



STUDY PROGRAMME

POL & MATA-POL

ACADEMIC YEAR

2020 - 2021

SEMESTER

2

COURSE TITLE

The European Parliament in the EU's Political System

COURSE PROFESSOR

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COURSE ASSISTANT

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NATURE OF COURSE

Optional

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

English

ECTS CREDITS

5

1. COURSE OBJECTIVE

This seminar provides a fresh approach to the study of the European Parliament, by situating it into the wider EU political system. The objective is to go beyond a mere description of the EP's internal structures and concentrate on its functions and practices. Treating the EP as part of a political system allows us to concentrate on how citizens' demands are translated into policy outputs. Focusing on the policy process helps us to examine the role of the EP in this process of translation and look at wider questions of democracy and legitimacy. The objective is thus to observe three stages of the policy process: where demands come from; who is in charge of aggregating citizens' demands inside the EP and how this is done; and how these demands are negotiated with other EU institutions and translated into outputs. Therefore, it looks at actors and internal structures as part of a wider process, rather than as isolated elements, stressing the dynamics between the EP and the other EU institutions. Each session will require students to examine and debate key questions of the European Parliament by putting them into a wider theoretical perspective. The sessions will be combined with practical exercises and (whenever possible) insights from practitioners.

2. LEARNING OUTCOMES

The above course objectives 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.
- 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.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.6 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:

- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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
- 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.
- 2.4 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

1. Introduction

Block 1:

2. Elections

3. Lobbying and the role of the media

Block 2:

4. MEPs and the role of staff in managing parliamentary roles

5. Political groups and national party delegations

Block 3:

6. Committees

7. Plenary

Block 4:

8. Informal decision-making and trilogues

9. Relais actors

10. Inter-institutional balance of power

11. Conclusion

4. TEACHING METHOD(S)

The course is based on seminars, in which selected readings will be critically discussed to understand the theoretical and methodological approaches used to explain the European Parliament. In addition, part of the seminar will be dedicated to developing a joint research project, for which students will have to write a research report in small groups.

5. COURSE MATERIAL

The textbook published by the lecturer can be used as background reading:

Ariadna Ripoll Servent (2018), *The European Parliament*, Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan.

1. Introduction

Textbook: Chapters 2-5

Block 1:

2. Elections

Textbook: Chapter 6

Compulsory readings:

Daniel, W. T. and Obholzer, L. (2020) 'Reaching out to the voter? Campaigning on Twitter during



the 2019 European elections', *Research & Politics* 7(2): 2053168020917256.

Farrell, D. M. and Scully, R. (2010) 'The European Parliament: One Parliament, Several Modes of Political Representation on the Ground?', *Journal of European Public Policy* 17(1): 36–54.

Galpin, C. and Trenz, H.-J. (2019) 'In the Shadow of Brexit: The 2019 European Parliament Elections as First-Order Polity Elections?', *The Political Quarterly* 90(4): 664–671.

3. Lobbying and the role of the media

Textbook: Chapter 7

Compulsory readings:

Greenwood, J. and Roederer-Rynning, C. (2020) 'Power at the expense of diffuse interests? The European Parliament as a legitimacy-seeking institution', *European Politics and Society* 21(1): 118–136.

Coen, D. and Katsaitis, A. (2019) 'Legislative Efficiency and Political Inclusiveness: The Effect of Procedures on Interest Group Mobilization in the European Parliament', *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 25(2): 278–294.

Lappas, G., Triantafillidou, A. and Yannas, P. (2019) 'Members of European Parliament (MEPs) on Social Media: Understanding the Underlying Mechanisms of Social Media Adoption and Popularity', *The Review of Socionetwork Strategies* 13(1): 55–77.

Block 2:

4. MEPs and the role of staff in managing parliamentary roles

Textbook: Chapter 8

Compulsory readings:

Aldrich, A. S. (2018) 'National Political Parties and Career Paths to the European Parliament', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 56(6): 1283–1304.

Bale, T. and Taggart, P. (2006) 'First-Timers Yes, Virgins No: The Roles and Backgrounds of New Members of the European Parliament', *SEI Working Papers* 89:
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/sei-working-paper-no-89.pdf>

Pegan, A. (2017) 'The role of personal parliamentary assistants in the European Parliament', *West European Politics* 40(2): 295–315.

5. Political groups and national party delegations

Textbook: Chapter 9

Compulsory readings:

Koop, C., Reh, C. and Bressanelli, E. (2018) 'When Politics Prevails: Parties, Elections and Loyalty in the European Parliament', *European Journal of Political Research* 57(3): 563–586.

Lefkofridi, Z. and Katsanidou, A. (2018) 'A Step Closer to a Transnational Party System? Competition and Coherence in the 2009 and 2014 European Parliament', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 56(6): 1462–1482.

McDonnell, D. and Werner, A. (2018) 'Respectable radicals: why some radical right parties in the European Parliament forsake policy congruence', *Journal of European Public Policy* 25(5): 747–763.

Rose, R. and Borz, G. (2013) 'Aggregation and Representation in European Parliament Party Groups', *West European Politics* 36(3): 474–497.



Block 3:

6. Committees

Textbook: Chapter 10

Compulsory readings:

Laloux, T. and Pennetreau, D. (2019) 'Policies with and without Politics: Committees and the Differentiated Politicization of Legislative Debates in the European Parliament', *Politique européenne* 64(2): 86–109.

Roger, L. and Winzen, T. (2015) 'Party Groups and Committee Negotiations in the European Parliament: Outside Attention and the Anticipation of Plenary Conflict', *Journal of European Public Policy* 22(3): 391–408.

7. Plenary

Textbook: Chapter 10

Compulsory readings:

Bowler, S. and McElroy, G. (2015) 'Political Group Cohesion and “Hurrah” Voting in the European Parliament', *Journal of European Public Policy* 22(9): 1355–1365.

Sorace, M. (2018) 'Legislative Participation in the EU: An Analysis of Questions, Speeches, Motions and Declarations in the 7th European Parliament', *European Union Politics* 19(2): 299–320.

Block 4:

8. Informal decision-making and trilogues

Textbook: Chapter 11

Compulsory readings:

Delreux, T. and Laloux, T. (2018) 'Concluding Early Agreements in the EU: A Double Principal-Agent Analysis of Trilogue Negotiations', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 56(2): 300–317.

Roederer-Rynning, C. and Greenwood, J. (2020) 'Black boxes and open secrets: trilogues as “politicised diplomacy”', *West European Politics*.

9. Relais actors

Textbook: Chapter 11

Compulsory readings:

Brandsma, G. J. and Hoppe, A. (2020) 'He who controls the process controls the outcome? A reappraisal of the relais actor thesis', *Journal of European Integration*.

Häge, F. M. and Ringe, N. (2019) 'Rapporteur-Shadow Rapporteur Networks in the European Parliament: The Strength of Small Numbers', *European Journal of Political Research* 58(1): 209–235.

Obholzer, L., Hurka, S. and Kaeding, M. (2019) 'Party group coordinators and rapporteurs: Discretion and agency loss along the European Parliament's chains of delegation', *European Union Politics* 20(2): 239–260.

10. Inter-institutional balance of power

Textbook: Chapter 11

Compulsory readings:



Kreppel, A. (2018) 'Bicameralism and the balance of power in EU legislative politics', *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 24(1): 11–33.

Ripoll Servent, A. (2019) 'Failing under the "shadow of hierarchy": Explaining the role of the European Parliament in the EU's "asylum crisis"', *Journal of European Integration* 41(3): 293–310.

11. Conclusion

Textbook: Chapter 12

6. EVALUATION¹

- Written exam (50%)
- Written report of the group project (30%)
- Poster presentation of the project (10%)
- Active participation in discussions and group exercises during the sessions (10%)

The written examination, held at the end of the course, will test the students' ability to understand the functioning of the EP as well as their ability to assess critically a variety of arguments and perspectives raised in contemporary writings on the EP. Students will be provided with four academic articles a couple of weeks before the exam. The examination will last 2:30 hours and will consist of an open-book exam with three or four questions asking students to critically evaluate one (out of the four) academic article.

Assessment at second attempt

During the second examination session the course is assessed 100% on the basis of a written resit exam. The format of the resit exam is identical to that of the first session.

¹ The evaluation modalities of the final exam may be subject to adaptations in function of the evolution of the sanitary situation.