



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Processes of European Integration

2627-1-F8702N028

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding:

The course aims to provide a basic knowledge of the perspectives and theoretical models of the process of integration of European states and societies in its multiple dimensions and in a polycentric perspective, taking into account the historical, structural and institutional development of the European Union.

Applying knowledge and understanding:

The course provides skills for understanding specific European politics and policies, and for applying these conceptual and methodological tools to the design of research and cooperation projects within the EU.

Autonomy of judgement

Ability to collect, analyse and critically interpret, independently, theoretical approaches relating to the specific field of the European Integration studies, and different types of empirical data concerning political and social phenomena and their change.

Communicational skills

The active and continuous participation of the students is one of the prerogatives of the course. Seminar activities and group work are an integral part of the educational project.

Ability to learn

Ability to continue one's education independently, developing specific learning methods that facilitate the acquisition of and access to further knowledge and skills related to one's field of study and other related disciplines.

Contents

The course aims to present and analyse the key dynamics of the European integration process in its fundamental dimensions. The first dimension is the strengthening of the EU's supranational and transnational institutions, known as 'deepening'. The second dimension is the EU's expansion to other states and societies on the continent, known as 'widening'. We will analyse the integration process from the perspective of European political sociology, focusing on active and participatory citizenship. This process requires ongoing innovative work on public and social policies that can strengthen the capabilities of citizens and the democratic institutions of the Union and its member and candidate states.

Detailed program

The profound and ongoing transformation of European societies is commonly defined in terms of Europeanization, understood as the strengthening of democratic systems in EU Member States and candidate countries. Europeanization entails the structural and institutional harmonization of these societies not only at the level of principles, in accordance with the Copenhagen criteria, but also through a series of reforms affecting all sectors of social life in the broadest sense, political, economic and cultural, as defined by the regulations of the *acquis communautaire*.

Starting from the origins of a united Europe in the aftermath of the defeat of Nazism and Fascism in the Second World War, particular attention will be devoted to the period inaugurated by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communist regimes. This historical period is crucial both for the formation of the European Union and for the dialectical, and often contradictory, process concerning the integration of the "Other Europe" — namely Central, Eastern, and Balkan Europe.

The first part of the course will introduce the main theories of European integration, its model of governance, and the discursive and normative construction of its structures and institutions. The course will then examine the various crises that have characterized recent turbulent decades, particularly the financial crisis (2008), the migration crisis (2015), the COVID-19 pandemic crisis (2020), the crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine (2022), and the crisis related to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (2023).

The analysis will be conducted from the perspective of the specific public and social policies developed in response to these crises: namely, austerity versus recovery and resilience policies, new border regimes, the redefinition of the European welfare state, and the construction of a common EU foreign and defence policy. These crises highlight both potential risk factors and sources of threat to future integration processes, as well as a growing awareness of the importance of a more equitable and solidaristic Europe committed to social justice.

Finally, two case studies will be examined and discussed. The first focuses on the accession process of the Western Balkan countries, on the one hand, and of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, on the other; the second addresses new restrictive migration policies in the EU. The analysis of these case studies will provide an opportunity to reflect on Europe's future, particularly with regard to the European welfare state and the Union's capacity to address new forms of socio-economic hardship and growing social inequalities. These challenges are further exacerbated by the context of wars within Europe and along its borders, against the backdrop of the rise of illiberal and authoritarian tendencies within European democracies.

Prerequisites

No specific prerequisite is required. A basic knowledge of English is desirable, but not essential.

Teaching methods

The course will combine lectures and participatory activities – students will be invited to present and discuss several selected texts. We will host experts in the field during our seminars. Please note that all lectures require attending in person. Italian is the official language of the course. There will be no mid-term exams.

A certain number of online meetings with working students may be arranged; Erasmus students may ask for short seminars in English, in remote synchronous mode.

I will receive students both in presence and via Webex – the appointment should be agreed by mail a few days in advance.

Assessment methods

The first part of the exam requires the writing of a paper (3500-5000 words including the bibliography), on a selected topic proposed by the student and agreed with the teacher; the paper must be delivered at least 7 days before the oral exam. The oral examination consists in presentation and discussion of the paper content. Participation to the seminars will be taken into consideration for the final evaluation.

Students can write and discuss their papers in English, Slovenian, Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages.

Evaluation criteria:

The written exam test:

- /- Ability to grasp the fundamental conceptual elements proposed by the course;
- /- Ability to unfold synthetically a subject chosen for the paper in an original and autonomous way;
- /- Ability to develop a critical and reflective discourse in written form.

The oral exam test:

- /- Understanding of the specific concepts related to the course topics;
- /- Appropriate knowledge concerning the subject selected for the paper;
- /- Ability to present the topic in a coherent way;
- /- Ability of critical and reflective thinking.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

For an introduction:

Cavalli A., Martinelli A. (2015), *La società europea*, Bologna: il Mulino.

The book is available in an updated English version for the Erasmus+ students:

Cavalli A., Martinelli A. (2021), *European Society*, Leiden and Boston: Brill.

For theories and conceptions:

Wiener A., Börzel T.A., Risse T. (eds.) (2019), *European Integration Theory*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Sekuli? T. (2020), *The European Union and the Paradox of Enlargement. The Complex Accession of the Western Balkans*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. (Chapters 1, 2 e 3)

Other relevant literature:

The reading list will be provided at the beginning of the course.

All texts will be available in the University library and, where possible, in electronic format. Other selected materials will be uploaded on the course web platform. Each student may create his/her selection of references regarding the specific topic of the paper.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
