



## STUDY PROGRAMME

1. POL  
2. MATA

## ACADEMIC YEAR

2021 - 2022

## SEMESTER

1st – 2nd

## COURSE TITLE

EU's International Role and External Action: ENP, Turkey, Russia, the EU's Architecture, CFSP, CSDP, EEAS, EU's Power

## COURSE PROFESSOR

Wolfgang WESSELS

## COURSE ASSISTANT

Raquel Ugarte Diez

## NATURE OF COURSE (COMPULSORY, OPTIONAL)

1. Research Seminar

## LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

English

## ECTS CREDITS

15

## 1. COURSE OBJECTIVE

The EU's role in the international system is of ever increasing political and academic salience. Events and trends over the last 50 years have shown a considerable evolution of the EU's external action and lead to highly controversial political and academic assessments of the EU's international performance and potential future role. Not least in cases of international crises. The relevant articles of the Lisbon Treaties have both confirmed - like in major areas – established procedures, but also revised the institutional architecture for the Union's external action. The new 'European Security Strategy 2016' as drafted by the High Representative has again stressed the challenge for 'the European Union in a changing global environment' and indicated major areas for research. Of specific interest are the EU's policies towards its neighbours.

In view of these developments, this research seminar aims at:

1. Analysing the EU's actorness in the international system with reference to both academic conceptualisations and specific case studies of EU external policies and (multi-lateral) activities;
2. Looking at the EU's architecture, including political, institutional and administrative mechanisms of the EU's external action in and across all several policy domains with a focus on the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty and on later developments (e.g. in relation with the Monetary Union, EEAS, CFSP, CSDP);
3. Discussing potential future roles and models of the EU in the international arena, with a particular focus on the concepts of 'global actor', a 'super-power in the making', 'civilian', 'normative', 'smart', 'structural' and 'zero' power;



4. Understanding the complex relations of the European Union with its neighbours, including actors such as Russia and Turkey, and the perspectives of enlargement in the Balkans;

The result of the student's work, the "master thesis", should be a valid contribution to the understanding and – if possible – to the improvement of the political and administrative workings of the EU in the world system. The work is expected to combine selected elements of theories with empirical research and, where appropriate, policy recommendations (a list of criteria and yardsticks will be made available on the intranet).

At the end of the semester, the student will have written a Master's thesis on a chosen topic. Students are expected to learn the fundamentals of the methodology in social science research's work, as well as in the field of the role of the EU within the international system.

This entails:

- identification of a specific topic
- identification of an initial research puzzle
- realisation of a state of the art of the literature in the selected topic
- formulation of a precise research question
- identification of testable hypotheses
- choice of a research protocol
- conduct of empirical work (field interviews with actors, observation, analytical documentation, realisation and diffusion of questionnaires, work on qualitative and/or quantitative data, etc.)
- test of the hypotheses
- drafting of the thesis as such, with full respect of the Departmental guidelines (length, referencing, bibliography...)

## 2. LEARNING OUTCOMES

The research seminars are not content-related as such: they all offer similar methodological guidance and support to groups of students who focus on a common topic.

Every seminar is supervised by a professor, assisted by an academic assistant, and focuses on a research area. The seminars alternate plenary sessions, bringing together the professor and all the students of the seminar to discuss research methods, and individual meetings during which students present their research project and discuss the progress of their work with the professor and the academic assistant.

These course objectives therefore link up with the programme-specific learning outcomes applicable to the master's thesis.

## 3. TEACHING METHOD(S)

This seminar alternates individual interviews, sessions in small groups and a plenary session.

Guidance is usually provided by the Professor through group interviews gathering students working on similar topics, with the Professor and the Academic Assistant, on the basis of outlines sent to the Assistant one week in advance. Additional individual interviews can be organized if needed when the Professor is in Bruges, and the Academic Assistant is available to provide counselling between the Professor's visits.



In Early October, the Professor presents the seminar in front of the students, which is a useful step for them to identify if the seminar corresponds to their academic wish. In November and December, the students and the Professor exchange on key questions via email. They start to identify fitting research topics. Mid-January, a plenary session is organised, which allows for a discussion on the theoretical approaches. It is followed by a first round of individual interviews. From January to April, students and the Professor clarify the topics and the supervision goes on via group discussions. Finally, in June, the Professor gives a feedback session. This final session provides an opportunity to debate on strengths and shortcomings of the thesis.

## 4. COURSE MATERIAL

Students are provided with the common departmental guidelines on the master thesis as well as with criteria for thesis assessment which serve as guidelines for structuring their work.

Early October: Presentation of the course (0,5 hour)

Nov/Dec: Presentation of key question via mail - Exchange about the research topics

Mid-January: Plenary session for all students: pinning down the theoretical approaches and the research methodology – First round of individual interviews

January-April: Clarification of topics and progress supervision via group discussions

June: Feedback session: professor's assessment and debate on thesis

In view of the highly complex and fragmented role of the European Union in the international system, the Professor proposes the following categories for analysis:

- a) Management of crises - in the Eastern or Southern neighbourhood (example: Belarus);
- b) External aspects of several policy fields (trade, security, migration, climate);
- c) Experience with and revisions of the EU's neighbourhood policy;
- d) Experiences and revision of the Eastern Partnership;
- e) The Common Foreign and Security Policy: the evolution of the institutional architecture;
- f) The Common Security and Defence Policy: experience and performance
- g) External aspects of co-operation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs;
- h) Relations with specific countries, groups of countries or international organizations;
- i) External aspects of the monetary union (example: the representation and activities of the EU in the G20 meetings);
- j) The role of individual EU institutions in the Eastern partnership from the Vilnius summit to the Riga summit and beyond;
- k) The institutional features of the Balkan policies;
- l) The enlargement policy, with a particular focus on the Balkans;
- m) The 2016 Security Strategy in comparison with the 2003 Security Strategy;
- n) The 2016 Security Strategy: analysis and assessment;
- o) New activities, especially in the PESCO project



- p) Relations with Turkey and Perspectives on Turkish accession;
- q) The EU in a multipolar international order;
- r) The role of the EEAS in the institutional architecture;
- s) The EU Global Strategy;
- t) The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the EU's global role.

The research should, of course, not deal with areas as vast as those mentioned, but rather look at particular political and administrative sub-elements, at specific (current) issues or at (aspects of) the theoretical debate.

The thesis subject should, if possible, fit into one of the following four chapters:

a) **Geographical orientation**

1. Europe and its regional neighbourhood in the East and in the South (i.e. Ukraine and Syria)
2. Relations with US, Russia, Turkey, China
3. Europe in the Balkans
4. Europe's link with third countries or groups of countries
5. Europe as a global player in economic and political matters

b) **The evolution of institutions and procedures concerning Europe's role in the international system**

1. The High Representative: expectations and performance (e.g. a balance sheet for Ashton and Mogherini, expectation for Borell)
2. The president of the European Council in the external action (expectations and performance a balance sheet for van Rompuy and Tusk, expectation for Michel)
3. The European External Action Service
4. The role of COPS
5. The role of the EDA
6. Policy-making in European foreign policy
7. The European Parliament and the External Action
8. The President of the Commission and the External Action
9. CFSP
10. CSDP

c) **Sectorial orientation**

1. The EU and challenges of global governance (e.g. new technologies)
2. External dimension of specific policies  
(e.g. CAP, environment, energy, climate and international aspects of EMU)



## d) Theoretical and strategic perspectives

1. Academic theories (e.g. neo-realism, classical and critical geo-politics, federalism, constructivism, neo- institutionalism, neo-intergovernmentalism, fusion)
2. Programs/ political concepts (e.g. Blair's idea of the EU as a "superpower but not a superstate" and the 2016 Security Strategy)
3. Concepts for EU foreign policy analysis (e.g. structural foreign policy, normative, civilian power vs. military power, presence, actorness, Atlanticism vs. Europeanisation)
4. Designing scenarios and educated guesses of future developments (e.g. about the EU's contribution to a peace settlement in the Middle East)

## 5. EVALUATION

Students are required to draft a Master's thesis. The outlines and the thesis can be drafted in English or French.

Students are expected to draft a Master's thesis, on the topic of their choice, after validation by the Professor. This thesis must comply with the Departmental rules on length, formatting and content.

The Professor has a key role in guiding the students, first to choose their topic, then to fine-tune their research project. He then follows up with a continuous supervision, dealing with various questions on the methodology, on the topics, on the theories, etc.

Students are required to send to the Professor written outlines describing their progress. It usually entails the topic, a provisional title, the research question, the hypothesis, some theoretical framework, etc. This outline is updated by the student through the semester.