

From Nation States to Member States: European Integration and State Transformation

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE OF THE LECTURER

Christopher Bickerton is a Professor of Modern European Politics at the Department of Politics and International Relations, Cambridge University. He is also an Official Fellow in Politics at Queens' College, Cambridge. He received his doctorate in International Relations from St Johns College, Oxford, and has taught at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands and Sciences Po, Paris, in France. His research is on both European integration and the comparative politics of Europe. He published with Oxford University Press in 2012 *European Integration: From Nation-States to Member States*, which was awarded the best book prize of the University Association of Contemporary European Studies (UACES). In 2016, he published with Penguin a best-selling book, *The European Union: A Citizen's Guide*. His most recent book is *Technopopulism: The New Logic of Democratic Politics* (2021). He is currently writing a history of Europe since 1989 which will be published by Penguin. Alongside his academic writing, he regularly contributes to the international media. His articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, the *Financial Times*, the *Guardian* and *Le Monde Diplomatique*. He was a regular panelist on the popular podcast, Talking Politics.

When not in Bruges, the Professor can be reached at cb799@cam.ac.uk. Please be advised, however, that you should clarify all administrative and organisational questions internally with the academic assistant, Pauline THINUS, in the first instance: pauline.thinus@coleurope.eu.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course will begin by considering the concept of the EU member state from an interdisciplinary and socio-historical perspective. It will ask what this concept means and whether there is anything different between member states and other past forms of statehood that have developed in Europe. The course will then focus on the variety of ways in which member states differ from one another: in terms of their size and power, their political system and economic growth model, the timing of their entry into the EU and the historical context in which this entry took place. The course will consider these differences amongst member states from the perspective of nation-states themselves and from the perspective of the EU and the European integration process. The course will encourage students to inquire into the relationship between the diversity amongst EU member states and the wider dynamics of European integration.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the conceptual and empirical challenges that surround the topic of the member states of the European Union (EU) and to provide them with some means of engaging with and mastering these challenges.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Give an account of the meaning of member statehood, in juridical and political terms, and to be able to differentiate EU member states from other historical forms of statehood that preceded the creation of the EU but that also co-exist today with EU member states;
- Identify the commonalities between EU member states that bind them together and form the basis for a sense of shared identity and interest;
- Identify the differences between EU member states that are sources of division within the EU and instability in the process of European integration;
- Appreciate the multiple perspectives that one can have regarding the nature of the EU and European integration, depending on factors such as state size, geographical location, national growth model and date of entry into the EU;
- Have a general sense of the evolution of European statehood (and types of European statehood) prior to the creation of the EU and since its creation;
- Give a detailed account of the national experiences of some of the EU member states, taking into account different national outlooks on policy areas and the different internal constitutional and political structures of EU member states.

EVALUATION METHODS

The course will be examined in the following way. There will be an end of course written exam which will account for 40% of the final mark. The term paper will count for 40%. Students will have a choice of questions for their term paper. The remaining 20% correspond to the participation score. Students are expected to take part in class discussions, class debates and class presentations.

Guidelines on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the IDEAs Programme

As per study regulations updated in June 2026, the IDEAs programme enforces the following rules on AI:

Non-Generative use of AI:

The **non-generative use of AI** in the form of assistance through AI-powered tools for purposes like searching information, spell checks or reference style management – without generating original content – **is by default allowed for all course work and the master's thesis.**

Generative use of AI (genAI):

The IDEAs programme has decided to allow a restricted use of Generative AI, as specified in Article 38 of the Study Regulations:

Restricted use – at foundational stages of the work process only, tasks like topic exploration, literature screening, planning of structure, organisation of data (including the creation of tables, figures and graphs, excluding analysis), preparation of interviews or surveys may be supported by genAI if appropriately acknowledged and checked by the student. The analysis/interpretation of data, the generation of arguments, and writing or similar advanced employment of genAI remain strictly prohibited.

Section 4.4. - Artificial intelligence / academic misconduct
Article 38. Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

Students must provide a comprehensive account of how they used AI at each stage of their IDEAs paper: during conception, writing and editing.

Transgressions regarding the permitted level or incomplete acknowledgement of genAI use will be considered academic misconduct and sanctioned on a progressive scale proportionate to the scope of the infringement.

COURSE SCHEDULE (*The timing is provisional, check always weekly timetables*)

Date (MM/DD)	Start time	End time
09/29	16:15	19:15
09/30	8:30	11:45
10/13	16:15	19:15
10/14	8:30	11:45
10/20	16:15	19:15
10/21	8:30	11:45
11/03	16:15	19:15
11/04	8:30	11:45

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READING

Students are expected to read the core reading for each week and to explore if they have time optional readings. By way of introduction, there are a variety of texts that can be useful, some of which are listed below. There is a very useful Oxford University Press textbook, which has a first and second edition, on the member states of the European Union. Its conceptual focus is on Europeanization, which is one of the themes of this course but the course is not exclusively focused on the dynamics of Europeanization but covers other broader themes. The useful titles are listed below. For those interested in the foreign policy dimension, there are many readings on national foreign policy traditions and their contribution to the EU's foreign and security policy. The course does not cover this directly but it is a question we discuss at various points.

Introductory readings

Kaeding, Michael et al. *The Future of Europe: Views from the Capitals*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

A variety of very short contributions on how the EU is viewed from all of its member states.

This book is available in the library, [as an e-book](#) and in the bookshop.

Bulmer, Simon, and Christian Lequesne (eds.). *The Member States of the European Union*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

This authoritative textbook covers some but not all of the EU member states, and has an extensive set of chapters covering the dynamics of Europeanization. This book is available in the College's library. Details of it are also on the OUP website: <https://global.oup.com/ukhe/product/the-member-states-of-the-european-union-9780198737391?cc=gb&lang=en&>

Lacroix, Justine and Kalypso Nicolaidis (eds.), *European Stories: Intellectual Debates on Europe in National Contexts*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

An edited book with a wide range of chapters on how public intellectuals at the national level discuss European integration and the EU. This book is available in the library.

COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1: The concept of the member state in relation to other forms of statehood

What sort of state is a 'member state' of the EU? How do member states compare and contrast with other forms of state? Have member states become more or less important in EU integration in recent decades?

Required Reading:

Bickerton, Christopher. "Member states in European integration", In *The Member States of the European Union*, edited by Simon Bulmer and Christian Lequesne, 3rd ed., 51-73. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Optional Reading:

Bickerton, Christopher. "2. The Member State Paradigm." In *European Integration: From Nation-States to Member States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Session 2: The EU seen from the perspective of large states: the case of the Franco-German axis

What is the role of the larger member states in EU policymaking? What is the role of Germany and what is the role of France? How different are the German and French visions of the EU? What is the nature of the Franco-German axis? Does it still exist and is it still a driving force for further European integration?

Required Reading:

Bulmer, Simon and William Paterson, [*Germany and the European Union: Europe's Reluctant Hegemon?*](#), The European Union Series. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, chapters 1-5.

Optional Reading:

Dyson, Kenneth, "[The Franco-German relationship and Economic and Monetary Union: Using Europe to Bind 'Leviathan'](#)," *West European Politics*, 22, no. 1 (1999): 25-44.

Krotz, Ulrich and Joachim Schild. "[Back to the future? Franco-German bilateralism in a post-Brexit union](#)," *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25, no. 8 (2018): 1174-1193.

Rozenberg, Olivier. "Genuine Europeanization or Monnet for nothing?" in *The Member States of the European Union*, edited by Simon Bulmer and Christian Lequesne, 2nd ed., ch.3. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Treacher, Adrian, "[Franco-German relations and European integration: peeling off the labels](#)" *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 4, no. 3 (2002): 510-518.

Class activity: group discussion then collective discussion on the topic of the impact of the war in Ukraine on leadership in the EU.

Reading for discussion: Kauffmann, Sylvie. "War in Ukraine has shaken the EU's power dynamics", *Financial Times*, 31 August 2022 <https://www.ft.com/content/2206a011-8769-4205-a5d1-f98492cb73b5>

Session 3: The EU seen from the perspective of small states: do small states always love the EU?

Small states in the EU are often its strongest supporters and yet they also find themselves in a union with much larger powers. What are the advantages of EU membership for smaller

member states? How can we define 'small states' and what sort of diversity characterizes them?

Required Reading:

Laffan, Brigid, and Jane O'Mahony, [*Ireland and the European Union*](#), Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, chapters 2, 3, 10 and 11.

Optional Reading:

Archer, Clive, and Neill Nugent. "Does the size of member states in the EU matter?", *Journal of European Integration*, 28, no.1 (2006): 3-6.

Class debate: 'Without the EU, small states in Europe would be instruments in the hands of the continent's great powers'.

Session 4: Are some political systems better suited to European integration than others?

How does EU integration impact upon national political systems? Are parliamentary or majoritarian systems better or worst suited to participating in EU integration than coalition-based or consensual forms of democracy? Can differences in national political systems help us understand the different attitudes of domestic populations to European integration?

Required Reading:

Schmidt, Vivien A. [*Democracy in Europe: The EU and National Politics*](#), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, chapters 2-4.

Optional Reading

Lijphart, Arend, [*Patterns of Democracy, Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*](#), New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012 [for background on various types of democracy]

Session 5: Macro-economic imbalances in the EU: do some countries prosper whilst others loose out?

European economic integration has generated both convergence and divergence between EU member states. Does divergence come from structural dynamics or from the policy choices of national governments? What are the implications for European economic integration and monetary union in particular? Does the EU have a core and a periphery?

Required Reading:

Bohle, Dorothee, "[European Integration, Capitalist Diversity and Crisis Trajectories on Europe's Eastern Periphery](#)", *New Political Economy*, 23, no. 2, (2018): 239-253.

Optional Reading:

Baccaro, Lucio and Jonas Pontusson. "Rethinking comparative political economy: the growth model perspective," *Politics and Society*, 44, no. 2 (2016): 175-207.

Jacoby, Wade, "[Surplus Germany](#)," *German Marshall Fund Policy Paper*, no. 8, Washington, DC: GMF of the United States, 2017, 1-25.

Magone, José M. et al. (eds.), [Core Periphery Relations in the European Union](#), London: Routledge, 2016, chapters 1 and 2.

Online resources:

Speech by Irish President Michael D Higgins, "A new mind for Europe," University College Dublin, Dublin, March 2019:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PplvxoLBIQA>

Class debate: 'There are more winners than losers in the history of European economic integration'.

Session 6: Joining Europe: The Iberian experience

Portugal and Spain joined the EEC in 1986 after collapse of authoritarian regimes in the mid-1970s. What did EU membership represent for these two states and what has been their record of EU membership?

Required Reading:

Morata, Francesc. "Spain: Modernization through Europeanization" In [The Member States of the European Union](#), edited by Simon Bulmer and Christian Lequesne, 2nd ed, 134-160, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Suggested Reading:

Royo, Sebastián and Paul Christopher Manuel. "[Some Lessons from the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Accession of Portugal and Spain to the European Union](#)", *South European Society and Politics*, 8, no. 1-2, (2007): 1-30.

Royo, Sebastián. "[Portugal in the European Union: The Limits of Convergence](#)", *South European Society and Politics*, 18, (2013): 197-216.

Class role-play: European Council meeting on the topic of the Iberian enlargement

Session 7: Joining Europe: the Central and Eastern European experience

Ten new member states joined the EU in 2004, most of them former states of the Soviet block. What were the experiences and consequences of joining for these new member states? And how has membership transformed these states? How has their membership transformed the EU?

Required Reading:

Cianetti, Licia, James Dawson, and Sean Hanley, "[Rethinking 'democratic backsliding' in Central and Eastern Europe – looking beyond Hungary and Poland](#)," *East European Politics*, 34, no. 3, (2018): 243-256.

Optional Reading:

Bickerton, Christopher. "[From Brezhnev to Brussels: Transformations of sovereignty in Eastern Europe](#)," *International Politics*, 46, no. 6, (2009): 732-752.

Börzel, Tanja and Frank Schimmelfennig, "[Coming Together or Drifting Apart? The EU's political integration capacity in Eastern Europe](#)", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 24, no. 2, (2017): 278-296.

Canetti, Licia, "Consolidated technocratic and ethnic hollowness, but no backsliding: reassessing Europeanization in Estonia and Latvia," *East European Politics*, 34, no. 3, (2018): 317-336.

Hanley, Sean and Milada Anna Vachudova, "[Understanding the illiberal turn: democratic backsliding in the Czech Republic](#)", *East European Politics*, 34, no. 3, (2018): 276-296.

Krastev, Ivan, "Is East-Central Europe Backsliding? The Strange Death of the Liberal Consensus", *Journal of Democracy*, 18, no. 4, (2007): 56-64.



Session 8: European diversity and the future of European integration: conclusions

Required Reading:

Comparative European Politics, "Imagining the Future of Europe: Between Multi-Speed Differentiation and Institutional Decoupling." Special Issue, 17 no. 2, (2019), <https://link.springer.com/journal/41295/17/2> - a variety of articles on how the EU manages integration and diversity – read at least 2 articles from the special issue.

Class activity: simulation around future institutional orientations for the EU from the perspective of the member states.