



Brugge

College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



Natolin

Academic Year 2026-2027

European General Studies

Professors: Oriane CALLIGARO and Jean-Frédéric SCHAUB

Assistante : Andréa DELESTRADE

Identity, Culture and the Symbolic Construction of Europe

Course description

The central objective is to introduce students to an understudied dimension of European integration – the construction of a European imagined community – and to reflect on categories too often used uncritically such as 'Europe', 'History of Europe', 'European identity', or 'European culture'. This reflection shall provide them with useful theoretical and empirical tools to assess critically past and current representations of Europe as well as a whole range of EU policies.

The course is divided in two parts.

In the first four sessions, Prof. Schaub adopts a historical perspective to explore those main concepts of European identity, consciousness or culture, and their emergence on the long term, from the Early Modern Times to WWI.

In the last four sessions, Prof. Calligaro focusses on the contemporary uses, in European policies, of these historical legacies to promote a sense of belonging to the European Union among the citizens.

In more detail, the main objectives of the course are the following:

Firstly, it will allow to students to understand that the consciousness of being European is being shaped by a set of historical heritages. This is not a simple history, since divergent and successive interpretations of these legacies have been companions of a very progressive awareness of the existence of a shared belonging. It will take into account the fact that the regions that constitute Europe today have defined their historical identity through the relations they have sustained with each other, but also through confrontations with the extra-European worlds.

It will discuss topics as important as the birth of specifically European political institutions and regimes, the characteristics of the processes of confessionalization and secularization, the progress of scientific knowledge and philosophical rationality, imperial and colonial expansion, the birth of racial ideologies, the invention of literary, visual or musical languages that are unlike any other.

It will provide students with insights into the historical, theoretical, and conceptual backgrounds of contemporary debates about European identity, especially the debate regarding the definitions to be given to European culture and European civilization. Students should acquire a thorough knowledge of the concrete strategies conceived by the EU institutions and other actors to promote a European imagined community and to establish connections between the EU and its citizens;

Finally, using these theoretical and practical insights gained in the course, students should be able to assess EU action in the symbolic, cultural and communicational fields critically, demonstrating the ability to identify the relevant sources, actors, and methodological frameworks. Students should have the capacity to use this reflection on identity construction and political legitimacy to contextualize developments in policy areas in which they specialize (law, economics, political governance, foreign affairs, etc.).



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At the end of the course, students will have acquired the following knowledge and skills:

Students will gain knowledge and understanding of the main political and cultural processes in the long-term history of Europe and their legacies and effects in contemporary European politics and in EU policies;

This will enable them to understand and discuss the respective literature and to apply this knowledge in their autonomous analysis and assessment of EU policies in the field of education, culture, communication;

This will allow them to formulate judgments on more normative and conceptual issues relating to the construction of European identity and to strategies developed by EU actors to foster a European consciousness;

Participants will finally be able to communicate their analyses to others – fellow students, scientific staff and practitioners – and discuss these in a critical manner.

Course Contents

Late September (date to be confirmed) – Organisational tutorial with Andréa Delestrade

13 and 14 October – Professor Schaub

Session 1: How can social sciences address a non-existent reality like race?

Session 2: European antisemitism, a matrix of racism

Readings

1. Delille, Gérard (2013). "The Shed Blood of Christ. From Blood as Metaphor to Blood as Bearer of Identity", in Johnson, Christopher et al., 1st eds. *Blood & Kinship. Matter for Metaphor from Ancient Rome to the Present*, Berghan Books.
2. Schaub, Jean-Frédéric (2018). Basques, Jews, and the Racialisation of Spanish Identity, *Politika*, [Basques, Jews, and the Racialization of Spanish Identity | Politika](#).

Session 3: Europe and the others: colonialism and slavery

Readings

1. Morgan, Jennifer L. (2018). "Partus Sequitur Ventrem: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery", *Small Axe*, volume 22 (1), March 2018 (n°55), pp.1-17.
2. Fields, Barbara J. (1990). "Slave, Race and Ideology in the United States of America", *The New Left Review*, May-June 1990 (n°181), pp.111-148.

Session 4: European experiences of racism: a cultural legacy

Readings

1. Malchow, H.L. (1993), "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain", *Past and Present*, n°139 (May 1993), pp.90-130.
2. Schaub, Jean-Frédéric (2016). "Racialization within universalist societies. Is it possible to identify various historical cases of the same antinomy?", in Ando, Clifford, eds. *Citizenship and Empire in Europe 200-1900*, Franz Steiner Verlag.

Background reading:

- George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*, Princeton U.P. 2002.

20 October – Professor Calligaro

Session 5: The European Union: A constructed imagined community?

Theories and models of collective identity

The symbolic construction of a European community

Readings:

- Cirila Toplak & Irena Šumi (2012) Europe(an Union): Imagined Community in the Making? *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 20:1, 7-28.
- Bouchard, Gérard (2017) *Europe in Search of European Identity* "The Road of Identity and Myth" 3.2. and 3.3 (pp.28-35) <https://institutdelors.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/europeidentitymyth-bouchard-jdi-dec16.pdf>
- Kundnani, Hans (2023) The 'Eurocentric fallacy': the myths that underpin European identity <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/17/the-eurocentric-fallacy-the-myths-that-underpin-european-identity>

21 October – Professor Calligaro**Session 6: Constructing Europe through culture**

An instrumentalization of European Heritage? The case of the European Capitals of Culture

The alternative visions of the Council of Europe

Readings:

- Cris Shore (2006), "In uno plures" (?) *EU Cultural Policy and the Governance of Europe*, in *Cultural Analysis*, 5, 7-26.
- Chiara De Cesari et al. (2019) (Why) do Eurosceptics believe in a common European heritage?, in *European Memory in Populism*, Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/oa-edit/10.4324/9780429454813-2/eurosceptics-believe-common-european-heritage-chiara-de-cesari-ivo-bosilkov-arianna-piacentini>

27 October – Prof. Calligaro**Session 7: Constructing Europe through historiography and memory**

EU University Action and Historiography

EU's action in the field of memory

Readings:

- Kuhn, T. (2012): Why Educational Exchange Programmes miss their Mark: Cross-border Mobility, Education
- Lindberg, Sara (2022), Forming EU-professionals: Geopolitical and Symbolic Hierarchies at the College of Europe, Uppsala University, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Education, PhD thesis. Chapter 7 Living Europe <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1703956/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

28 October – Professor Calligaro**Session 8: Constructing Europe through symbols**

What are the symbols of Europe?

A travel into the euro iconography

Readings:

- Littoz-Monnet, A. (2012). The EU Politics of Remembrance: Can Europeans Remember Together? *West European Politics*, 35.
- Sierp, A. (2020). EU Memory Politics and Europe's Forgotten Colonial Past. *Interventions*, 22(6), 686–702. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2020.1749701>
- Calligaro, O. (2022) "Iconographies of European integrations" in Thomas Hoerber, Ignazio Cabras, Gabriel Weber (eds), *Handbook of European Integrations*, London, Routledge.

Teaching method

This course mainly consists of lectures.

Substantial time will be devoted to discussions and presentations and students are warmly invited to participate.

Discussions in class

All students will give a short presentation in pairs (5 minutes each), to introduce and then lead a debate with the whole class. This presentation, along with contributions to the class discussions, will be assessed as part of the participation grade.

Course material

Besides the compulsory readings for each session, students are invited to consult the following books:

- Jean-Frédéric Schaub, *L'Europe a-t-elle une histoire ?* Paris, Albin Michel, 2008 (trad. Spanish, Madrid, Akal, 2013); Diana Mishkova, Trencsény Balázs, eds., *European Regions and Boundaries: A Conceptual History* (2017) [online](#)
- Oriane Calligaro, *Negotiating Europe: The EU Promotion of Europeanness*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013;

Evaluation

- **Take-home essay (40%):** 1400-1800 words max;
- **Final oral exam (40%):** 15-minute exam with several questions on the course content.
- **Participation (20%):** attendance, constructive participation in the class discussions and a presentation in class.



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

As per study regulations updated in June 2025, 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.
