



STUDY PROGRAMME(S)

(1) EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies

(2) Transatlantic Affairs

ACADEMIC YEAR

2026-27

SEMESTER

2

COURSE TITLE

Drivers of European Defence Cooperation and the Transatlantic Alliance

COURSE PROFESSOR(S)

Simon J. SMITH

COURSE ASSISTANT(S)

Chiara GABBIANI

NATURE OF COURSE (COMPULSORY, OPTIONAL, ELECTIVE)

(1) Optional course

(2) Elective course

ECTS CREDITS

4.5

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

English

1. COURSE OBJECTIVES

This optional course will identify and analyse the underlying national and multinational drivers of European defence and security. It focuses on the evolution of these issues in Europe (understood geographically, politically and institutionally) from the end of the Cold War right up to, and including, contemporary challenges, most notably the ramifications from the war in Ukraine. It pays particular attention to the spectrum between autonomous national strategies and the overlapping institutions (NATO, the EU and the OSCE) that form the core of the multinational European and transatlantic security architecture. The course will identify key threats and broader security challenges facing Europe and assess the performance of a range of national and multinational actors responsible for mitigating them. It will introduce the students to the various operational concepts in European defence and security and ask the students to critically evaluate their utility. Finally, this course will identify and analyse the key internal and external drivers of European strategic and operational constructs, transformation in the European and transatlantic security environment, including material, strategic, geopolitical and operational drivers of change.

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.



- 1.3 The graduate has good knowledge of the institutional architecture and the decision-making processes in the European Union and in particular in EU external relations
- 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 1.3 The graduate possesses in-depth and comparative knowledge of the political systems of the European Union and the United States, including their institutional structures, policy-making processes, and core internal and external policies, and can analyse their interactions in a transatlantic context.
- 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.
- 1.6 The graduate can analyse developments within Europe and/or the US that impact their relative geopolitical standing, thereby influencing EU and/or US interests relevant to transatlantic affairs.
- 1.7 The graduate acquires a nuanced perspective of internal political, economic, and/or social pressures and how they may impact, either directly or indirectly, the transatlantic relationship and the capacity of the transatlantic partners to act in accordance with the needs of the transatlantic partnership.
- 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: Security and the Transatlantic Alliance in Europe after the Cold War: between a dense network of interlocking and interlocking institutions for 'security governance'

Session 2: NATO - from conventional to nuclear deterrence

Session 3: The development of the CSDP to European defence strategies without the US

Session 4: Decision-making and the institutions of European security

Session 5: EU-NATO relations and differences in operational planning (C2)

Session 6: Strategic and security cultures

Session 7: European military transformation

Session 8: The Europeanisation of defence and security

Session 9: Defending Europe's Eastern and Southern flanks

Session 10: The future of European security

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

4. TEACHING METHOD

- Interactive lectures
- Individual paper assignment, including a brief oral presentation on it

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

- Paper in the form of a briefing report including a brief oral presentation on the report (50%) to which the 'restricted use' of generative AI (as per art. 38 Study Regulations) applies
- Written exam (50%): duration 2h

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

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