



STUDY PROGRAMME(S)

(1) EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies

(2) Transatlantic Affairs

ACADEMIC YEAR

2023-24

SEMESTER

2

COURSE TITLE

Public Relations and Communications Management

COURSE PROFESSOR(S)

Carme COLOMINA SALÓ

COURSE ASSISTANT(S)

Jovica JOVIĆ

NATURE OF COURSE (COMPULSORY, OPTIONAL, ELECTIVE)

(1) Optional course

(2) Elective course

ECTS CREDITS

4.5

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

English

1. COURSE OBJECTIVES

The objective of this optional course is to analyse and understand how the EU institutions manage their Public Relations and Communications strategies and practices, while defining the challenges and opportunities posed by the consecutive 'crisis' situation (e.g. euro, migration, Brexit, populism, Covid-19 or the war in Ukraine) and the uniqueness of the European environment. It is difficult to find a moment in the EU's history when the reputation of its institutions and policies has been more severely challenged. The course will address the potential and the weaknesses of Public Relations and Communications, looking at their evolution, daily practices and their adaptation to the current and future challenges, shaped by extraordinary technological developments already impacting practices and procedures. Among the key areas of study will be the foundations of communications in the EU; reputation and crisis management; engagement with different audiences; the organisation and practices of actors and stakeholders; as well as the challenges of technology and disinformation. This course offers theoretical foundations and a hands-on approach to build a solid European perspective on strategic communications.

At the end of this course, the student will be able to

- understand the basics of Public Relations (PR) theory in general and the particularities of PR management in the EU in particular;
- explain the Europeanisation of communication strategies and the evolution of the Brussels press corps;
- better understand the principles of speech communication and the specificities of EU persuasion techniques;
- draft press releases, manage a press conference and prepare for interviews;
- implement a communication strategy to respond to a crisis situation;
- understand how EU institutions engage in social media and how digital networks complement and transform traditional ways of communication and challenge traditional narratives;



- explain how to influence the EU decision-making process through lobbying tactics;
- critically assess how the EU carries out its internal and external communication.

2. LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course objectives tie in with the following learning outcomes of the programme **EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies**:

- 1.1 The graduate masters the most important theoretical approaches and concepts of International Relations, EU Studies and Diplomacy Studies relevant for the analysis of the role of the European Union in international affairs.
- 1.2 The graduate can describe, explain and illustrate the current state of scientific research in the field of EU external relations in a broad sense and is able to critically assess the results of this research.
- 1.4 The graduate has acquired insights into the political, legal and economic aspects of EU external action and can use these insights to contextualise and interpret new developments.
- 2.1 The graduate can approach the field of national, European and international diplomacy analytically by assessing the challenges in this domain with an open mind for diversity and for complex situations.
- 2.2 The graduate has the ability to critically reflect upon problems in international and European affairs, to adopt well-informed points of view and to communicate them effectively orally and in writing, whether working independently or in a team.
- 2.3 The graduate can independently formulate a research question within the field of European affairs, find, select and critically assess relevant sources, answer the question using typical concepts and methods and present the research results in line with the ethical rules of the discipline.
- 2.4 The graduate is capable of processing a large amount of information within a short period of time and to work efficiently and effectively through planning, organising, setting priorities and meeting deadlines.
- 2.5 The graduate has the intellectual maturity and skills to function responsibly and autonomously in a professional context at national, European or international level and the capacity of suggesting possible action that contributes to problem-solving in a creative way.
- 2.6 The graduate can apply the acquired skills in the analysis and conduct of multifaceted (international) negotiations, both independently and in diverse and multicultural teams.
- 3.4 The graduate has acquired specific professional skills relevant to the practice of EU external action but also transferable to many other fields in the public and private sector.

The course objectives tie in with the following learning outcomes of the programme **Transatlantic Affairs**:

- 1.1 The graduate masters the most important theoretical approaches and concepts of, depending on his or her disciplinary focus, Economics, International Relations and Diplomacy Studies, Legal Studies and/or Political Science relevant for the analysis of transatlantic affairs.
- 1.2 The graduate can describe, explain and illustrate the current state of scientific research in the field of transatlantic affairs in a broad sense and, in line with his or her disciplinary focus, is able to critically assess the results of this research.
- 1.4 The graduate has insights into historical, political, legal and economic aspects of transatlantic affairs as well as into those policy areas that are of essential importance to transatlantic affairs. He or she can use these insights to contextualize and interpret new developments.
- 2.1 The graduate can approach the field of transatlantic affairs in a broad sense analytically by assessing the challenges in this domain with an open mind for diversity and for complex situations.
- 2.2 The graduate has the ability to critically reflect upon problems regarding an extensive range of transatlantic affairs, to adopt well-informed points of view and to communicate them effectively orally and in writing, whether working independently or in a team.
- 2.3 The graduate can independently transform complex transatlantic issues into a research question within the broader field of transatlantic affairs and, depending on his or her disciplinary focus, find, select and



critically assess relevant sources, answer the question using appropriate concepts and methods and present the research results in line with the ethical rules of the chosen discipline.

- 2.4 The graduate is capable of processing a large amount of information and appropriately analyse relevant sources depending on his or her disciplinary focus within a short period of time and of suggesting possible actions that contribute to problem-solving in a creative way.
- 2.5 The graduate has the intellectual maturity and skills to take responsibilities and function autonomously in a professional environment at national or international level, and especially in a transatlantic context, and to work efficiently and effectively through planning, organizing, setting priorities, meeting deadlines, cooperating across cultural boundaries and networking.

3. COURSE CONTENTS

Session 1: PR and Communications Management in the EU institutions

Session 2: Europeanisation of communication strategies and practices; Designing a communication strategy

Session 3: Audiences and instruments; Press Releases and Press Conferences; Preparing for interviews

Session 4: Persuasion and speech communication

Session 5: Traditional and social media: Mutually reinforcing the messages?

Session 6: The three levels of communication; Media landscape reporting about/on EU issues

Session 7: Crisis communication in the age of hyper-transparency

Session 8: Influencing the decision-making process: Lobbying the EU

Please refer to the intranet course page for access to the full course outline.

4. TEACHING METHOD

- Interactive lectures
- Oral group presentation
- Individual written assignment
- Simulation game: Students will deal with a crisis scenario on an EU external action-related topic that will need to be addressed from a communications point of view.
- Guest lecture(s) by practitioner(s)

5. COURSE MATERIAL

Please refer to the intranet course page for access to the detailed reading list (required and supplementary readings) and the slides.

6. EVALUATION

- Oral presentation (group exercise) and simulation game (20%)
- Individual written assignment (30%)
- Closed-book written exam of 2 hours (50%)

In case of a second-session resit, the closed-book written exam (2h) counts for 100% of the mark.

Please refer to the intranet course page for access to further information and instructions.