



## STUDY PROGRAMME

1. POL  
2. MATA

## ACADEMIC YEAR

2020 - 2021

## SEMESTER

2

## COURSE TITLE

**The Council and new intergovernmentalism: law-making, policy coordination and executive power**

## COURSE PROFESSOR

**Uwe PUETTER**

## COURSE ASSISTANT

**Thijs VANDENBUSSCHE**

## NATURE OF COURSE (COMPULSORY, OPTIONAL)

1. Optional  
2. Optional

## LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

**English**

## ECTS CREDITS

**5**

## **1. COURSE OBJECTIVE**

This course is an advanced-level seminar on the Council of the European Union and its role as a central policy-making institution within the EU's political system. It specifically introduces students to the Council as a diverse policy-making environment in which member state representatives simultaneously and by using different working methods engage in legislative decision-making, policy coordination and executive decision-making.

The course discusses how the role of the Council as the central forum for representing member state governments in EU decision-making has changed within the context of new intergovernmentalism, as a key dynamic of institutional change in post-Maastricht integration. Besides its traditional role as a co-legislator the Council is reviewed as being the key organisational structure through which member state governments as well as the Commission exercise far-reaching executive powers collectively in some of the EU's most prominent policy domains.

Students will obtain detailed knowledge of

- 1) how the Council operates, how its work is organised in different Council formations, the Eurogroup and within a plethora of preparatory bodies including high-level policy committees, such as COREPER, the Economic and Financial Committee and the Political and Security Committee;
- 2) how the Council operates in tandem with the European Council, with which it shares the representation of member state interests, as well as in conjunction with the Commission and



the European Parliament;

3) how different theoretical perspectives in EU studies, including new and liberal intergovernmentalism, neofunctionalism as well as rational choice and sociological institutionalism, make sense of the work of the Council and analyse its decision-making and overall institutional development.

## 2. LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course students will be able to attribute different decision-making mechanisms to different Council formations and aspects of the Council's agenda. They will be able to formulate assessments and expectations of Council actions and can delineate implications for inter-institutional relations. At an analytical level students will be able to engage in independent research on aspects of the work of the Council by using different theoretical and methodological perspectives and strategies.

**The course objectives above link up with the following programme-specific learning outcomes:**

### **POL:**

- 1.1 Students possess a pluri-disciplinary understanding of European integration, allowing them to understand fully the nature, dynamics and functioning of the EU system.
- 1.2 Students have a general knowledge of the main components of the EU political system: institutions, actors, decision-making procedures, competences and policies.
- 1.3 Students comprehend the disciplinary knowledge and theories specific to EU studies.
- 1.4 Students possess an in-depth knowledge of fundamental aspects of the EU political system (institutions, actors, policies etc.).
- 1.5 Students develop a concrete understanding of the logics of policy-making and negotiations within the EU political system, thanks to simulation exercises and the drafting of policy papers.
- 1.6 Students recognize the normative assumptions and implications of theories of European integration.
- 2.1 Students can recognize, contextualize, explain, and interpret political, societal and economic phenomena in European integration. They can assess events, governance problems and political crises.
- 2.2 Students can analyse the process and actors of EU policy-making at different levels of governance and can reflect on potential developments.
- 2.3 Students can transform a complex problem into a research question, mobilize theories, develop a research design, and conduct empirical work to provide solutions in an analytical and balanced way.
- 2.4 Students can flexibly apply theories and analytical frameworks from different disciplinary perspectives to the main issues of EU politics and policies.
- 2.5 Students are able to analyse, in a limited amount of time, complex and new issues, by finding and investigating various sources of information and delivering an analytical and critical synthesis.
- 2.6 Students are capable of working as part of a complex project, individually or collectively, and they develop skills of planning, organisation, prioritisation and time management.
- 2.7 Students can communicate clearly and effectively, through oral presentations or written



documents, to different kinds of audiences.

2.8 Students are capable of evolving in a multi-cultural context and of taking into account the variety of political systems, institutional logics and cultural backgrounds.

**For MATA students, the following MATA programme-specific learning outcomes are relevant**

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.

1.3 The graduate has good knowledge of, depending on his or her disciplinary focus, the political and/or legal systems, the decision-making processes, the economic structures and the main internal and external policies of the European Union and the United States.

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

2.1 The graduate can approach the field of transatlantic affairs in a broad sense analytically by assessing the challenges in this domain with an open mind for diversity and for complex situations.

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

#### Part 1: The Council and the role of intergovernmentalism in EU decision-making

Introduction: between community method and new intergovernmentalism

- The Council as a diverse institutional environment
- But one which is governed by two prevailing organising principles

Intergovernmentalism and the Council

- Conceptions of intergovernmentalism
- Historical origins of the council
- Controversies in the literature



## New intergovernmentalism and the Council

- EU post-Maastricht institutional change
- A new role for the Council in a changing EU
- Understanding the Council's working methods and institutional differentiation

## Part 2: The Council in the Treaty of Lisbon

### Co-legislator

- Ordinary legislative procedure
- Practices and routines
- Policy domains

### Policy coordinator

- Central forum for intergovernmental policy coordination
- Practices and routines
- Policy domains

### The European Council and the presidency of the Council

- Role of the European Council and its president
- Rotating presidency
- Permanent presidents and chairs

## Part 3: The Council configurations and the Eurogroup

### The Foreign Affairs Council

- Coordinating external action and international representation
- Executive decisions
- Negotiation mandates

### The Eurogroup and ECOFIN – coordinating economic governance

- Coordination of economic policies
- Executive decisions
- Law-making

### Competitiveness, Environment, and Transport, Telecommunications and Energy

- Regulating Europe
- Law-making
- Single market governance

### Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO)

- Hybrid and jumbo configuration
- Law-making and policy coordination combined

### The General Affairs Council, the committees and the General Secretariat

- Preparing and coordinating a diverse Council and the European Council
- Institutional competition and overlapping structures
- Administering the work of the Council

## Part 4: Inter-institutional relations and the future of the Council

### The Council and the European Parliament



- Adversaries and closest collaborators
- Beneficiaries of post-Maastricht integration

#### The Council and the Commission

- Integrated EU executive
- Agenda-setting

#### The Council and the European Council

- Hierarchy and ultimate decision-making
- 'Tasking' and mutual dependency

#### The matrix of Council decision-making

- Decision-making mode
- Presidency regime
- Frequency of meetings
- Working methods

## 4. TEACHING METHOD(S)

The course is delivered as a seminar, which is based on close inter-action between the students and the course director. Individual course sessions are based on required readings which all course participants must prepare ahead of the relevant meeting. Discussion is organised in the form of plenary debates and group work. The language of the course is English.

## 5. COURSE MATERIAL<sup>1</sup>

Puetter, U., *The European Council and the Council. New intergovernmentalism and institutional change*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014.

Bickerton, C.J., Hodson, D. & Puetter, U. (eds.): 'The new intergovernmentalism: States and supranational actors in the post-Maastricht era', Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Dermot Hodson and John Peterson (eds.), *The institutions of the European Union* 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2017.

Lewis, J., *The European Council and the Council of the European Union. European Union Politics*. M. Cini and N. Pérez-Solórzano\_Borragán. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2015, pp. 138-154.

Hayes-Renshaw, F. and H. Wallace, *The Council of Ministers*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Palgrave 2016.

Puetter, U., *The Eurogroup: how a secretive circle of finance ministers shape European economic governance*. Manchester, Manchester University Press 2006.

Batory, A. and U. Puetter, "Consistency and diversity? The EU's rotating trio Council presidency after the Lisbon Treaty." *Journal of European Public Policy* 20(1), 2013: 95-112.

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<sup>1</sup> This bibliography has been put together by the Professor. The formatting of the references does not necessarily correspond to the referencing rules applicable in the Department.



## 6. EVALUATION

All students are required to make a 15 minutes in-class presentation and complete a written exam.

Presentations will be assigned in the first session and involve a particular task. Students discuss a pre-defined presentation reading, which represents a complementary or adversary research perspective in comparison to what is covered by the required reading, or carry out a predefined empirical research task. Presentations are intended to help students to learn how to discuss academic texts and own research findings. Presenters should assume that their audience learns about an author, a research perspective or own empirical findings through the presentation and not through prior preparation. Presenters **MUST NOT** present on the required reading which is read by everyone anyway! A presentation should conclude with clearly identifying points for further discussion in the class. Students are encouraged to make use of presentation techniques such as Power Point, Prezi or the flip chart. Presenters should share their presentation slides and/or outline with the course director and the teaching assistant at least one week prior to the relevant session.

The final course grade is composed as follows:

20% in-class contribution  
30% presentation  
50% written exam<sup>2</sup>

Course attendance is compulsory.

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<sup>2</sup> The evaluation modalities of the final exam may be subject to adaptations in function of the evolution of the sanitary situation