



STUDY PROGRAMME(S)

(1) EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies

(2) Transatlantic Affairs

ACADEMIC YEAR

2024-25

SEMESTER

2

COURSE TITLE

Digital Diplomacy and the European Union: Global Governance, Geopolitics and Diplomatic Practice

COURSE PROFESSOR(S)

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COURSE ASSISTANT(S)

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NATURE OF COURSE (COMPULSORY, OPTIONAL, ELECTIVE)

(1) Optional course

(2) Elective course

ECTS CREDITS

4.5

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

English

1. COURSE OBJECTIVES

The internet, artificial intelligence (AI), and other digital technologies are impacting economies and societies worldwide, promising to help advance sustainable development, while also posing a wide range of governance challenges. These technologies have not only become central themes in global governance and international relations, but they are also regarded as geopolitical resources, as illustrated by the intensifying tech competition between nations and regions.

Against this backdrop, how is the EU positioning itself in digital geopolitics? With digital governance issues such as cybersecurity, privacy, data flows, and AI governance high on the diplomatic agenda, what is the bloc's contribution to these global debates? And to what extent are the EU's internal regulatory efforts in the digital realm (e.g. the General Data Protection Regulation, the Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act, the AI Act, the Chips Act) shaping these debates? What policies, initiatives, and tools are at the core of the Union's digital diplomacy and foreign policy efforts? What is – or could be – setting the EU's approach to digital governance and diplomacy apart from those of other major players such as China and the United States? And how are digital issues reflected in the EU's bilateral and multilateral relations?

This optional course unpacks these and related questions by focusing on the external dimensions of the Union's digital policies and its role in global digital governance and geopolitics. It will further explore the use of digital technologies as tools for diplomacy, and discuss the skills, capacities, and knowledge that diplomats need to be equipped with to stay ahead of the curve in a rapidly changing digital landscape. Also included in the course will be various exercises (simulations, exploration of AI tools, etc.) designed to train skills for the practice of diplomacy.



Overall, the course is built on the notion of a digital transformation of diplomacy in three main areas: changes in the (geo)political, social, and economic environment in which diplomacy is conducted; the emergence of new policy topics in diplomatic negotiations; and the use of digital tools in the practice of diplomacy. Lectures, discussions, and exercises will explore these three dimensions in the context of the EU's digital diplomacy goals and activities.

Generative AI will be used as a pedagogical tool. During a dedicated session, students will experiment with DiploGPT, a custom-made generative AI tool for diplomatic use, to unpack complex digital policy topics. In doing so, students will explore the strengths and weaknesses of generative AI tools, critically assess their effectiveness, and learn about AI prompting in diplomacy.

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

- understand the main digital governance issues on the global diplomatic agenda and the elements that shape the EU's position on these issues;
- describe and explain the core elements of EU's approach to digital diplomacy and foreign policy;
- understand the dynamics between the main players in global digital governance and geopolitics and critically assess the EU's strengths and weaknesses within this landscape;
- apply digital tools (e.g. AI, data analysis) to activities that form the core of diplomatic practice (e.g. drafting, reporting, summarising).

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.
- 1.4 The graduate has acquired insights into the political, legal and economic aspects of EU external action and can use these insights to contextualise and interpret new developments.
- 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.
- 2.1 The graduate can approach the field of national, European and international diplomacy analytically by assessing the challenges in this domain with an open mind for diversity and for complex situations.
- 2.2 The graduate has the ability to critically reflect upon problems in international and European affairs, to adopt well-informed points of view and to communicate them effectively orally and in writing, whether working independently or in a team.
- 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.
- 2.4 The graduate is capable of processing a large amount of information within a short period of time and to work efficiently and effectively through planning, organising, setting priorities and meeting deadlines.
- 2.5 The graduate has the intellectual maturity and skills to function responsibly and autonomously in a professional context at national, European or international level and the capacity of suggesting possible action that contributes to problem-solving in a creative way.



- 2.6 The graduate can apply the acquired skills in the analysis and conduct of multifaceted (international) negotiations, both independently and in diverse and multicultural teams.
- 3.4 The graduate has acquired specific professional skills relevant to the practice of EU external action but also transferable to many other fields in the public and private sector.

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.
- 1.4 The graduate has insights into historical, political, legal and economic aspects of transatlantic affairs as well as into those policy areas that are of essential importance to transatlantic affairs. He or she can use these insights to contextualize and interpret new developments.
- 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.
- 2.1 The graduate can approach the field of transatlantic affairs in a broad sense analytically by assessing the challenges in this domain with an open mind for diversity and for complex situations.
- 2.2 The graduate has the ability to critically reflect upon problems regarding an extensive range of transatlantic affairs, to adopt well-informed points of view and to communicate them effectively orally and in writing, whether working independently or in a team.
- 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.
- 2.4 The graduate is capable of processing a large amount of information and appropriately analyse relevant sources depending on his or her disciplinary focus within a short period of time and of suggesting possible actions that contribute to problem-solving in a creative way.
- 2.5 The graduate has the intellectual maturity and skills to take responsibilities and function autonomously in a professional environment at national or international level, and especially in a transatlantic context, and to work efficiently and effectively through planning, organizing, setting priorities, meeting deadlines, cooperating across cultural boundaries and networking.

3. COURSE CONTENTS

- Session 1: Global digital governance and geopolitics and EU digital diplomacy
- Session 2: The EU's position in the global digital economy: Goals and challenges
- Session 3: Cybersecurity and cybercrime: Global processes and EU contributions
- Session 4: Digital tools for diplomatic activities: From social media to artificial intelligence
- Session 5: A human-rights-based approach to digital technologies
- Session 6: Governing artificial intelligence: Chances for a global compromise?
- Session 7: Practicing digital diplomacy: Negotiation skills
- Session 8: Global digital geopolitics and the roles of the EU, China, and the US: Case studies in standard-setting and relations with Africa (comparative analysis)

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



4. TEACHING METHOD

- Interactive lectures
- Group project: simulation exercise
- Individual research paper

Please refer to the intranet course page for access to further information and instructions.

5. COURSE MATERIAL

Please refer to the intranet course page for access to the detailed reading list (required and supplementary readings) and the slides.

6. EVALUATION

Students will be assessed on the basis of:

- A group project: simulation exercise (20%)
- An individual research paper (30%)
- A final open-book written examination of 2h (50%)

In case of a second-session resit, a written exam of the same format will be held which counts for 100% of the mark.