

Europe in Crisis? European Politics and Policies

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Time Slot:	Thursdays, 1:30 p.m.
Language of Instruction:	English
Contact Hours:	45
ECTS Credits:	6

Course Description

European Politics, and the history and politics of European Integration more specifically, have been characterized by crises. Many contemporary and current observers have highlighted this again and again. During the past two decades, Europe has been shaken by a series of crises at an accelerating pace – from the failed EU constitution and the financial crisis to the migration, Brexit and the COVID crises, and most recently the return of war. Populism has been on the rise and democratic institutions have come under pressure in several member states. Why is Europe so crisis-ridden – and what does this imply for European integration, created to foster democracy, rule of law, peace, and prosperity? Policy-makers and publics have variously responded to these crises. We may also ask to what extent have these crises perhaps strengthened European integration, too, even if that feels counter-intuitive at first sight.

This course will introduce students to the politics of the European Union (EU), its history, its peculiar institutions and some of its key policies. It will address and explain the – often crisis-ridden – processes of widening and deepening this unique political entity, drawing on some relevant theorizing. Students will learn how institutions changed and how policies are being made, as well as the role of the different supranational and intergovernmental institutions. Next to the formal institutions, interest representation, lobbying, and the media have shaped processes of policy-making and policy-building, and crisis responses. Special emphasis will be placed on Europe's most recent crises – the Euro crisis, the migration crisis, Brexit, and the Russian war in Ukraine – and the lingering challenges of the environment and climate change.

The sessions consist of lectures, literature-based discussions, a close reading of sources, in smaller and larger groups. Students will be expected to participate actively, collaborate with other students, and prepare oral presentations. The course also includes a visit to the Europa House near Brandenburg Gate. In addition to a presentation and opportunity to discuss with a speaker from the Commission's Team Europe, we will visit the exhibition on the European Parliament.

Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is threefold:

1. To familiarize students with the politics, history, and the institutional structures of the European Union, and its policies
2. To discuss, understand and explain these developments and decisions as the outcome of structures and agency, characteristic conflicts, contradictions, and dilemmas, drawing on concepts and (elements of) theories from the field of interdisciplinary EU Studies
3. To assess and evaluate, and to reflect on European integration, in the light of different perspectives and underlying assumptions

At a practical level, the course trains reading skills with a view to academic literature and different genres thereof (such as journal articles), academic writing, and presentation skills.

Student Profile

Should be in their fourth semester of college/university education or beyond.

Assignments and Grading

Midterm Exam: 200 Points

Final Exam: 350 Points

Class Participation (incl. one Independent Project Report): 300 Points

Group Presentations: 150 Points

Completion of the Midterm Exam as well as the Final Exam is needed for a grade.

FUB Grade	Points of 1,000
1.0	980-1,000
1.3	950-979
1.7	900-949
2.0	850-899
2.3	800-849
2.7	750-799
3.0	700-749
3.3	650-699
3.7	600-649
4.0	500-599
5.0	< 500

Attendance

Attendance in class is **mandatory**. We also expect you to be **punctual** out of respect to both your instructor and your fellow students. An absence for more than half of a particular day's session will be considered an absence for that day.

If you cannot attend class because you are ill, please **notify your instructor** by e-mail (not via messenger service or through another student) before class. Any absence **without a notification** of your instructor before class will automatically be considered **unexcused**.

Absences because of **illness** are **excused**; however, for the **third** sick day and every other sick day after that (per course), you will need to turn in a **doctor's notice** ("Attest" in German) in order for them to count as excused, too. It is **your** responsibility to keep track of your absences and to know when a doctor's note is required. No doctor's notice issued more than three days after the day of illness will be accepted.

If you miss an **exam** due to an excused absence, your instructor and the FU-BEST team will arrange a make-up exam for you; you may also be entitled to a term paper **deadline extension**. If you, however, do not fulfill all course requirements needed for a grade by the (later) date determined by the program, passing the course is no longer possible.

Please also note that if you miss **more than half** of a course's sessions (even if due to excused absence), passing the course is no longer possible.

Personal travel and visits by relatives or friends are **not** accepted as reasons for absence (i.e., absences for these reasons always count as **unexcused**).

Regarding **unexcused** absences, please note the following:

- Any unexcused absence has consequences for at least the participation portion of the grade.
- Two unexcused absences lead to a lowering of the course grade by a fraction.
- Three unexcused absences will result in a 5.0 (equivalent to an "F") on the transcript.

Literature

Readings will be posted on the online learning platform Blackboard.

Course Schedule

Calendar	Topics, Readings, etc.
<p>Session 1</p>	<p>Topic: European integration and crisis – Introduction</p> <p>This session introduces the structure, requirements, assignments and activities of this course. We will discuss what the European Union is, and how its crises can be studied, based on a recent typology.</p> <p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roos, Mechthild and Daniel Schade. 2023. Introduction: The EU under Strain. In <i>The EU under Strain? Current Crises Shaping European Union Politics</i>, ed. Mechthild Roos and Daniel Schade. 3-25. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.
<p>Session 2</p>	<p>Topic: Excursion: Europe in Crisis. Visit to Europa House / European Parliament Representation</p> <p>This excursion to the Europa House, the representation of the European Parliament, and the exhibition “European experience” near Brandenburg gate, will offer an opportunity to discuss with a speaker from the European institutions about the institutions and current crises, and how they impact, in particular, on the European Parliament (EP) and political parties represented, and the formation of the European Commission. It is a chance to ask questions and get a first-hand impression of the institutions and their approach to the public. You will be asked to prepare questions on the EP and the Commission.</p> <p>Readings</p> <p>On the EP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crum, Ben. 2025. Party Dynamics in the 2024 European Parliament Elections: How the European People’s Party Has Come to Occupy the Centre of Power. <i>JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies</i> 63 (S1): 80-90. <p>On the new European Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dinan, Desmond and Sophia Russack. 2025. The Formation of the Second von der Leyen Commission: Nomination, Organisation and Confirmation. <i>JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies</i> 63 (S1): 91-104.
<p>Session 3</p>	<p>Topic: European institutions: What do they do? Institutions and Policy Making</p> <p>In this session, students will learn about the different European institutions and examine how they co-operate, compete and interact in the practice of policy- and law-making. We discuss the different stages of the policy process and the relevance of the different institutions therein.</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kenealy, Daniel, Hadfield, Amelia, Corbett, Richard, Peterson, John. 2022. <i>The European Union. How does it work?</i> 6th ed. • pp. 53-81 [The EU’s Institutions]. • pp. 108-135 [Policy-Making in the EU] <p>Assignment: Familiarize yourself with the five European institutions (Council, European Council, Commission, Parliament, Court of Justice) for a group work assignment.</p>

<p>Session 4</p>	<p>Topic: History I: Why integrate? A response to Europe’s perennial crises?</p> <p>This session explores the early history of European integration from the late 1940s onwards and continues the overview until the crisis-ridden 1970s. In order to get a first-hand insight into the reasoning of the contemporaries, we will read and learn to analyse a historical source, written by one of the key promoters of European integration.</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leucht, Brigitte. 2023. "The formation of the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic Community and Euratom, 1945–58." In Reinventing Europe: The History of the European Union since 1945, edited by Brigitte Leucht, Katja Seidel and Laurent Warlouzet, 7-26. London: Bloomsbury. • Historical Source: Spaak, Paul-Henri. 1950. The Integration of Europe: Dreams and Realities. Foreign Affairs 29 (1): 94-100. <p>Input: Exam preparation: We will discuss the structure and expectations of the midterm exam.</p>
<p>Session 5</p>	<p>Topic: History II: Why relaunch European integration? A response to Europe’s economic crises</p> <p>This session continues the historical overview, arguing that the so-called “relaunch” of European integration in the 1980s with the Single Market and the founding of European Union and European Monetary Union with the 1991/93 Maastricht Treaty was a response to the economic crises and political deadlock of the 1970s. We will discuss the role of the European Roundtable of Industrialists (ERT), a very influential industry lobbying group that pushed for the completion of the European Single Market, and analyse a historical source which reflects this lobbying.</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Cowles, Maria. 1995. “Setting the Agenda for a New Europe: The ERT and EC 1992,” Journal of Common Market Studies 33 (4): 501-526. • Source: European Roundtable of Industrialists: Foundation for the Future of European Industry, 1983 <p>Video: The Brussels Business: https://youtu.be/xMuUEd6w54E</p> <p>Independent project report due: 1,000 words project report on a European institution. Detailed instructions will be provided in the first two sessions.</p>
<p>Session 6</p>	<p>MIDTERM EXAM</p>
<p>Session 7</p>	<p>Topic: Energy Policy – between geopolitical challenges and the climate crisis</p> <p>Energy is a key factor in modern economies, and central to competitiveness, and prosperity, central EU objectives. The session will look at the internal and international dimensions of EU’s energy policy, which has apparently only thrived in times of crises. Despite the early involvement with key energy resources through the Coal and Steel Community and Euratom, EU energy policy only really started after the 1973 oil crisis. In the wake of the Single Market programme, the EU imposed liberalisation in the 1990s, particularly in the electricity and gas sectors, to reduce prices. Issues of energy security have returned with a vengeance in recent, as has the impact on climate change, which emphasize the international dimension of EU energy policy.</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buchan, David. 2020. "Energy Policy. Sharp Challenges and Rising Ambitions." In Policy-making in the European Union. 8th ed., edited by Helen Wallace, Mark A. Pollack, Christilla Roederer-Rynning and Alasdair R. Young, 321-42. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

	<p>Group Presentation 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Herranz-Surrallés, Anna. 2025. External pressures from ‘enemies’, ‘rivals’ and ‘allies’: EU energy policy integration in response to geopolitical challenges. <i>Journal of European Public Policy</i>: 1-28. Pavlenko, Anastasia and Aleh Cherp. 2026. Do Energy Security Crises Accelerate Decarbonisation? The Case of REPowerEU. <i>Energies</i> 19 (1): 200.
<p>Session 8</p>	<p>Topic: European Monetary Union and the Euro Crisis</p> <p>European Monetary Union (EMU) had been on the agenda of the European Communities, the EU's predecessor, from the late 1960s onwards. EMU had been controversial from the start, and even though the Euro has been in Europeans' wallets for more than two decades now, the Euro crisis has exposed some of the major difficulties of operating a currency beyond the nation state. We will discuss the reasons for the crisis and the measures undertaken to solve it. The presentation will analyse the specific role of Germany in monetary politics, and the role of the “trauma” of the 1923 hyperinflation, and the impact of the Euro crisis on populism.</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hodson, Dermot. 2020. "European Monetary Union. An Enduring Experiment." In <i>Policy-making in the European Union</i>. 8th ed., edited by Helen Wallace, Mark A. Pollack, Christilla Roederer-Rynning and Alasdair R. Young, 152-81. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <p>Student Group Presentation 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rathgeb, Philip and Jonathan Hopkin. 2025. How the Eurozone shapes populism: a comparative political economy approach. <i>Journal of European Public Policy</i> 32 (5): 1173-1196. Barkhausen, David. 2025. Trauma as a Tool: Hyperinflation Narratives in German Fiscal Policy Debates on European Monetary Integration. <i>JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies</i> 63 (6): 1865-1885.
<p>Session 9</p>	<p>Topic: Migration policy and the Migration Crisis</p> <p>European Union member states have long cooperated in overcoming borders with the Schengen agreements, and started to work together in regulating migration jointly in the 1990s. The migration crisis of 2015 and the aftermath have exposed the problems of borders, given their close relation with sovereignty. The migration crisis has contributed to the rise of right-wing populist parties, which have politicised the issue and often pursued openly Eurosceptic agendas.</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hill, Christopher. 2023. "Migration: The Dilemmas of External Relations." In <i>International Relations and the European Union</i>. Fourth Edition, edited by Christopher Hill, Michael Smith and Sophie Vanhoonacker, 327-51. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <p>Group Presentation 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arnoux Bellavitis, Marguerite and Ariadna Ripoll Servent. 2025. The New Pact on Migration and Asylum in a shifting political context: Depoliticization and repoliticization in EU external migration policy. <i>Mediterranean Politics</i>: 1-10. Zaun, Natascha. 2025. Externally driven integration in EU migration policy: enabling integration through indifference, undermining it through conflictive politicisation. <i>Journal of European Public Policy</i>: 1-28.
<p>Session 10</p>	<p>Topic: Climate and the Environment</p> <p>Environmental policy had not been part of the founding Treaties of the 1950s, but has – since its inception in the 1970s – become a “flagship” policy of the European Union. Since the early 1990s, the EU has been involved in the fight against climate change, also at the international</p>

	<p>level. This session will offer insights into the emergence and development of EU environmental policy – from concerns about dead fish in the river Rhine to the European Commission’s “European Green Deal” announced in 2019. It will examine, how environmental policy works, will take a critical look at the role of the Commission and climate obstructionism, and discuss in a pro-con confrontation the prospects for EU climate change policy in a period of multiple crises crowding out the climate issue.</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rosamond, Jeffrey. 2023. "The slow-burning climate emergence and the European Green Deal: prospects and pitfalls in the polycrisis era." In <i>The EU under Strain? Current Crises Shaping European Union Politics</i>, edited by Mechthild Roos and Daniel Schade, 275-92. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter. <p>Group Presentation 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leenders, Emma, et al. 2025. Leadership in EU policy-making: a deep dive into the extension of the EU emissions trading system. <i>Journal of European Public Policy</i> 32 (7): 1695-1717. • Wettestad, Jørgen. 2025. EU Emissions Trading for Transport and Buildings: Saved by Synergistic Institutional Interaction? <i>JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies</i> 63 (3): 915-931. <p>Input: Exam preparation: We will discuss the structure and expectations of the final exam.</p>
<p>Session 11</p>	<p>Topic: Brexit</p> <p>The United Kingdom had long been an “awkward partner” within the European Union, after having joined only in 1973. Nevertheless, Brexit was not a foregone conclusion. The session examines the role of the UK within the EU before the 2016 referendum, the short and long-term reasons for Brexit, the long-drawn negotiations, their domestic impact, and the longer-term implications. Brexit may be “done”, but its after-effects will remain with us for considerable time. The group presentation will look at the consequences of Brexit for trade and security.</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thompson, Helen. 2017. Inevitability and contingency: The political economy of Brexit. <i>British Journal of Politics and International Relations</i>, 19(3), 434–449. <p>Group Presentation 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sus, Monika and Benjamin Martill. 2026. There and Back Again: How UK–EU De-Institutionalisation After Brexit Shaped Re-Engagement After Ukraine. <i>JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies</i> 64 (1): 371-386. • Garcia, Maria J. 2023. Post-Brexit trade policy in the UK: placebo policy-making? <i>Journal of European Public Policy</i> 30 (11): 2492-2518.
<p>Session 12</p>	<p>Topic: The ultimate crisis? The EU peace project in the face of the Russian war against Ukraine</p> <p>This last session is devoted to a crisis that took many Europeans by surprise. It challenged some of the fundamental assumptions of the internal order in Europe and the aims and objectives of international cooperation for peace and prosperity. We will explore the origins and ideas underlying Russian aggression and discuss the implications for the European Union and its policy towards Ukraine, and European security more generally.</p> <p>The session also offers an opportunity for feedback and final questions with a view to the exam.</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kuzio, Taras. 2023. Imperial nationalism as the driver behind Russia's invasion of Ukraine. <i>Nations and Nationalism</i> 29 (1): 30-38. <p>Group Presentation 6</p>

- Rabinovych, Maryna and Anne Pintsch. 2024. From the 2014 Annexation of Crimea to the 2022 Russian War on Ukraine: Path Dependence and Socialization in the EU–Ukraine Relations. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 62 (5): 1239-1259.
- Bosse, Giselle. 2024. The EU's Response to the Russian Invasion of Ukraine: Invoking Norms and Values in Times of Fundamental Rupture. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 62 (5): 1222-1238.

Session 13**FINAL EXAM – in the MORNING**