



STUDY PROGRAMME(S)

(1) EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies

(2) Transatlantic Affairs

ACADEMIC YEAR

2023-24

SEMESTER

2

COURSE TITLE

Invisible Security Challenges: Hybrid Threats and the EU

COURSE PROFESSOR(S)

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COURSE ASSISTANT(S)

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NATURE OF COURSE (COMPULSORY, OPTIONAL, ELECTIVE)

(1) Optional course

(2) Elective course

ECTS CREDITS

4.5

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

English

1. COURSE OBJECTIVES

24 February 2022 brought war yet again into Europe. Ukraine is the first case where hybrid threat activity has gone through all three phases: priming, destabilization, and coercion, before the activity moved away from the landscape of hybrid threats into a conventional war. The start of the war showed clearly how important it is for the EU and its member states to build resilience and responses against hybrid threats. Today the concept of hybrid threats is a political normality appearing in the discourses and documents of the EU, of NATO and of their member states.

This optional course addresses questions of how our security environment has changed not only due to the war in Ukraine but also because the technological revolution penetrates all areas of life, affecting the thinking about security, conflict and war. Disinformation is part of the information landscape and opinion builders on social media platforms. The interconnectedness and complexity of networks are of a very different nature than ever before in human history, yet at the same time, we are heading towards new dividing lines. New domains like space and cyber have emerged while domains like culture and diplomacy have become more important battlefields in international politics. This has contributed to a feeling of insecurity since the effects of the changes are not clear, the battles are ambiguous, and the threat seems to be often 'invisible'.

The course will discuss the changes in the EU's security environment, shed light on the conceptual 'jungle' relating to hybrid threats, clarify the mechanisms behind hybrid threats (in areas such as cyber; law; culture; diplomacy; critical infrastructure; information; intelligence, etc.) and how the EU is responding to them. In addition, it will also look into the future to assess the security challenges the EU will face during the next decade.



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

- understand the conceptual and practical perspectives of hybrid threats;
- describe and explain the major trends in the field of the current European security environment;
- critically assess the dynamics of mechanisms behind the hybrid threats and the way the EU counters them.

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.
- 1.5 The graduate is able to incorporate knowledge and understanding of various fields of EU external action and of different related disciplines (such as Political Science, International Relations, Law, Economics) at the interface between EU affairs and world politics.
- 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.
- 3.1 The graduate has gained a deeper understanding of security challenges as well as the role of justice and values in specific fields of EU external action.

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, is, in line with his or her disciplinary focus, 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.
- 1.5 The graduate is able to incorporate knowledge and understanding of various fields of transatlantic affairs and of different related disciplines (such as Economics, International Relations, Legal Studies, Political Science) as well as to adopt both a European and a US perspective on transatlantic affairs.
- 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: The changing character of security; what is the European security environment today?

Session 2: What are hybrid threats?

Session 3: The actors' analysis; state and non-state actors behind hybrid threat activity

Session 4: The Ukraine case study and the EU's reactions

Session 5: The EU's actions to counter hybrid threats

Session 6: The future of hybrid threats

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

4. TEACHING METHOD

- Interactive lectures
- Group work: short written assignment and oral presentation
- Individual paper

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

- Group work: short written assignment and oral presentation (20%)
- Paper (30%): 2,000-2,500 words
- Open-book written examination of 2h (50%)

In case of a second-session resit, the open-book written exam counts for 100% of the mark.

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