

## PSCI 363 | The European Union: Challenges and Strategic Choices Spring 2026

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### **Course Description**

With 27 member states and nearly half a billion residents, the European Union has grown into a major political and economic actor on the world stage. It has promoted peace in Europe for almost seven decades, changed the way Europeans live, as well as the way the rest of the world perceives Europe. The EU has been considered a paradigm of a successful “peace project” that promoted stability, prosperity, and successful cooperation between erstwhile feuding nations. The fact that the Union had grown from its original 6 members to 27 served as undeniable proof of the appeal and attractiveness of the EU for most countries on the European continent.

The past few years have changed this idyllic picture of the European Union, and the EU has faced repeated and sustained challenges, both internal and external. The eurozone crisis, Brexit, the refugee crisis, the rise of euroscepticism, populism and extremism in Europe, the fear of terrorism, the ongoing war in Ukraine and the uncertainty surrounding escalating violence in the Middle East have all created an increasingly volatile and insecure environment which the European Union must navigate. Its inability to speak with a single voice and act as a united entity in the face of these new and ongoing conflicts is also challenging its role as an important strategic actor on the world stage. *Will the European Union become less important, less cohesive, and less relevant?*

The course is structured into **two core thematic units**:

The **first** part provides a comprehensive historical background of the dynamics of European integration and an analysis of its key institutions and policies. Starting in the immediate post -World War Two period, emphasis is placed on the drivers of integration and cooperation, such as dealing with the need for post war economic recovery, laying the foundations of reconciliation and long-lasting peace, and consolidating a united front in the face of the Soviet threat. For context, the situation in Europe during the Cold War will be discussed, including the division of Europe and the Iron Curtain, the Berlin Wall, and the ideological, political, economic, and strategic allegiances of each side (“Europe between the Superpowers”). This part of the course also examines how the European Union works, by analyzing the core institutions and decision-making processes (Commission, Council of Ministers, European Parliament, European Court of Justice) as well as several key EU Policies (the Single Market, Economic and Monetary Union, and Foreign and Security Policies) and their impact on the lives of Europeans. The theory and practice of EU Enlargement will also be discussed, whereby the Union grew through successive enlargement rounds: six → nine → ten → 12 → 15 → 25 → 27 and ultimately to 28 members with the conclusion of the Cold War and the reunification of Europe. The accession process and criteria, as well as current issues and on-going negotiations with the Western Balkan candidate countries will also be analyzed.

The **second** part addresses the challenges that have emerged over the past decade that have caused instability and insecurity within the European Union. The unprecedented turmoil and uncertainty following the United Kingdom’s shock decision to leave the EU, the impact of the refugee crisis on European policy and national elections, the popular disenchantment with Europe among many European citizens and the subsequent rise of euroscepticism, the growth of radical Islamic terrorism and the prospect of a possible “Clash of civilizations” have all created an increasingly volatile and insecure environment concerning the future of the EU. Special attention will be given to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Russia’s increasingly aggressive and destabilizing policies, and the impact on European energy markets.

Throughout the semester the students participate in a variety of class activities, including short group presentations on the topics of the day (e.g. impact of Brexit on Ireland, on the possibility of Scottish independence on British youth; country case studies on democratic backsliding and the rise of populism). There will also be a class debate on Turkey’s EU Accession prospects, with representatives of the EU Commission, several EU member states, the European Parliament and Turkey. The students will not only

debate the intricacies and difficulties of EU enlargement in general, but the challenges involved in Turkey's case in particular.

At the end of the semester the students will participate in two simulation exercises concerning EU foreign policy responses: the war in Ukraine and the war in Gaza. They will be challenged to negotiate and design a collective European response to each international crisis. Through these simulation games the students will be immersed in a dynamic exercise that explores how the European Union might react to substantial threats to stability within its jurisdiction or in its broader neighbourhood. The simulation game allows students to apply their knowledge about EU foreign policy and crisis management, to use and develop their negotiation skills, and to experience the difficulties of reaching political agreements and consensus at the EU level on foreign policy issues.

The goal will be to evaluate to what extent the lack of a coherent united foreign and security policy is weakening the EU's international role and prestige.

## **Learning Objectives**

The goals of the course are to acquire knowledge of the history, institutions, policies and economics of the European Union, and to understand the complex new realities and challenges it is facing. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Appraise and assess the key drivers and stimuli of European integration and the main steps in the process over the past decades.
- Contextualize the Cold War era and its impact on European integration, including the impact of the division and reunification of the continent.
- Reflect on the impact the European Union has had on the lives of its citizens
- Understand the functioning of the institutions, policies and actors involved in European integration
- Evaluate the theory and practice of EU Enlargement, the process, the criteria, and the current enlargement negotiation rounds
- Critically assess the complex new problems and challenges that are confronting the EU both domestically and internationally
- Simulate the complex process through which the European Union might respond to an international crisis affecting the stability and security within its jurisdiction or in its broader neighbourhood.

The material will be explored through a combination of lectures, critical analysis in class discussions, students' written work/ independent research, class debates, student group presentations and a simulation game. The readings will include academic articles, reports from international organizations, case studies, and videos. Due to the rapidly-changing nature of the topics covered in the course, readings and class material will be constantly updated according to current events.

## **Course Requirements/ Assessment**

The **breakdown of the final grade** is as follows:

### **Class participation: 20%**

This course addresses very important current international, geopolitical, and geostrategic issues, and lively class discussions are an essential part of the class dynamic. **Class participation is therefore considered essential.** This includes consistent physical and mental presence in the classroom, no distraction from inappropriate use of laptops, punctuality, preparation (having done all the assigned readings), and participation in class discussions / debates through thoughtful comments and questions. Reading assignments / response papers are to be completed before each class session. If you are extremely uncomfortable speaking in front of a large group of students, you may send your opinions or afterthoughts in writing via email. If you never participate in class and do not send any thoughts by email, your contribution grade will be low.

### **Mid-term exam: 30%**

A combination of short answers and a choice of essay.

### **Group presentations / class activities: 20%.**

Throughout the semester we have a variety of class activities in which students present (in groups) their research / insights on a variety of topics and current events relating to the European Union. These presentations serve as a basis for dynamic class discussion and include a Council of Ministers Simulation concerning Turkey's candidacy to the EU, ongoing Brexit challenges, challenge to the rule of law and democratic backsliding in Europe, and EU foreign policy case studies including Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war. At the end of the semester the students will present a final group presentation on the topic of their choice.

### **Final Exam: 30%**

Same format as the Midterm. The Final exam will cover material from the entire semester.

### **CYA Policies and Regulations**

#### **Academic Accommodations:**

If academic accommodations are requested, students must submit an official letter from the appropriate office at their home institution. Please contact me at the beginning of the semester so we can discuss how these accommodations can be implemented in this course.

#### **Use of Laptops**

In-class use of laptops is permitted **ONLY** when this facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up information and references, etc. Abuse of laptop use in class (watching videos, online shopping, booking tickets etc) is extremely distracting, disrespectful, and detrimental to the class dynamic: therefore, **laptop privileges will be suspended if they are not used for class-related work.**

#### **ePolicy on Original Work**

Plagiarism is literary theft. As such, it is a serious offense which will not be tolerated either at your home institution or at CYA. Plagiarism on an examination or in a paper will result in an F for the course. You must cite the author of any and all ideas that you use that is neither common knowledge nor your own idea. If you are in doubt, it is safest to cite the source. Your work should be original and reflect your own ideas and thoughts. If you are unsure about what counts as original work, please consult your professor and check the Student Handbook.

### **Books, Course Materials, Moodle**

#### **Core readings:**

Cini, Michelle (ed.) *European Union Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 6th edition, 2019.

McCormick, John, *Understanding the European Union*, Palgrave Macmillan, 7th Edition, 2017.

Dinan, Desmond, *Europe Recast: A History of European Union*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2nd Edition, 2014.

Tsoukalis, Loukas. *In Defense of Europe: Can the European Project be Saved?* Oxford University Press, 2016.

Tsoukalis, Loukas. *The Unhappy State of the Union: Europe needs a New Grand Bargain*, Policy Network, 2014.

Class handouts, including a broad compilation of current articles, policy papers, surveys, and reports.

#### **Periodicals and Websites**

A wide range of material on the EU is available on-line, and students are encouraged to consult the official EU website (Gateway to the EU: <http://europa.eu>) as part of their weekly preparation and also for research purposes. Other websites with relevant material are <http://euobserver.com> and <http://www.euractiv.com/en>. Reading daily/weekly newspapers and magazines is also recommended, particularly the Financial Times (<http://www.ft.com>), the International Herald Tribune (<http://www.iht.com>) and the Economist (<http://www.economist.com>).

## **Class Schedule**

This is a preliminary schedule of lectures. Part of the order may change and some topics may be replaced by others, depending on current developments within the EU during the course.

<b>Class Day</b>	<b>Day/Date</b>	<b>Topic / Readings / Assignments Due</b>
1	Tues Jan 27	<b>Introduction to the European Union, introduction to the Course</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loukas Tsoukalis, <i>In Defense of Europe</i>, Ch. 1 ("High Stakes").</li> <li>• McCormick, Ch. 2 (The idea of Europe)</li> <li>• Trump, populism and the Identity of Europe (E. Jones)</li> </ul>
<b>I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, INSTITUTIONS AND POLICIES</b>		
2	Thurs Jan 29	<b>Historical Background: From War to Peace to integration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Video</u>: Europe, from War to Peace</li> <li>• <u>Video</u>: A brief History of the European Union</li> <li>• Dinan, Ch. 1</li> <li>• Nobel Peace Prize Awarded to the EU, BBC Report</li> <li>• <u>Extra Reading</u>: Cini, Ch. 2</li> </ul>
3	Tues Feb 3	<b>Europe Divided: The Cold War</b> <u>Video</u> : The Americans (Trailer) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Cold War in Europe, R. Wilde, October 21, 2019.</li> <li>• The Cold War, Origins 1941-56, BBC bitesize.</li> <li>• The Cold War, 1958-1970, BBC bitesize.</li> <li>• The Cold War, 1972-1991, BBC bitesize.</li> </ul>
4	Thurs Feb 5	<b>How the EU works: The Commission</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cini, Ch. 10</li> <li>• McCormick, Ch. 4 (pp. 80-83)</li> </ul>
5	Tues Feb 10	<b>How the EU works: The Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cini, Ch. 11</li> <li>• McCormick, Ch. 4 (pp. 77-80; 83-87)</li> </ul>
6	Tues Feb 17	<b>How the EU works: The European Parliament, the European Court of Justice and European Interest Groups</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cini, Ch. 11</li> <li>• McCormick, Ch. 4 (pp. 87-95; 114-117)</li> <li>• <u>Optional reading</u>: Cini, Ch. 13/14</li> </ul>
7	Thurs Feb 19	<b><u>Guest Speaker</u></b>
8	Tues Feb 24	<b>Creating the Single European Market</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cini, Ch. 20</li> <li>• McCormick, Ch. 7 (pp. 145-158)</li> </ul>
9	Thurs Feb 26	<b>Economic and Monetary Union; creation of the single currency (the Euro)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cini, Ch. 23</li> <li>• McCormick, Ch. 7 (pp.158-168)</li> <li>• EMU and the euro (eu4journalists)</li> <li>• Why was the euro created? (I. Chapple)</li> </ul>
10	Tues March 3	<b>The EU's Foreign and Security Policies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cini, Ch. 19</li> <li>• McCormick, Ch. 9</li> <li>• "Would Coalitions of the Willing strengthen EU Foreign Policy?" Carnegie Europe, September 17, 2020.</li> </ul>
11	Tues March 10	<b>EU Enlargement: From 6 to 28</b> <b><i>Assignment: Watch the video and write a brief response paper discussing it</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Video</u>: A Brief Summary of the history of European Union enlargement</li> <li>• European Commission: From 6 to 28 members</li> <li>• Cini, Ch. 18 (pp. 227-236)</li> <li>• Bomberg and Stubb, Ch. 9</li> <li>• Dinan, pp. 253-265</li> <li>• Why can't the EU's West and East work as one? T. Valasek, Carnegie Europe, November 8, 2019.</li> </ul>
12	Thurs March 12	<b>Midterm exam</b>
13	Tues March 17	<b>Europe United: The Collapse of the Socialist bloc and the Reunification of Europe</b> <b><i>Assignment: Watch videos and write a response paper discussing them</i></b> <u>Video</u> : End of Communism: How 1989 changed Europe <u>Video</u> : The Revolutions of 1989

Video: German Reunification explained

March 18-21

**FIELD STUDY TRIP**

## II. NEW AND ONGOING CHALLENGES TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

14 Tues March 24

### **EU Enlargement, Current Issues: How Far can Europe Go?**

- Video: Where do Western Balkan nations stand with their EU membership bids?
- Video: EU leaders worried about human rights in Turkey
- Enlargement overview (European Commission)
- Conditions for membership (European Commission)
- Steps towards joining (European Commission)
- Current status (European Commission)
- Debating Europe: Arguments for and Against EU enlargement
- Europe's Enlargement Problem (Carnegie Europe)

15 Thurs March 26

### **Class Activity**

#### **Council of Ministers Simulation: Turkey's Candidacy to the EU**

- The rise and fall of free speech under Turkey's Islamists
- Turkey seeking better EU ties as journalists await prison (Euobserver)
- Amnesty International: Turkey 2022
- How the European Union should tackle Turkey's hostility, Carnegie Europe, November 3, 2020.
- Human Rights Watch reports Turkey's alarming abuse against women, January 15, 2021.

New York Times Analysis: The West hoped for democracy in Turkey

16 Tues March 31

### **Brexit; the European Union without the United Kingdom**

***Assignment: Watch two of the following videos and write a response paper discussing them***

- Video: What led to Brexit?
- Video: Aftershock of Brexit
- Video: How Brexit changed Britain
- Video: How Brexit is changing Europe
- Cini, *European Union Politics*, Ch. 27 ("Brexit")
- The roots of Euroscepticism (The Economist)
- Britain and Europe (The Economist)
- Boris Johnson may have saved the EU (FT)
- Economic implications of Brexit (Brookings Institution)
- A Background Guide to Brexit (The Economist)
- UK-EU trade deal at a glance, Politico, December 24, 2020.
- 10 key details in the UK-EU trade deal, Politico, December 27, 2020.
- Optional Video: The inside story of how the Leave campaign won

[Brexit Britain: The inside story of how the Leave campaign won - BBC Newsnight - YouTube](#)

17 Thurs April 2

### **Class activity**

#### **Discussion / debate on ongoing Brexit Challenges**

##### **Ireland**

- Brexit and Irish border (The Conversation)
- What will happen to Northern Ireland after Brexit, The Independent, 23 December 2020.
- Brexit has Northern Ireland's very future hanging in the balance, Newsweek, 15 December 2020.
- Northern Ireland after Brexit: five prospects, Barron's, November 15, 2020.
- How Brexiters are destabilizing Ireland's Fragile Peace (Carnegie Europe)

##### **Scotland**

- The EU's Scottish question, European Policy Centre, 18 June 2019.
- Brexit might break Britain: what will Scotland do? Foreign Policy, September 21, 2020

##### **Should (could) Brexit be reversed??**

- The Rocky Road to Rejoin, The New European
- Polls reveal voters want to reverse Brexit, Euroweekly

##### **The Next Generation**

- Brexit and British youth (The Guardian)

18 Tues April 14

### **Euroscepticism: Falling out of Love with Europe?**

- Euroscepticism: Statistics and Facts; Statistica
- Desire to leave the EU (by country); Statistica
- General feelings towards the EU; Statistica

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU dissatisfaction with Democracy (by country); Statistica</li> <li>• Optimism about the future of the EU, Statistica</li> <li>• A new wave of Euroscepticism in the heart of Europe? Modern Diplomacy, March 26, 2020</li> <li>• Support for Eurosceptic parties doubles in two decades across EU, The Guardian, March 2, 2020.</li> <li>• Map of the main Eurosceptic parties in Europe, BETA Italia</li> <li>• Euroscepticism was never just about Europe, Political Studies Association, 28 June, 2021</li> <li>• Thousands take part in pro-European demonstrations in Poland, France24</li> <li>• Mass protests in Poland amid EU exit fears, BBC</li> </ul>
19	Thurs April 16	<b>Guest Speaker</b>
20	Tues April 21	<b>Russia's War in Ukraine: Background, Causes, and Impact on Europe</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Video</u>: Lessons Learned from the war in Ukraine</li> <li>• Russia and Ukraine: The Tangled History that connects – and divides – them, Eve Conant, National Geographic, February 2022</li> <li>• Russia's War in Ukraine: Identity, History and Conflict, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, April 2022</li> <li>• Was it inevitable? A short history of Russia's war on Ukraine, Keith Gessen, The Guardian, March 2022</li> <li>• Putin and Ukraine; Fiona Hill, Politico</li> <li>• What a Russian Victory would mean for Ukraine, Foreign Policy</li> </ul>
21	Tues April 28	<b>New Foreign Policy Challenges, Case Study 1: EU response to the Ukraine War</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The West defends Israel's skies. Not doing the same for Ukraine is a deadly mistake (The Guardian, April 22, 2024)</li> <li>• The War in Ukraine will either forge or splinter Europe (Carnegie Europe, April 18, 2024)</li> <li>• The EU and the global battle of narratives (Carnegie Europe, March 21, 2024)</li> <li>• Europe's foreign policy ambitions in 2024 should be regional (Carnegie Europe, January 9, 2024)</li> </ul>
22	Thurs April 30	<b>New Foreign Policy Challenges, Case Study 2: EU response to the Israel-Hamas War</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "What Europe's role should be in the Israel Hamas war", Julien Barnes-Dacey and Hugh Lovatt, <i>Politico</i>, October 17, 2023.</li> <li>• "The EU and the Israel Hamas war", Emiliano Alessandri, Middle East Institute, November 14, 2023.</li> <li>• "A Year after October 7 EU-Israeli relations frayed amid war", Lucia Schulten, Deutsche Welle, July 10, 2024.</li> <li>• Europe's response to the war in Gaza, Maya Sion Tzidkiyahu and Azriel Bermant, The Institute for National Security Studies, December 2024.</li> </ul>
23	Tues May 5	<b>Student Final Group presentations</b>
24	Thurs May 7	<b>Student Final Group presentations</b>
		<b>Final Exam</b>

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