



STUDY PROGRAMME

POL & MATA

ACADEMIC YEAR

2023-2024

SEMESTER

1st & 2nd

COURSE TITLE

EU Reform: Institutional Change, Constitutional Issues, EU Politics

COURSE PROFESSOR

Martin WESTLAKE

COURSE ASSISTANT

Íñigo MARTÍN MONTERRUBIO

NATURE OF COURSE (COMPULSORY, OPTIONAL)

Research Seminar

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

English and French

ECTS CREDITS

15

1. COURSE OBJECTIVES

This seminar is intended to provide a critical framework for advanced research into the main issues and processes of the constitutional, institutional and political reform of the European Union and of its institutions and procedures. It will focus on the reform issues which have arisen out of the euro zone crisis, Brexit, the migration crisis, the prospect of further enlargements, climate change, trade relations, Covid-19 and previous reform processes leading from the Declaration of Laeken (2001) to the implementation of the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon reforms to the recent Conference on the Future of Europe. The seminar will bring a critical eye to bear on the whole concept and process of reform. How are reforms generated? Where do reform ideas and proposals come from? In what circumstances? How are they sustained? How is their success measured, if at all? If nothing changes subsequent to reforms, were those reforms necessary? Or, on the other hand, would the situation have been worse if they hadn't been implemented? What is the difference, if any, between reform and change? How is continuity ensured? Is the very term 'reform' a misnomer? And is there any sort of collective memory of the reasoning behind various reform processes?

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 theme. Every seminar is supervised by a professor, assisted by an academic assistant, and focuses on a research area. The seminars comprise 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. COURSE CONTENTS

The subjects covered will depend on the topics chosen by the participants for their Master's theses. These topics should, however, fit into one of the following areas:

- Evaluation of the Union's actual needs for reform in the light of internal and external policy challenges and future challenges such as, for example, the euro zone, Brexit and its ongoing ramifications, the migration crises, further enlargements, climate change, trade relations, Covid-19, the Biden administration's policy stances, etc;
- Assessment of the Treaty of Lisbon reforms in terms of their implementation to date and their capacity to meet the identified major challenges which they were supposed to help the Union meet;
- Analysis of major elements of the Treaty of Lisbon reforms and their implications for the further evolution of the EU system (for example, the Presidency system, the High Representative, the new institutional balance (including the 'Spitzenkandidaten' procedure), the European Citizens' Initiative, the new subsidiarity early-warning procedures, changes to EU action possibilities in various policy fields such as the area of freedom, security and justice);
- The ongoing developments and possible initiatives in the context of the recent Conference on the Future of Europe;
- Evaluation of the political 'costs' of the Treaty of Lisbon in terms of further differentiation (e.g. extended 'opt-outs' and facilitated enhance cooperation), missed reform opportunities (could Brexit have been avoided?), the limitations of TEU Article 7, and so on;
- Evaluation of the methods of EU treaty reform (Convention method, IGC method, new simplified treaty revision procedures under the Treaty of Lisbon, the ill-fated UK Settlement device, the Conference on the Future of Europe).

4. TEACHING METHOD

The seminar entails monthly meetings with the students individually to advise them on the choice of their topic (relevance, feasibility), their research progress, and the presentation of the results. There will also be several 'plenary' sessions.

Before each meeting, the students will have to hand in a provisional outline of their theses and progress reports, which will be used as the basis for the discussion between the Professor, the academic assistant, and the student.

5. FURTHER DETAILS ON THE TEACHING METHOD

The main assignment is the thesis itself. Advice is given on readings (both theoretical and empirical), research methodology and progress as well as on potential interviewees.

6. COURSE MATERIAL

N/A

7. EVALUATION



College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



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ECTS CARD

The criteria for assessment include both content and form: relevance and originality of topic, methodology, consistency and structure, analytic capacity and quality of argumentation, use of relevant material, validity of conclusions, correct formalities (footnotes, bibliography), style and presentation.