joachim Stern (asylum expert, former UNHCR Senior Policy Officer) <u>Submission of Paper Abstracts</u>
Week 9 24/26 Nov	Paper Abstracts Discussion	<u>Elevator Pitch</u> to present your final paper abstract <u>Guest Lecture</u> : Jakob Wiesbauer-Lenz (Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology)

Week 10 01/03 Dec	The Future is Still Unwritten: Current Challenges and the Prospects for European Integration	Readings: • Laffan in Cini/Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, ch. 29, pp. 436-448 • Nugent, ch 26, pp. 461-466 • Tömmel, ch. 13, pp. 309-335
-----------------------------	--	--

COURSE RELATED SITE VISITS AND GUEST LECTURES

- Austrian Parliament
- Raimund Löw (journalist, former ORF correspondent in Brussels, Washington and Beijing), Meri Disoski (MP, The Greens), Joachim Stern (asylum expert, former UNHCR Senior Policy Officer), Jakob Wiesbauer-Lenz (Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology)

REQUIRED READINGS (chapters and texts as specified above):

- Cini, Michelle/Perez-Solorzano Borragan, Nieves (eds): European Union Politics, 6th ed, Oxford: OUP 2019.
- Cini, Michelle/Perez-Solorzano Borragan, Nieves (eds): European Union Politics, 7th ed, Oxford: OUP 2022.
- Jones, Erik/Menon, Anand/Weatherill, Stephen (eds): The Oxford Handbook of the European Union, Oxford: OUP 2012.
- Nugent, Neill: The Government and Politics of the European Union, 8th ed, London: Palgrave 2017.
- Segers, Mathieu/Albrecht, Yoei (eds): Re:Thinking Europe: Thoughts on Europe: Past, Present and Future. Amsterdam: AUP 2016.
- Tömmel, Ingeborg: The European Union. What it is and how it works, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2014.

Selected non-academic materials (e.g. policy briefs, white papers, reports, journalistic articles) will be provided.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Checkel Jeffrey T./Katzenstein, Peter J. (eds.): European Identity, Cambridge: UP 2009.
- De Vries, Catherine E.: Euroscepticism and the Future of European Integration, Oxford: OUP 2018.
- Dinan, Desmond/Nugent, Neil/Paterson, William E. (eds): The European Union in Crisis, London: Palgrave 2017.
- Hancock, M. Donald et al. (eds): Politics in Europe, 7th ed, Basingstoke: Palgrave 2018.
- Hashimoto, Tom/Rhimes, Michael (eds): Reviewing European Union accession: unexpected results, spillover effects, and externalities, Leiden/Boston: Brill Nijhoff 2018.
- Hix Simon: What's Wrong with the European Union and How to Fix it, Cambridge: Polity 2008.
- Hooghe, Liesbet/Marks, Gary: Grand theories of European integration in the twenty-first century, Journal of European Public Policy, 26:8, 2019, 1113-1133, DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2019.1569711.
- Judt, Tony: Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945, New York: Penguin 2005.
- Kaeding, Michael et al. (eds): The Future of Europe: views from the capitals, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan 2019.
- Martill, Benjamin/Staiger, Uta (eds): Brexit and Beyond: Rethinking the Futures of Europe, London: UCL Press 2018.

INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY:

Mag. Dr. Gerd Valchars is a political scientist specializing in citizenship and electoral rights, as well as the Austrian and European political systems. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science and an M.Sc. in Political and Communication Science from the University of Vienna. Gerd Valchars teaches at several Austrian universities, including the University of Vienna and the University of Innsbruck. Since 2018, he has also been teaching at IES Abroad Vienna. Gerd Valchars serves as a Country Expert for Austria at the Global Citizenship Observatory (<http://globalcit.eu/>) at the European University Institute in Florence and as Country Coordinator for Austria for the EU's Migrant Integration Hub. He was Visiting Professor at the University of Vienna in 2022, Visiting Researcher at the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto (2007–2008), and Researcher at the Institute for European Integration Research at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (2006–2009). Website: <https://homepage.univie.ac.at/gerd.valchars>