



STUDY PROGRAMME

EUROPEAN GENERAL STUDIES

ACADEMIC YEAR

2020 - 2021

SEMESTER

2

COURSE TITLE

SOCIAL DIMENSION OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

COURSE PROFESSOR

Bart VANHERCKE

COURSE ASSISTANT

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NATURE OF COURSE (COMPULSORY, OPTIONAL)

Optional

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

English

ECTS CREDITS

LAW: 3 ECTS; ECO: 3 ECTS; ELEA (LAW): 2 ECTS; POL: 4

1. COURSE OBJECTIVE

The aim of the course is to provide general knowledge of the social policies of the European Union, from its beginnings. This includes an understanding of the interaction between social policy debates and initiatives, on the one hand, and economic and monetary policies, on the other. The course will also address the diverse national welfare systems and will ultimately ask the following question: *is the 'European social model' a reality or an elusive concept?*

2. LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students will have acquired the following knowledge and skills:

- A general knowledge of European social policies and the ability to explain the main developments through different theoretical lenses;
- An understanding of the interaction between social debates and initiatives, on the one hand, and economic and monetary policies, on the other;
- Awareness of the diverse welfare systems and social policy actors, and a grasp of the ways in which national and EU policies influence each other;
- The ability to approach issues from the perspective of various disciplines (law, political science, sociology, economics);



- Development of a critical interpretation of current issues and debates.

3. COURSE CONTENTS

Each class will be structured around the same format (as of Class 3, 16 Feb).

- **Start of the class** [10']: '*My week in Europe*': 2 students give a brief presentation (3'), explaining which recent development, related to the course, has caught their attention/left them puzzled.
- **Lecture 1** [60'], followed by **Q&A** with students [15'] & stretch break [10'].
- **Lecture 2** [60'], followed by stretch break [5'] and **Q&A** with students [15'].
- **End of the class** [10']: '*European events: debriefing*': 2 students briefly explain what they learned during a recent (online) event or a podcast they listened to, and how this may inspire their course paper. Examples of such events are provided in the 'reading materials' below.

- **Class 1: Course introduction - The main stages of Social Europe** (2 Feb)

- Presentation of the lecturer, the course objectives and content, as well as of the required paper [20'], followed by Q&A [15']
- Students introduce themselves (3' each): (academic/professional/personal) background, motivation for attending this course, subjects of specific interests, expectations [50']
- The main stages of 'Social Europe': from the Treaty of Rome to the European Pillar of Social Rights [Lecture 1]

- **Class 2: Theory and practice** (3 Feb)

- Main theoretical approaches to understanding EU social policymaking: between eclecticism and 'grand theory' [Lecture 2]
- From the economic and monetary union to the COVID-19 pandemic: the 'Cinderella status' of Social Europe [Lecture 3]

- **Class 3: Actors and institutions** (16 Feb)

- The key actors and institutions of Social Europe [Lecture 4]



- Policy coordination: the Europeanisation of social policies through (not so) 'soft governance' [Lecture 5]

- **Class 4: Diversity of welfare systems** (17 Feb)
 - The diverse national welfare systems and the 'European Social Model' [Lecture 6]
 - Foot-dragging and agenda-setting in healthcare: towards more EU intervention against the odd? [Lecture 7]
 - Discussion of initial paper topics: introduced by students (3' each)

- **Class 5: Instruments of EU social policymaking** (3 Mar)
 - Once upon a time there was: the European social dialogue [Lecture 8]
 - Guest lecturer: Jean-Paul Tricart (former European Commission, DG EMPL)
 - Conditionality of EU structural funds: *do carrots really work?* [Lecture 9]
 - Guest lecturer: Loris di Pietrantonio (European Commission, DG EMPL)

- **Class 6: Areas of EU social policymaking (I)** (16 Mar)
 - EU employment protection and social legislation: about 'hard law' and its 'soft pockets' [Lecture 10]
 - Guest lecturer: Filip Dorssemont (Université catholique de Louvain)
 - Social security coordination and occupational health and safety: social policymaking through the internal market [Lecture 11]

- **Class 7: Areas of EU social policymaking (II)** (6 Apr)
 - The EU as a gender equality polity: *myths and realities* [Lecture 12]
 - Students present the outline (including methodology and proposed literature) of their papers; one student and Professor act as discussants [1.5h]



- **Class 8: Summing up** (7 Apr)
 - Students present the outline (including literature and methodology) of their papers. One student and Professor act as discussants [1.5h]
 - Wrapping things up: *is the 'European social model' a reality or an elusive concept?* [Lecture 13]

4. TEACHING METHOD(S)

The course adopts a multidisciplinary approach to European social policies, with a view to highlighting the interactions between different levels of governance (Europeanisation) as well as the role of actors, ideas and institutions. Finally, the course will highlight links between the day-to-day EU initiatives and the main theoretical frameworks that explain the historical development of the EU's social dimension, which is partially developed 'through the back door' of the internal market and economic governance.

This is an interactive course related to current affairs: several guest lecturers with diverse backgrounds (research, policymaking) will introduce some of the most recent developments on the EU agenda.

5. EVALUATION

The assessment grade for this course will be based on:

- **An individual oral presentation and in class participation (20%):** This is an interactive course related to current affairs. Students' participation in class – regular Q&A, student introductions during Class 1, 'my week in Europe' and 'European events: debriefing' – is therefore assessed and makes up 20% of the final mark.
- **A written paper (30%):** Students will be required to produce an individual written paper. This will be on a topic chosen by the student, related to the issues covered in the course, and approved by the Professor. In it, the student should consider developments relating to a topical social issue, highlighting how this policy has emerged, how it has changed and developed, and the main actors supporting and opposing it. This written paper, between 3,600 and 4,400 words, will account for 30% of the final mark.
- **An oral examination (50%).**