Institutions and challenges of the European Union

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Aim and approach

There are no less than 58 entries in the handbook on the European Union (EU) published at Oxford University Press, and 25 in the one edited by Renaud Dehousse at the Documentation française. While it is not possible to present the political reality of the EU in an exhaustive way in eleven two-hour sessions, this lecture course provides a number of elements of understanding. Its objective is to present, in an intelligible way, the main institutions and policy challenges of the EU. To do this, a political sociology approach is mobilised to restore the EU as it is, rather than taking a stand for what it should be. Weekly reading of a text (article or chapter) is mandatory. It is also strongly recommended to prepare each lecture session by consulting the elective readings at each session and by following European political news.

Assessment

The course is evaluated by a two-hour written examination on the table at the end of the semester (week of December 16). The exam consists of three parts:
- ten multiple-choice questions on course fundamentals (5 points),
- twelve multiple-choice questions on mandatory reading (6 points),
- and a development question/an essay (9 points).

For multiple-choice questions, a half-point is added per correct answer and a quarter-point is subtracted per wrong answer. Regarding the essay, the rating takes into account three main evaluation criteria:
- the clarity of the demonstration,
- its originality and the scientific references on which it is based.
- Responses with unclear, normative or unjustified developments will be penalized.

Your answer should not exceed three pages (one and a half sheets). Two points will be removed for each additional page. Students can answer the exam in either French or English.
Programme

The seminar is organized into eleven two-hour sessions. Each session is organized into two 55-minute sequences and a five-minute break.

Class starts at 6. Students are advised to arrive on time and activate the ‘silent’ mode of their phone before entering the amphitheatre.

I. Institutions of the European Union

Session 1 (9.9) – History: What’s the driver of European integration?

Aim
Explaining the institutionalisation of the EU

Argument
The institutionalisation of the EU has been unexpected

Keywords
Bargaining, ‘constructive ambiguity’, J. Delors, enlargement, national interest, internal market, J. Monnet, treaties

Compulsory reading

Elective readings

Session 2 (9.16) – Governance: How could we define the EU and how does it work?

Aim
Defining the EU and understanding how the EU works

Argument
The EU is a system of differentiated integration where decision-making depends on the sector of public action

Keywords
Community method, differentiated integration, « opt-out », transfer of sovereignty, variable geometry Europe
Compulsory reading

Elective readings

Session 3 (9.23) – EXECUTIVE AND JUDICIAL POWERS: Who governs, the States or the Commission?

Aim
Presentation of the EU’s executive institutions and their power relations, and the judicial power represented by the Court

Argument
The EU government is not the result of one institution, but of a continuous balance of power between the Member States (European Council and Council) and the Commission which are checked by the Court

Keywords
European Council, Council, Commission, Court, technocracy, politisation

Compulsory reading

Elective readings


**Session 4 (9.30) – LEGISLATIVE POWERS: Who sets the rules?**

**Aim**

Presentation of the EU’s legislative and judicial powers to understand who sets the rules and who controls them

**Argument**

EU rules are set by the European Parliament and the Council under the ‘ordinary legislative procedure’

**Keywords**

Budget, co-decision, Community method, decision-making, intergovernmentalism, ‘ordinary legislative procedure’, norms, parliamentarisation

**Compulsory reading**


**Elective readings**


Session 5 (10.7) – LOBBIES: How do interest groups shape the EU?

**Aim**
Presentation of interest groups in Brussels and their role in the EU decision-making process

**Argument**
Lobbies represent actors with multiple resources, objectives and strategies and have a variable effect on the EU

**Keywords**
Interest groups, lobbying

**Compulsory reading**

**Elective readings**
II. CHALLENGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Session 6 (10.14) – EURO: The monetary policy of the EU

**Aim**
Presentation of the monetary policy of the EU through the Eurozone crisis

**Argument**
Supranational institutions (ECB, but also Court and Commission) have been strengthened during the Eurozone crisis

**Keywords**
ECB, Euro, Germany, Greece

**Compulsory reading**

**Elective readings**


Session 7 (10.21) – MIGRATION: The area of freedom, security and justice

**Aim**
Understanding the functioning of the area of freedom, security and justice through the migration challenge

**Argument**
Migration policy unveils ‘multi-level’ governance

**Keywords**
Freedom of movement, immigration, migrants, refugees

**Compulsory reading**
Elective readings


Wildo GEIS, Silke UEBELMESSER, Martin WERDING. Why Go to France or Germany, if You Could as Well Go to the UK or the US? Selective Features of Immigration to the EU ‘Big Three’ and the United States. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. 2011, vol.49, no 4, p. 767-796.

Session 8 (11.4) – A EUROPEAN DEFENCE POLICY: An oxymoron?

Aim
Explaining the EU’s political role in a non-Community area

Argument
The CSDP reveals the differentiated integration of the EU

Keywords
Armaments, Army, CSDP, Defence, EDA, EEAS, Industry, OCCAR, strategic culture

Compulsory reading

Elective readings


Session 9 (11.18) – DEMOCRACY: Looking for a homo europeanus

Aim Understanding how European citizens perceive the EU

Argument European citizens are less opposed to the EU than indifferent to it

Keywords Euroscepticism, citizens, citizenship, democracy, democratic deficit, Erasmus, European elections, identity


Session 10 (11.25) – BREXIT: What’s happening in Britain and what are the effects on the EU?

Aim Explaining the reasons of Brexit and understanding the effects on the EU

Argument European citizens are less opposed to the EU than indifferent to it

Keywords Euroscepticism, citizens, citizenship, democracy, democratic deficit, Erasmus, European elections, identity
Compulsory reading

Elective readings

Session 11 (12.2 - tbc) – Conclusion
References

Multilingual glossary
https://iate.europa.eu/home

Information database
http://www.europresse.com/fr/

Handbooks

In English

In French
MOOC

« Géopolitique de l’Europe » (Sciences Po) par Sylvain Kahn, Philippe Perchoc, Thomas Raineau : https://www.coursera.org/learn/geopolitique

Scientific Journals

European Journal of Political Research (Wiley)
European Union Politics (Sage)
Journal of Common Market Studies (Wiley)
Journal of European Public Policy (Routledge)
Politique européenne (L’Harmattan)
West European Politics (Routledge)
CAIRN (http://www.cairn.info/)
JSTOR (http://www.jstor.org/)

Specialized information sources

Bruxelles 2 http://www.bruxelles2.eu/ Blog on military issues
Le Grand Continent https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/ Specialized journal
Contexte https://www.contexte.com/ Specialized journal
Coulisses de Bruxelles http://bruxelles.blogs.formation.fr/ Blog of the Libération correspondent in Brussels
Décrypter la communication européenne http://www.lacomeuropeenne.fr/ Blog of an expert of the political communication
EU Observer https://euobserver.com/ Specialized journal
Euractiv.fr http://www.euractiv.fr/ Specialized journal
Fondation Robert Schuman http://www.robert-schuman.eu/fr/ Think Tank
Notre Europe http://www.institutdelors.eu/ Think Tank
Institut Jacques Delors http://www.touteleurope.eu/ Information website funded by the French government and the EU
Toute l’Europe
VoxEurop http://www.voxeurop.eu/en Specialized journal