

*Syllabus*

# **European Union Politics**

## ***Contemporary Research Perspectives***

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University of Potsdam,  
Master seminar  
Summer term 2026  
Wednesdays, 2-4 p.m., Room [3.06.S23](#)

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## **A. Course outline and learning goals**

This seminar helps students in acquiring an in-depth understanding of the contemporary functions and functioning of the European Union, building on both recent empirical research in the political sciences and on group work in the seminar.

The seminar contents are structured along three blocks. In the *first block*, we will look at the traditional explanations of European integration and political co-operation in the EU. We then together assess whether these classical explanations still hold when we think about the different crises the EU has lived through in the last two decades. The *second block* will then zoom in on the functions and functioning of the key institutions in EU legislative politics, most notably the European Council and the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, as well as the European Commission. Students will learn about and discuss the internal decision-making logics of these institutions and their relative influence in the EU as a whole. The *third block* finally focusses on the interactions between European decision-making on the one hand and national and international politics on the other. We will investigate the public politicisation of EU affairs in the member states to then review empirical research studying how different EU institutions respond to and deal with such controversial public debates while putting this in the context of the recent and drastic geopolitical change that the EU faces.

Throughout these three blocks, students will thus encounter the key questions in the current scientific and political debates about the EU and European integration and will train how to think and discuss about them on their own. Throughout the individual sessions, the seminar will provide many pointers to relevant literatures as well empirical data sources and research methods for students wishing to pursue specific questions further.

## B. Course requirements and seminar organization

The seminar addresses Masters students in political science and related disciplines (e.g. international relations, comparative politics, public administration, or political sociology) who are interested in understanding and analyzing contemporary European Union politics. Prior exposure to or practical experience in EU politics is an asset but not a requirement to engage in this class. But prospective participants should be willing to:

- Engage with the substantive and methodological aspects of political science literature,
- Invest in active self-learning based on the various materials provided,
- Contribute their knowledge, views, and questions to our active learning in class.

The seminar is organized around the idea of an **inverted or flipped classroom**. Contrary to traditional teaching in class, I will offer the lecture and content delivery part of the seminar *before* our meetings. This will typically be one or two introductory texts for your own reading and a lecture video shared via Moodle roughly three days before each session. For you, this approach has *two key advantages*. First, it allows you to learn about the key contents of each session at your own speed. Second, it frees up *in-class time* for joint, active learning: together we will deepen the key contents of each session on the basis of your questions, group discussions and debates, as well as presentations of more advanced topics. To realize these advantages all participants should take both their own preparation phase as well as our joint in-class work seriously along the following *seminar participation steps*:

1. Start the preparation by reading the guiding questions provided for each session.
2. Read the obligatory introductory text(s) for the session and mark this task as completed on Moodle.
3. Watch the lecture video (~30 mins) offered for the session and mark this task as completed on Moodle.
4. Assess whether you have understood the key concepts listed for each session and how they help you in sketching answers to the guiding questions.
5. Note down your questions, discussion points, or research ideas into the shared document provided for each session on Moodle. This will be the first input for our group discussions in class. Any factual, political or methodological question as well as ideas for tackling the guiding questions empirically is welcome here!
6. Participate actively and regularly during the in-class discussions and activities and cooperate with your fellow students. We will frequently work with the “Think–Pair–Share” (TPS) method where you can make up your own mind, discuss in smaller groups, to then engage in the plenum. If you have to miss an individual session, please notify me briefly via email beforehand.
7. Take up *one of the active participation roles* specified for each individual seminar session. Students wishing to collect at least 4 ECTS for this seminar have to take up one of these roles at least once during seminar. A respective booking tool will be offered via Moodle.

Preparation  
(self-learning)

In-class activities  
(joint active learning)

The following active participation roles are available to you in individual sessions:

- *Presenter*: Prepare a ppt/pdf presentation (12-15 mins) on one published study on the topic of the seminar session. Your presentation summarizes the motivation, research design, and results of the study to then engage your fellow students in a short discussion about the implications or shortcomings of that research. Below I suggest suitable studies marked with (P) for each session, but if you have other ideas or if you want to present an own research design (e.g. for your term paper or a potential MA thesis project), I am very happy to talk about this!
- *Debater*: One session will be organized as a House-of-Commons style group debate (on the topic of EU politicization). To kick off the debate there will be two teams of up to three seminar participants each that argue for and against respective statements. As part of one of these teams, you will search for and collect arguments on the side you are defending during preparation to then exchange them with the opposing team during class. I will provide relevant scientific sources on this debate and I am also happy to talk to your team beforehand.
- *Minute-taker*: As a minute taker you will prepare an overview document of an individual in-class session that will be shared with your fellow students via Moodle (pdf, ~ 3-4 pages). During class you take notes and ask your fellow students if something was unclear, afterwards you summarize the main points and views discussed in class where you may also include links to materials or sources that were mentioned during the discussions.

Students wishing to collect 6 ECTS will hand in a *term paper* in the form of a research design after the seminar (deadline September 30, 2026). The length of the term paper is typically around 6.000 to 7.500 words, depending on the module under which you are enrolled in the seminar. More detailed guidelines for the paper are available via Moodle and on my [website](#).

The term paper format of a research design will be further specified in class – it consists of developing a research question on contemporary EU politics, discussing relevant political science literature to develop expectations/hypothesis for answering the question, to finally discuss empirical sources and methods that could (!) be used for assessing the developed expectations. In other words, you are expected to plan (rather than to execute) a research project. This format is particularly suited to develop and to assess potential projects for a master's thesis (independent from whether it is realized later or not).

Registration takes place via PULS in the first three weeks of the seminar. As noted above, the main means of communication and seminar organization will be a respective course on Moodle.UP with the short title “EUpolitics2026”. The enrollment key will be shared during the first session of the seminar.

I am very much looking forward to work with and to learn from you!

### C. Calendar and topic overview

<i>Date</i>	<i>Session topic</i>
15.04.26	Introduction to the seminar and its organization plus a brief history of the European Union in numbers
<i>First block: Perspectives on European Integration</i>	
22.04.26	Classical theories of European Integration I: (Neo-)functionalist perspectives
29.04.26	Classical theories of European Integration II: Intergovernmentalism
06.05.26	Institutionalist perspectives on European integration
13.05.26	The public politicization of European Integration (Debate session)
<i>Second block: The key institutions in EU (legislative) politics</i>	
20.05.26	The European Council and the Council of Ministers
27.05.26	The European Commission
03.06.26	European Parliament
10.06.26	European Court of Justice
<i>Third block: Contemporary questions and how to research them</i>	
17.06.26	Meme competition ( <i>no in-class session!</i> )
24.06.26	Democratic deficits and responsiveness in EU politics
01.07.26	Development of own research ideas ( <i>no in-class session!</i> )
08.07.26	The European Union amidst geopolitical change
15.07.26	How to craft an own research project in EU politics?
22.07.26	Wrap up session

## **D. Detailed course outline – seminar sessions & literature**

**15.04.2026: 1<sup>st</sup> session**

### **Introduction to the seminar and its organization and a brief history of the European Union in numbers**

**Goals:** Primarily this session should help you in deciding of whether you want to take this seminar. It sets the scene for the later substantial sessions by briefly highlighting the development of the European Union and its key institutions quantitatively over time. We will thereby get to know the EU as the most developed political system beyond the nation state. I will thus also introduce the seminar plan and its organization while providing ample room for your questions.

**Key concepts:** European integration, multi-level governance, EU treaties

**Active participation roles available:** None

**Further reading suggestions:**

- (F) Hix, S. and Høyland, B. (2022) *The Political System of the European Union*, 4th Ed., London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic: Chapter 1 (pp 1-23)
- (F) Dehousse, R. and Magette, P. (2017) 'The history of EU institutions: Six decades of institutional change', in D. Hodson and J. Peterson (eds). *The Institutions of the European Union*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, pp. 30–52.
- (F) Biesenbender, J. (2011) 'The Dynamics of Treaty Change - Measuring the Distribution of Power in the European Union', *European Integration online Papers (EIoP)* 15(5): 1–24.
- (F) Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2003) 'Unraveling the Central State, but How? Types of Multi-level Governance', *American Political Science Review* 97(2): 233–243.

## **First block: Perspectives on European Integration**

22.04.2026: 2<sup>nd</sup> session

### Classical theories of European Integration I: (Neo-)functionalist perspectives

**Goals:** We will review and assess neo-functional theories of European Integration, essentially arguing that political cooperation is rather continuously pushed forward by the need to solve joint functional problems and pro-active strategies of supranational institutions and elites.

**Key concepts:** functional pressures, spillover logic, technocracy, supranationalism

**Active participation roles available:** Presenter (2x), Minute-taker (1x)

#### **Guiding questions:**

- (1) Do you think that functional pressures and spillover dynamics are still relevant for understanding EU politics today? Can you think of examples?
- (2) Who are the actors that push for further European integration and joint decision-making today, in your opinion?
- (3) Which empirical evidence would you need to see in order to assess whether neo-functional logics still matter today? What information or data sources could we tap into?

#### **Obligatory literature:**

- (O) Tranholm-Mikkelsen, J. (1991) 'Neo-functionalism: Obstinate or Obsolete? A Reappraisal in the Light of the New Dynamism of the EC', *Millennium* 20(1): 1–22.

#### **Presentation texts:**

- (P) Niemann, A. and Speyer, J. (2018) 'A Neofunctionalist Perspective on the "European Refugee Crisis": The Case of the European Border and Coast Guard', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 56(1): 23–43.
- (P) Niemann, A. and Ioannou, D. (2015) 'European economic integration in times of crisis: a case of neofunctionalism?', *Journal of European Public Policy* 22(2): 196–218.
- (P) Håkansson, C. (2024) 'The Ukraine war and the emergence of the European commission as a geopolitical actor', *Journal of European Integration* 46(1): 25–45.
- (P) Schimmelfennig, F. (2024) 'Crisis and polity formation in the European Union', *Journal of European Public Policy* 31(10): 3396–3420.

#### **Further reading suggestions:**

- (F) Rabinovych, M. (2025) 'Wartime super-spillover? The perils and limits of a neofunctionalist approach to Ukraine's single market integration', *Journal of European Public Policy* 32(12): 2886–2913.

- (F) Niemann, A. (2021) 'Neofunctionalism', in M. Riddervold, J. Trondal, and A. Newsome (eds). *The Palgrave Handbook of EU Crises*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 115–133.
- (F) Lefkofridi, Z. and Schmitter, P. C. (2020) 'Neofunctionalism in the Decade of Crises', in *Theorising the Crises of the European Union*. Routledge.

### **29.04.2026: 3<sup>rd</sup> session**

#### **Classical theories of European Integration II: Intergovernmentalism**

**Goals:** We will review and assess liberal intergovernmentalism, a theory that essentially argues that European Integration is primarily driven and/or constrained by negotiations among national governments who represent their dominant economic interest groups at home. We will then explore 'newer' intergovernmentalist perspectives on the EU (and its crises) as well.

**Key concepts:** national preference formation, interstate bargaining, lowest common denominator, low vs. high politics, credible commitments

**Active participation roles available:** Presenter (2x), Minute-taker (1x)

#### **Guiding questions:**

- (1) From your perspective, is the power of states or the role of EU institutions more decisive in shaping the outcome of EU negotiations and policies? Can you think of (recent) examples?
- (2) Do you think that national governments primarily pursue their domestic economic interests when engaging in EU politics today?
- (3) Which empirical evidence would you like to see in order to assess whether contemporary EU politics is primarily driven by intergovernmentalism? What information or data sources could we tap into?

#### **Obligatory literature:**

- (O) Moravcsik, A. (1993) 'Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 31(4): 473–524.

#### **Presentation texts**

- (P) Bickerton, C. J., Hodson, D. and Puetter, U. (2015) 'The New Intergovernmentalism: European Integration in the Post-Maastricht Era', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 53(4): 703–722.
- (P) Schimmelfennig, F. (2018) 'Liberal Intergovernmentalism and the Crises of the European Union', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 56(7): 1578–1594.

- (P) Gürkan, S. and Coman, R. (2021) 'The EU–Turkey deal in the 2015 “refugee crisis”': when intergovernmentalism cast a shadow on the EU's normative power', *Acta Politica* 56(2): 276–305.
- (P) Genschel, P., Leek, Lauren and Weyns, J. (2023) 'War and integration. The Russian attack on Ukraine and the institutional development of the EU', *Journal of European Integration* 45(3): 343–360.

**Further reading suggestions:**

- (F) Hodson, D. and Puetter, U. (2025) 'The New Intergovernmentalism 10 Years On', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 63(S1): 39–51.
- (F) Moravcsik, A. (1998) *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- (F) Moravcsik, A. (2018) 'Preferences, Power and Institutions in 21st-century Europe', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 56(7): 1648–1674.
- (F) Verdun, A. C. (2020) 'Intergovernmentalism: old, liberal, and new', in F. Laursen (Ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**06.05.2026: 4<sup>th</sup> session**

**Institutionalist perspectives on European integration**

**Goals:** This session introduces participants to institutionalist analyses of EU politics. These perspectives generally argue that actors' strategies and influence on policy outcomes are determined by the rules that govern their interaction. Disagreement exists with regard to which 'rules of the game' are decisive in EU politics and how they matter: rational-choice institutionalists focus on formal decision-making rules and the realization of self-interests, historical institutionalists recur to past decisions when explaining what actors want and can do today, while sociological institutionalist focus on norms and beliefs in shaping the space for agreement.

**Key concepts:** win sets, agenda-setting, exogeneous and endogenous preferences, norms, path dependency

**Active participation roles available:** Presenter (2x), Minute-taker (1x)

**Guiding questions:**

- (1) Can you think of contemporary conflicts in European Union politics that are strongly shaped by past decisions on European integration?
- (2) If you think about the key disagreements in European integration today (e.g. those that came to the fore during the refugee crisis, during Brexit, in the lingering rule-of-law conflicts, or the war on Ukraine), are they best explained by different normative stances and identities or rather by states' rational self-interests in your opinion?

- (3) Which empirical evidence could we tap into to study the relative explanatory power of rational self-interest, norms and identities, or historical factors in contemporary EU politics?

**Obligatory literature:**

- (O) Aspinwall, M. D. and Schneider, G. (2000) 'Same Menu, Separate Tables: The Institutional Turn in Political Science and the Study of European Integration', *European Journal of Political Research* 38(1): 1–36.

**Presentation texts:**

- (P) Costello, R. and Thomson, R. (2013) 'The distribution of power among EU institutions: who wins under codecision and why?', *Journal of European Public Policy* 20(7): 1025–1039.
- (P) Tsebelis, G. and Garrett, G. (2001) 'The Institutional Foundations of Intergovernmentalism and Supranationalism in the European Union', *International Organization* 55(2): 357–390.
- (P) Pierson, P. (1996) 'The Path to European Integration: A Historical Institutional Analysis', *Comparative Political Studies* 29(2): 123–163.

**Further reading suggestions:**

- (F) Risse, T. (2004) 'Social Constructivism and European Integration', in A. Wiener and T. Diez (eds). *European Integration Theory*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, available at <https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/3389> (accessed March 2024).

**13.05.2026: 5th session**

**The public politicization of European Integration (Debate session)**

**Goals:** This session will introduce empirical research on the public politicisation of European integration – meaning the growing salience of EU affairs in domestic media debates, polarization of public opinion on the EU, and the mobilization of different political parties in EU affairs. In class, we will then organize a *House-of-Commons style debate* triggered by *two opposing teams of up to three seminar participants*. Team 1 will argue and justify that public politicisation is a constraint for further political cooperation in the European Union. Team 2 will argue and justify that public politicisation is rather a productive force for further political cooperation in the EU. The *other course participants* may intervene in favor of one side or the other and can vote in the end.

**Key concepts:** politicization, Euroscepticism, policy vs. polity contestation

**Active participation roles available:** Debater (6x), Minute-taker (1x)

**Guiding questions:**

- (1) Do you think that public politicisation is boon or bane for European integration?
- (2) How can or could we empirically analyze whether public politicisation constrains or enhances European integration?

**Obligatory literature:**

- (O) Rauh, C. (2021) 'Between neo-functionalist optimism and post-functionalist pessimism: Integrating politicisation into integration theory', in N. Brack and S. Gürkan (eds). *Theorising the Crises of the European Union*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 119–137.

**Further reading:**

- (F) Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2009) 'A Postfunctionalist theory of European integration: From permissive consensus to constraining dissensus', *British Journal of Political Science* 39(1): 1–23.
- (F) Rauh, C. and Zürn, M. (2014) 'Zur Politisierung der EU in der Krise', in M. Heidenreich (ed.). *Krise der europäischen Vergesellschaftung?*. Springer Wiesbaden, pp. 121–145.
- (F) De Wilde, P. and Zürn, M. (2012) 'Can the Politicization of European Integration Be Reversed?', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 50(S1): 137–153.
- (F) Zeitlin, J., Nicoli, F. and Laffan, B. (2019) 'Introduction: the European Union beyond the polycrisis? Integration and politicization in an age of shifting cleavages', *Journal of European Public Policy* 26(7): 963–976.
- (F) Nicoli, F. and Zeitlin, J. (2024) 'Introduction: Escaping the politics trap? EU integration pathways beyond the polycrisis', *Journal of European Public Policy* 31(10): 3011–3035.
- (F) Rauh, C. and Parížek, M. (2024) 'Converging on Europe? The European Union in mediatized debates during the COVID-19 and Ukraine shocks', *Journal of European Public Policy* 31(10): 3036–3065.
- (F) Hutter, S., Grande, E. and Kriesi, H. (2016) *Politicising Europe: Integration and Mass Politics*, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

## **Second block: The key institutions in EU (legislative) politics**

20.05.2026: 6th session

### The European Council and the Council of Ministers

**Goals:** The session introduces the key EU institutions meant to represent national interest in the Union – the European Council, comprised of the Heads of State and Government providing direction for the Union, and the Council of Ministers, comprised of national ministers who negotiate and vote on European laws. We will look into their decision-making logics, voting rules, and conflict structures.

**Key concepts:** Veto power, qualified majority voting, consensus norm

#### **Guiding questions:**

- (1) Would you agree or disagree, that the Council could be called the government of the European Union? Why?
- (2) Should we have more or less veto rights in Council decision-making in your opinion?
- (3) What kind of information and data sources could we tap into to study decision-making dynamics in the Council(s)?

**Active participation roles available:** Presenter (3x), Minute-taker (1x)

#### **Obligatory literature:**

- (O) Hayes-Renshaw, F. (2017) 'The European Council: A formidable locus of power', in D. Hodson and J. Peterson (eds). *The Institutions of the European Union* (Fourth Edition). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, pp. 155–184.
- (O) Peterson, J. (2017) 'The Council of Ministers: Conflict, consensus, and continuity', in D. Hodson and J. Peterson (eds). *The Institutions of the European Union* (Fourth Edition). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

#### **Presentation texts:**

- (P) Hobolt, S. B. and Wratil, C. (2020) 'Contestation and responsiveness in EU Council deliberations', *Journal of European Public Policy* 27(3): 362–381.
- (P) Bailer, S., Mattila, M. and Schneider, G. (2015) 'Money Makes the EU Go Round: The Objective Foundations of Conflict in the Council of Ministers', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 53(3): 437–456.
- (P) Alexandrova, P., Carammia, M., Princen, S. and Timmermans, A. (2014) 'Measuring the European Council agenda: Introducing a new approach and dataset', *European Union Politics* 15(1): 152–167.

#### **Further reading suggestions:**

- (F) von Ondarza, N. and Stürzer, I. (2024) The State of Consensus in the EU - What Is the Way Forward in the Debate about Expanding Qualified Majority Decisions?, available at

<https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/the-state-of-consensus-in-the-eu> (accessed April 2026).

- (F) Middelaar, L. van (2014) *The Passage to Europe: How a Continent Became a Union*, Reprint Edition., New Haven London: Yale University Press.

### **27.05.2026: 7th session**

#### **The European Commission**

**Goals:** In this session we will study why the European Commission is arguably the most powerful supranational institution, focusing especially on its formal monopoly of initiating EU law-making processes. We will then discuss what kind of animal the Commission actually is: the engine of European Integration or just a mere agent of the member states?

**Key concepts:** formal and informal agenda-setting, delegation

#### **Guiding questions:**

- (1) Would you agree or disagree, that the Commission could be called the government of the European Union? Why?
- (2) Do you think that the Commission is too weak or rather too powerful in contemporary EU politics?
- (3) What kind of data or information could we use to assess the political influence of the European Commission?

**Active participation roles available:** Presenter (2x), Minute-taker (1x)

#### **Obligatory literature:**

- (O) Peterson, J. (2017) 'The College of Commissioners: Supranational leadership and presidential politics', in D. Hodson and J. Peterson (eds). *The Institutions of the European Union (Fourth Edition)*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- (O) Hooghe, L. and Rauh, C. (2017) 'The Commission services: a powerful permanent bureaucracy', in D. Hodson and J. Peterson (eds). *The institutions of the European Union (Fourth Edition)*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, pp. 187–212.

#### **Presentation texts:**

- (P) Blom-Hansen, J. and Senninger, R. (2021) 'The Commission in EU Policy Preparation', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 59(3): 625–642.
- (P) Rauh, C. (2021) 'One agenda-setter or many? The varying success of policy initiatives by individual Directorates-General of the European Commission 1994–2016', *European Union Politics* 22(1): 3–24.

**Further reading suggestions:**

- (F) Bocquillon, P. (2024) 'Setting the European agenda in hard times: the commission, the European Council and the EU polycrisis', *Journal of European Integration* 46(4): 567–574.
- (F) Mérand, F. (2021) *The Political Commissioner: A European Ethnography*, Oxford University Press.
- (F) Hartlapp, M., Metz, J. and Rauh, C. (2014) *Which Policy for Europe?: Power and Conflict inside the European Commission*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (F) Kassim, H. et al. (2013) *The European Commission of the Twenty-First Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (F) Wille, A. (2013) *The Normalization of the European Commission: Politics and Bureaucracy in the EU Executive*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**03.06.2026: 8th session**

**European Parliament**

**Goals:** This session introduces the European parliament – in particular by highlighting its institutional empowerment over time and by analyzing the political dynamics determining its composition.

**Key concepts:** ordinary legislative procedure, second-order voting, transnational party groups

**Guiding questions:**

- (1) Do you think that EP elections today can still be considered second-order elections?
- (2) Do you think that the outcome of the 2024 EP elections has or will change the course and contents of European integration?
- (3) What kind of data or information sources could be useful to study the influence of the EP and its individual political groups?

**Active participation roles available:** Presenter (2x), Minute-taker (1x)

**Obligatory literature:**

- (O) Shackleton, M. (2017) 'The European Parliament: The power of democratic ideas', in D. Hodson and J. Peterson (eds). *The Institutions of the European Union (Fourth Edition)*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

**Presentation texts:**

- (P) Ehin, P. and Talving, L. (2021) 'Still second-order? European elections in the era of populism, extremism, and Euroscepticism', *Politics* 41(4): 467–485.
- (P) Hix, S. and Cunningham, K. (2026) 'Still second-order national elections? Evaluating the classic model after the 2024 European elections', *West European Politics* 49(1): 243–264.

- (P) Sorace, M. (2026) 'The Europeanisation of policy preferences: cross-national similarity and convergence 2014–2024', *Journal of European Public Policy* 33(2): 662–686.
- (P) Braun, D., Hutter, S. and Kersch, A. (2016) 'What type of Europe? The salience of polity and policy issues in European Parliament elections', *European Union Politics* (17): 570–592.

***Further reading suggestions:***

- (F) Steiner, N. D. (2025) 'The 2024 European Parliament election: Another second-order national election?', *European Union Politics* 26(4): 783–789.
- (F) Crum, B. (2025) 'Party Dynamics in the 2024 European Parliament Elections: How the European People's Party Has Come to Occupy the Centre of Power', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 63(S1): 80–90.
- (F) Mudde, Cas (2024). The Far Right and the 2024 European Elections. *Intereconomics* 59 (2), 61–65. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ie-2024-0014>.
- (F) Koepke, J. and Ringe, N. (2006) 'The Second-order Election Model in an Enlarged Europe', *European Union Politics* 7(3): 321–346.
- (F) McDonnell, D. and Werner, A. (2020) *International Populism: The Radical Right in the European Parliament*, Oxford University Press.
- (F) Fazekas, Z., Popa, S. A., Schmitt, H., Barberá, P. and Theocharis, Y. (2021) 'Elite-public interaction on twitter: EU issue expansion in the campaign', *European Journal of Political Research* 60(2): 376–396.
- (F) Van Spanje, J. and de Vreese, C. (2014) 'Europhile Media and Eurosceptic Voting: Effects of News Media Coverage on Eurosceptic Voting in the 2009 European Parliamentary Elections', *Political Communication* 31(2): 325–354.

**10.06.2026: 9th session**  
**European Court of Justice**

**Goals:** This session will introduce the purpose and powers of the European Court of Justice and dynamics of judicial politics around it. We will examine how the ECJ has historically expanded the reach of EU law through landmark doctrines and discuss how it continues to shape the boundaries of European integration today. A particular focus will be on the Court's increasingly prominent role in enforcing EU laws and values to then discuss whether and how the ECJ can be understood as a political actor in EU governance.

**Key concepts:** primacy of EU law, direct effect, rule of law

**Guiding questions:**

- (1) The ECJ has been described both as a neutral legal arbiter and as a powerful political actor that drives European integration forward. Which of these characterizations do you find more convincing and why?
- (2) What are the limits of judicial enforcement without political consensus? Can you think of recent examples where the ECJ engaged in politics?
- (3) What kind of data or information sources could we tap into to study the ECJ's influence on European integration systematically?

**Active participation roles available:** Presenter (2x), Minute-taker (1x)

**Obligatory literature:**

- (O) Shuibhne, N. N. (2017) 'The Court of Justice: European integration and judicial institutions', in D. Hodson and J. Peterson (eds). *The Institutions of the European Union (Fourth Edition)*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

**Presentation texts:**

- (P) Mandujano Manriquez, M. and Pavone, T. (2025) 'Follow the leader: the European Commission, the European Court of Justice, and the EU's rule of law revolution', *Journal of European Public Policy* 32(2): 444–473.
- (P) Ovádek, M. (2021) 'Supranationalism, constrained? Locating the Court of Justice on the EU integration dimension', *European Union Politics* 22(1): 46–69.
- (P) Blauburger, M. et al. (2018) 'ECJ Judges read the morning papers. Explaining the turnaround of European citizenship jurisprudence', *Journal of European Public Policy* 25(10): 1422–1441.

**Further reading suggestions:**

- (F) Gabel, M., Lyder Hermansen, S. S. and Krehbiel, J. (2026) 'The politics of the Court of Justice of the European Union: A review', *European Union Politics* 27(1): 136–178.
- (F) Alter, K. (1998) 'Who Are the "Masters of the Treaty"?: European Governments and the European Court of Justice', *International Organization* 52(01): 121–147.
- (F) Dawson, M. (2020) 'How Can EU Law Respond to Populism?', *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 40(1): 183–213.

### ***Third block: Contemporary questions and how to research them***

17.06.2026

***No in-class session***

***Reflection and meme competition***

**Goals:** There will be no in-class meeting and no obligatory reading in this week, but I want you to use the freed time to reflect a bit on your perspectives on EU politics, also by engaging creatively with what you have learnt thus far. What moves, motivates, confuses, irritates, or even annoys you about contemporary EU politics (and its analysis)? Which EU-related topics are important to you and how can you apply the arguments, knowledge and methods we have discussed so far to dig into them? Start taking some notes to make the final block of the seminar more targeted for you ...

To motivate reflection further, I would like to ask each seminar participant to submit at least one meme about EU politics to a small competition which we will vote on in the subsequent week. Let us know what you think and be creative! Tools like [imgflip](#) or [iloveimg](#) may be helpful, but do whatever works for you best. Here are two examples but I bet that you can be much more creative and witty than that ...



#### ***Guiding questions:***

- (1) Which topics and questions regarding EU politics (or its analysis) move, motivate, confuse, irritate or even annoy you?
- (2) How can you make fun of EU politics (or its analysis)?

***Active participation roles available:*** None

## 24.06.2026: 10th session

### Democratic deficits and responsiveness in EU politics

**Goals:** In this session, we will analyze how the different EU institutions respond (or not) to the growing public politicisation of EU affairs – both in terms of policy change and political communication. Along this line we will also pick up the long-standing debate on whether the European Union suffers from a democratic deficit or not.

**Key concepts:** responsiveness vs. responsibility

#### **Guiding questions:**

- (1) Do you think that the EU suffers from a democratic deficit or that there is rather too much (direct) democratic influence already?
- (2) What are the chances and risks of increased responsiveness in EU politics?
- (3) What kind of data or information sources could you analyze to study the responsiveness of (individual) EU institutions?

**Active participation roles available:** Presenter (4x), Minute-taker (1x)

#### **Obligatory literature:**

- (O) Majone, G. (1998) 'Europe's Democratic Deficit: The Question of Standards', *European Law Journal* 5–28.
- (O) Rauh, C. and Van der Veer, R. A. (2024) 'Responsiveness', in *Handbook on European Union Public Administration*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.

#### **Presentation texts:**

- (P) Yordanova, N., Khokhlova, A., Ershova, A., Schmidt, F. D. and Glavaš, G. (2024) 'Curb EU enthusiasm: how politicisation shapes bureaucratic responsiveness', *West European Politics*: Online First.
- (P) Koop, C., Reh, C. and Bressanelli, E. (2022) 'Agenda-setting under pressure: Does domestic politics influence the European Commission?', *European Journal of Political Research* 61(1): 46–66.
- (P) Wratil, Christopher (2018) 'Modes of government responsiveness in the European Union: Evidence from Council negotiation positions', *European Union Politics* 19(1): 52–74.
- (P) Schneider, C. J. (2020) 'Public Commitments as Signals of Responsiveness in the European Union', *The Journal of Politics* 82(1): 329–344.

#### **Further reading suggestions:**

- (F) Moravcsik, A. (2002) 'In Defence of the "Democratic Deficit": Reassessing Legitimacy in the European Union', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40(4): 603–624.

- (F) Follesdal, A. and Hix, S. (2006) 'Why There is a Democratic Deficit in the EU: A Response to Majone and Moravcsik', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 44(3): 533–562.
- (F) Rauh, C. (2016) *A responsive technocracy? EU politicisation and the consumer policies of the European Commission*, Colchester, UK: ECPR Press.
- (F) Van der Veer, R. A. (2020) 'Technocratic responsiveness', in *The Technocratic Challenge to Democracy*. Routledge.

**01.07.2026**

***No in-class session***

**Develop your own research ideas**

As there is no in-class meeting during this week, I invite you to more carefully think about what questions about (contemporary) EU politics are important and interesting for you – to then develop ideas on how they could be translated into an actual research project. This exercise initially addresses students wishing to submit a term paper for this class or a master's thesis on EU politics later on, but I'm expecting some input from all seminar participants as it is important to train and share this kind of thinking.

Please check my guidelines for term papers and theses on Moodle or my [website](#) – here you find a small template for sketching your preliminary ideas, basically a one pager on topics related to EU politics that are of interest to you, sketching how one could research them systematically. Your project interests and ideas – to be submitted via Moodle – will then be input for a latter session on how to break down these ideas into term paper or thesis projects (which will be helpful also if you do not plan to write a full paper for this particular class).

***Guiding questions:***

- (1) Which topics and questions regarding EU politics (or its analysis) move, motivate, confuse, irritate or even annoy you?
- (2) What expectations, preliminary answers; or answer options do you see regarding these questions and why?
- (3) What kind of data or information sources could you tap into to test whether your suspicions are consistent with empirical reality?

***Active participation roles available:*** None

***Obligatory literature:***

- (O) Toshkov, Dimiter (2016) 'Research design', In: Marsh, Stoker and Lowndes 'Theory and Methods in Political Science', Palgrave Macmillan.

***Further reading suggestions:***

- (F) Toshkov, D. (2016) *Research Design in Political Science*, 1st ed. 2016 Edition., London New York, NY: Red Globe Press.

**08.07.2026: 11th session**

**The European Union amidst geopolitical change**

**Goals:** In this session we will discuss how the changing external context – including the rapid economic rise of China, the return of war to Europe with the Russian aggression in Ukraine, or the decline of the US-backed liberal world order – (may) interact with European Union politics. Can the EU deal with an increasingly hostile geopolitical environment and what does that mean for the political integration of Europe?

**Key concepts:** ‘bellicist’ integration, EU international actorness, multilateralism

**Guiding questions:**

- (1) What foreign policy tools and what international powers does the EU control in your opinion?
- (2) Is external pressure on the EU a driver or rather an obstacle for further political integration of the EU member states?
- (3) What are suitable data sources to analyze the EU’s international influence?

**Active participation roles available:** Presenter (3x), Minute-taker (1x)

**Obligatory literature:**

- (O) Peterson, J. and Helwig, N. (2017) ‘Common foreign and security policy: Institutionalizing Europe’s global role’, in D. Hodson and J. Peterson (eds). *The Institutions of the European Union (Fourth Edition)*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, pp. 307–333.
- (O) Kelemen, R. D. and McNamara, K. R. (2022) ‘State-building and the European Union: Markets, War, and Europe’s Uneven Political Development’, *Comparative Political Studies* 55(6): 963–991.

**Presentation texts:**

- (P) Meunier, S. and Nicolaïdis, K. (2006) ‘The European Union as a conflicted trade power’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 13(6): 906–925.
- (P) Rauh, C. (2025) ‘International recognition of European Union ‘actorness’: Language-based evidence from United Nations General Debate speeches 1970–2020’, *International Interactions* 51(5): 792–821.
- (P) Rauh, C. and Parížek, M. (2024) ‘Converging on Europe? The European Union in mediatized debates during the COVID-19 and Ukraine shocks’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 31(10): 3036–3065.
- (P) Manners, I. (2002) ‘Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?’, *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 40(2): 235–258.
- (P) Moise, A. D., Oana, I.-E., Truchlewski, Z. and Wang, C. (2025) ‘Two functionalist logics of European Union polity formation under external threat: Evidence from a conjoint experiment’, *European Union Politics* 26(2): 369–392.

### ***Further reading suggestions***

- (F) Moise, A. D. and Wang, C. (2025) 'Division and unity: Voter and party perspectives on EU integration under external threat', *European Union Politics* 26(2): 296–309.
- (F) Jones, E. (2025) 'Transatlantic Rupture: Legitimacy, Integration and Security', *Survival* 67(2): 69–84.
- (F) Anghel, V. and Jones, E. (2023) 'Is Europe really forged through crisis? Pandemic EU and the Russia – Ukraine war', *Journal of European Public Policy* 30(4): 766–786.
- (F) Bradford, A. (2020) *The Brussels Effect: How the European Union Rules the World*, Oxford University Press.
- (F) Bretherton, C. and Vogler, J. (2013) 'A global actor past its peak?', *International Relations* 27(3): 375–390.

### **15.07.2026: 12th session**

#### **How to craft an own research project in EU politics?**

**Goals:** In this session, we will discuss how to break down the big questions in EU politics into manageable empirical research projects – drawing not the least on your earlier project ideas. Please check out the proposals that your fellow students have developed as well (available via Moodle).

**Key concepts:** Research question, hypotheses, research design

**Active participation roles available:** None.

#### ***Further reading suggestions:***

- (F) Toshkov, D. (2016) *Research Design in Political Science*, 1st ed. 2016 Edition., London New York, NY: Red Globe Press.
- (F) Plümper, T. (2008) *Effizient Schreiben: Leitfaden zum Verfassen von Qualifizierungsarbeiten und wissenschaftlichen Texten, 2.*, vollständig überarbeitete und erweiterte Edition., München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag.

### **22.07.2026: 13th session**

#### **Wrap up**

**Goals:** In this session, we will wrap up by exchanging some aggregate conclusions and insights we have gained throughout the seminar. We will also try to carve out some of the blind spots and the future needs for a research agenda on European integration, also leaving room for final questions on the term papers.

The session will furthermore provide the students with the opportunity to give feedback on the seminar and its organisation (we will also look at the evaluation results together).

***Have a great summer break!***

## **E. Information and data sources on European Union politics**

### ***E1. EU Databases & Archives***

- [Eur-Lex](#): Full access to European Law and the preparatory documents and procedures by which it has come about. For advanced searches you might acquaint yourselves with the [CELEX](#) (classifying document types) and [directory codes](#) (classifying policy areas) that structure the database.
- [OEIL](#): Legislative Observatory of the European Parliament - very useful to study individual legislative procedures, including EP debates, amendments on Commission proposals etc.
- [EC Press Corner](#): Press releases, speeches and other public communication of the European Commission since 1985 to today.
- [Register of Commission Documents](#): Commission proposals, impact assessments, communications, delegated and implementing acts and other Commission decisions, agendas and minutes of meetings held by the College of Commissioners.
- [European Council Conclusions](#)
- [Council newsroom](#) (incl. press conferences, doorstep statements etc.)
- [Council document register](#)
- [CURIA](#): Register of ECJ case-law
- [EU Whosiswho](#): Contemporary organigrams and contact details for all major EU institutions
- [Eurobarometer](#): Regular public opinion surveys by the EU (access via a free Gesis subscription), for more info also see the [official EU website for Eurobarometer](#) or the scholarly sources below.
- [EU sanctions map](#)

### ***E2. Scholarly data sources on European Union politics***

- [eudata](#): A crowd-sourced collection of readily available datasets and/or data collection tools related to European integration (initiative by Michal Ovadek) – includes a.o. collections on *EU decision-making*, *EU political communication*, *public opinion*, and all *EU institutions*
- Chapel Hill Expert Survey ([CHES](#)): data on EU party positions 1999-2024
- European Election Studies ([EES](#)): data on voters & parties for all EP elections
- [ParlGov](#): Data on partisan composition of EU institutions and nationale governments
- [EP vote monitor](#): Tracker o all votes within the European Parliament

### ***E3. Specialized EU media***

- [Euractiv.com](http://Euractiv.com)
- [Euobserver.com](http://Euobserver.com)
- [Politico.eu](http://Politico.eu)
- [European Politics and Policy Blog](#) (London School of Economics EUROPP)
- General newspapers with very good coverage of European Union Politics include *The Economist* and *The Financial Times*

### ***E4. Think tanks focusing on European Union Politics***

- Stiftung Wissenschaft & Politik (SWP) providing a.o. the [EU Council Monitor](#)
- Bertelsmann Stiftung with the [eupinions](#) project
- Bruegel – Focus on economic governance, fiscal integration, and trade dimensions of EU politics ([bruegel.org](http://bruegel.org))
- Center for European Policy Studies ([CEPS](#))
- EuropeanPolicy Center ([EPC](#))
- Centre for European Reform ([CER](#))
- European Council on Foreign Relations ([ECFR](#))
- Hertie School / [Jacques Delors Center Berlin](#)