



STUDY PROGRAMME(S)

(1) EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies

(2) Transatlantic Affairs

ACADEMIC YEAR

2024-25

SEMESTER

1 & 2

COURSE TITLE

Research Design in EU External Action Studies

COURSE PROFESSOR(S)

Sieglinde GSTÖHL & Simon SCHUNZ

COURSE ASSISTANT(S)

Jovica JOVIĆ

NATURE OF COURSE (COMPULSORY, OPTIONAL, ELECTIVE)

(1) Compulsory course

(2) Course not required but attendance encouraged

ECTS CREDITS

1

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LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

English

1. COURSE OBJECTIVES

This compulsory course aims to help students prepare their Master's thesis by familiarising them with important theoretical approaches and aspects of social sciences research methodology relevant for EU external action studies. The course comprises three parts: the first part offers an introduction to research design and focuses in particular on the structure of the thesis, the formulation of a precise research question and hypothesis/argument, and on case selection. The second part then deals with some major concepts, approaches and theories to study EU external action, whether specifically conceptualised for this purpose or adapted from theories of International Relations or regional integration. By discussing examples of how to apply these concepts, approaches or theories, students learn to analyse specific issues of EU external action through different theoretical lenses for the benefit of their own research and analysis. The third part of the course introduces research techniques from social sciences, in particular the often-used techniques of document analysis and expert interviews. It illustrates how these can be employed when carrying out research for a Master's thesis in the field of EU external action.

At the end of this course, the student will be able to

- formulate a precise research question and corresponding argument;
- understand the key issues of research design;
- explain and apply concepts, approaches and theories relevant to the study of EU external action;
- use appropriate research techniques for an analysis in this field.



2. LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course objectives tie in with the following learning outcomes of the programme **EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies**:

- 1.1 The graduate masters the most important theoretical approaches and concepts of International Relations, EU Studies and Diplomacy Studies relevant for the analysis of the role of the European Union in international affairs.
- 1.2 The graduate can describe, explain and illustrate the current state of scientific research in the field of EU external relations in a broad sense and is able to critically assess the results of this research.
- 1.5 The graduate is able to incorporate knowledge and understanding of various fields of EU external action and of different related disciplines (such as Political Science, International Relations, Law, Economics) at the interface between EU affairs and world politics.
- 2.3 The graduate can independently formulate a research question within the field of European affairs, find, select and critically assess relevant sources, answer the question using typical concepts and methods and present the research results in line with the ethical rules of the discipline.

The course objectives tie in with the following learning outcomes of the programme **Transatlantic Affairs**:

- 1.1 The graduate masters the most important theoretical approaches and concepts of, depending on his or her disciplinary focus, Economics, International Relations and Diplomacy Studies, Legal Studies and/or Political Science relevant for the analysis of transatlantic affairs.
- 1.2 The graduate can describe, explain and illustrate the current state of scientific research in the field of transatlantic affairs in a broad sense and, is, in line with his or her disciplinary focus, able to critically assess the results of this research.
- 1.5 The graduate is able to incorporate knowledge and understanding of various fields of transatlantic affairs and of different related disciplines (such as Economics, International Relations, Legal Studies, Political Science) as well as to adopt both a European and a US perspective on transatlantic affairs.
- 2.3 The graduate can independently transform complex transatlantic issues into a research question within the broader field of transatlantic affairs and, depending on his or her disciplinary focus, find, select and critically assess relevant sources, answer the question using appropriate concepts and methods and present the research results in line with the ethical rules of the chosen discipline.

3. COURSE CONTENTS

First semester

Part 1: Research design for the thesis (3h, Prof. Gstöhl)

Part 2: EU External Action Studies (6h30, Prof. Gstöhl)

Second semester

Part 3: Social science research techniques (2h30, Prof. Schunz)

Please refer to the intranet course page for access to the full course outline.

4. TEACHING METHOD

- Interactive lectures: Slides are provided for each session.
- Discussions in class: Students are expected to fully attend all classes, to prepare the required readings in function of their background and to participate actively in the discussions.

5. COURSE MATERIAL

Please refer to the intranet course page for access to the detailed reading list and the slides.



College of Europe
Collège d'Europe

Brugge



Natolin

ECTS CARD

6. EVALUATION

This compulsory course takes place during the first semester and ends at the beginning of the second semester, in line with the thesis research process. It requires full attendance. Students have to sign attendance lists in each session. Any unjustified absence has to be compensated by an individual paper assignment at the end of the course. The paper will reflect the length of absence and the topic(s) of the part(s) that the student missed. It will be marked on a 'pass' or 'fail' basis. Should a student fail the paper assignment, a mark (below 11) will be attributed and mentioned on the transcript.

In case of a second-session resit, the assessment will also take the form of an individual paper assignment that will be marked in the same manner.