



STUDY PROGRAMME(S)

(1) EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies

ACADEMIC YEAR

2025-2026

SEMESTER

1

(2) Transatlantic Affairs

COURSE TITLE

Legal Aspects of the EU's External Relations

COURSE PROFESSOR(S)

Jan WOUTERS

COURSE ASSISTANT(S)

Julie VERDUYN

NATURE OF COURSE (COMPULSORY, OPTIONAL, ELECTIVE)

(1) Compulsory course

ECTS CREDITS

3.5

(2) Elective course

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

English

1. COURSE OBJECTIVES

This compulsory course offers insights into the legal aspects of the EU's external action and relations. It focuses on the EU's external competences and objectives, legal personality, the actors, decision-making processes (including treaty-making), instruments and principles of external action and relations, the legal effects of international agreements and international law in the EU's internal legal order, as well as on the relationship between the EU and international organisations.

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

- understand the European and international legal framework governing the EU's external relations
- explain the competences, actors, procedures and instruments of EU external policy- and law-making
- conceptualise different aspects of the relationship between European and international law
- critically assess the role of values in the EU's external action
- analyse the case-law of the Court of Justice in the field of external relations

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.





- 1.3 The graduate has good knowledge of the institutional architecture and the decision-making processes in the European Union and in particular in EU external relations.
- 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.4 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.

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.
- 1.3 The graduate has good knowledge of, depending on his or her disciplinary focus, the political and/or legal systems, the decision-making processes, the economic structures and the main internal and external policies of the European Union and the United States.
- 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.4 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

Part I: Legal Personality and *Jus Legationis*

Part II: Competences

Part III: Actors

Part IV: Decision-making and Treaty-making

Part V: Status of International Agreements and International Law in EU Law



Part VI: Instruments and Values of EU External Relations

Part VII: Competences at Work: the EU and International Organisations

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

4. TEACHING METHOD

- Interactive lectures
- Tutorials: three tutorials will be offered by the course assistant: an introductory tutorial to cover the basics of EU and international law before the course starts; a second tutorial designed to review the content of the sessions and introduce the exam format; and a third one at the end of the course to allow the students to practice the exam format through practical exercises.

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

- Written exam (100%): duration 3h

In case of a second-session resit, students will be evaluated on the basis of a written exam of the same type.

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

