



STUDY PROGRAMME

Inter-departmental European Advanced

ACADEMIC YEAR

2026 - 2027

SEMESTER

First

COURSE TITLE

The Historical Foundations of the European Union

COURSE PROFESSOR

Wolfram Kaiser

COURSE ASSISTANT

Lola Létourmy

NATURE OF COURSE (COMPULSORY, OPTIONAL)

Fundamental course

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

English

ECTS CREDITS 3 ECTS

1. COURSE OBJECTIVE

To provide students with a thorough understanding of the history of European integration and the present-day European Union.

To help students contextualize contemporary problems of European integration and the European Union against the background of its historical development since 1945.

To allow students to enhance their critical thinking about the history of European integration and key positions in academic debates about it.

2. LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students will be able to reconstruct the temporal evolution of European integration from 1945 to the Maastricht Treaty, with a perspective on the present day.

Students will be able to critically evaluate the successes and failures and the ambitions and limits of the present-day European Union in contemporary historical perspective.

Students will be in a position to critically evaluate key positions in academic debates about the history of European integration and the European Union.

Finally, students will have developed a good understanding of the role of History and historical perspectives for understanding and evaluating European integration in a cross-disciplinary perspective.

3. COURSE CONTENTS

The course outline is available to students on the intranet and details the focus of and learning objectives for each session. The course integrates chronological sessions about the history of European integration from 1945 to the Maastricht Treaty with thematic sessions. It is structured as follows:

1st teaching bloc

1. 'Core Europe' formation in the ECSC
2. Negotiating the EEC
3. Alternative cooperation patterns: EFTA

2nd teaching bloc

4. Great Leap: Negotiating the Maastricht Treaty
5. Theory and EU history
6. Internal federator? France and the 'German question'

3rd teaching bloc

7. External federator? Britain and 'core Europe' formation
8. External federator? US and European integration
9. Transnational parties as integration agents

4th teaching bloc

10. Transnational business as integration agents
11. Civil society groups in European integration
12. Supranational agency: Commission, Parliament, and CJEU

4. TEACHING METHOD(S)

The course aims to provide students with core knowledge of the history of European integration and the European Union with enabling them to evaluate and discuss it critically in historical perspective. As a result, each session combines one-hour lecture with a one-hour seminar. The lectures are interactive in allowing students to raise questions and make observations.

The seminars are student-centred. They employ three different forms of student-led participation and interaction. Five sessions include a short student group presentation of up to 20 minutes by up to four volunteers. Two sessions consist of discussion groups to debate different questions related to the lecture within the group, before a wider debate among all students. The remaining sessions involve the discussion of a theme of European integration based on and evolving from the critical prior reading by students of an original source related to European integration.

5. COURSE MATERIAL

The course material includes a choice of one of two introductory textbooks, with particular chapters to be read by all students in preparation of each sessions; the original sources to be discussed in the sessions; and information about additional literature, all of which is accessible in the course outline available on the intranet.



Brugge

College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



Natolin

ECTS CARD

6. EVALUATION

Student performance is evaluated through the combination of a written assignment (40%), a written exam (40%) as well as in-class participation and contributing to a group presentation (20%).

The written assignment follows regulations that apply equally to all EG courses regarding length, required referencing etc. The students have a choice of essay questions which will allow them to discuss in writing one controversial theme of European integration history based on their reading of relevant literature.

The exam consists of a choice of four of eight shorter exam questions which check the acquired knowledge of facts and temporal understanding by students of the history of European integration.