



UNIVERSITÀ  
CATTOLICA  
del Sacro Cuore



**Franklin University Switzerland  
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore  
Forum-Nexus Program  
Course Syllabus**

**Understanding Europe and the European Union:  
A Social & Cultural Approach**

**Introduction**

Europe can be used as a synonym for the European Union, but it is so much more. Europe is also a continent, it is an idea, a social community, a culture, a shared history, a project, and a set of values. While most can agree on the geographical boundaries of Europe, these other facets of Europe are much more difficult to pin down, as everyone can read into Europe their own hopes, or fears. By looking at the long-term trends in European history, we can best understand Europe (and the European Union) today, as well as the challenges that it faces.

**Course Description**

This course provides an overview of European institutions, culture, and history, with a particular emphasis on the countries of Spain, Italy, Switzerland, France, and the Netherlands. It starts from the simple premise that one cannot understand Europe today without studying its history. This is not done just for the erudite pleasure of studying history, but because this history is still alive and impactful, it has fundamentally shaped the society of Europe today.

Ever since the fall of Rome, Europeans have tried to unite the continent under a single banner, forming a political community and a common culture, and today's European Union is just the newest attempt. Europe has its own identity, that is both grounded in the past, but profoundly malleable and adaptive. This course proposes a division of the class into a first half dedicated to understanding the functioning of the European Union and its institutions and the general history of the continent. After the midterm, the course will then look at thematic issues facing Europe and Europeans today, from federalism, to Brexit, to immigration and the rise of illiberal democracy, to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Students should gain appreciation for the complicated question of "What does it mean to be European?"

## **Learning Objectives**

At the conclusion of this course, students will understand:

- The overall arc of European history, from the Classical Period to the contemporary period
- How these events shaped the issues and debates that the continent faces today.
- The history of European integration and the basic structures of EU institutions
- The debate over federalism in the EU.
- The importance of economics in tying together the EU.
- The place of Europe in the world.
- The impact of immigration and its relationship with Europe's colonial past.
- The rise of the far right and illiberal democracy.
- The Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- The current economic, social, cultural, and political environment in Europe in general, and in particular in Spain, Italy, Switzerland, France, and the Netherlands

## **Course Requirements**

The course requires active student participation in class discussions. Students are expected to read the required articles and material before every class. Punctual attendance is required. There will be a midterm exam, a final exam, a paper, and a final PowerPoint presentation. Each student is required to participate in a minimum of three professional visits and three cultural visits.

## **Pedagogical Approach**

Teaching methods used in this course include lectures, discussions, field activities, and professional visits. Learning in this course requires the student's constructive participation and active involvement in both class discussions and small group discussions. Small group discussions in particular are a key mechanism for facilitating learning from other team members. Thus, it is essential to attend all group activities inside and outside classes. The professional visits will expose the participants to different aspects of the class and will highlight the practical relevance of the concepts learned. The visits will be accompanied by individual or group assignments. Cultural visits enhance the students' understanding of the history and culture of each country.

## **Required Readings**

Jeremy Black, *A History of Europe: From pre-history to the 21st century* ([Kindle Amazon US](#))

Simon Usherwood & John Pinder, *The European Union: A Very Short Introduction* ([Kindle Amazon US](#))

## **Course Bibliography**

Tim Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe 1648-1815*  
Charles Briggs, *The Body Broken: Medieval Europe 1300-1520*  
Peter Brown, *Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity*  
William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*  
Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of Third Reich*  
David Herlihy, *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West*  
Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*  
Ian Kershaw, *Roller-Coaster: Europe 1950-2017*  
Brigitte Leucht, Katja Seidel, and Laurent Warlouzet, *Reinventing Europe: the History of the European Union, 1945 to the Present*  
Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*  
Charles Naurert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe*  
Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*  
Kiran Klaus Patel, *Project Europe: A History*  
Serhii Plokyh, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*  
Simon Price and Peter Thonemann, *The Birth of Classical Europe: A History from Troy to Augustine*  
Barbara H Rosenwein, *A Short History of the Middle Ages*  
Guido Ruggiero, *Renaissance in Italy: Social and Cultural History of the Rinascimento*  
Laurent Warlouzet, *Europe contre Europe: Entre liberté, solidarité, et puissance*  
Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy*

## **Assignments & Grading**

Active and engaged participation in class is necessary to succeed in this course. This requires solid attendance as well as active participation in class discussions. Students are expected to come to class prepared, having read the assigned readings, and ready to discuss in a respectful, collegial manner with their peers. Any unexcused absence will lead to -5% to the final overall grade.

Students will make a final presentation that takes one of the thematic issues examined at the end of the course and makes an in depth analysis of the issue. They will explain the historical roots of this issue, why it is important to understanding Europe today, and evaluate how the European Union is addressing this issue. The presentation should last 10-15 minutes. Students will also submit a 1500 (~3-5 double-spaced pages, 12-point font) word analysis paper, complete with references (Chicago style) that presents an analysis of the issue, its historical antecedents, how the EU is addressing the issue, and in addition, what they think the future holds.

### Participation in “Europe Today: An International IQ Seminar”

All students also attend **Europe Today: An International IQ Seminar**, a daily session conducted by the Academic Director, Dr. Edward Gray, with occasional distinguished guest lectures. In this seminar, students learn about the culture of each country visited, gain an understanding of essential European geography and current events, discuss their experiences and cross-cultural interactions, get language tips, and identify ways to have an even more immersive study abroad experience. The material covered in the seminar complements the syllabus for this course, and there will be some exam questions based on the seminar. Knowledge from and participation in the International IQ Seminar is factored into the grade for this course.

### Components of the Final Grade

Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	30%
Presentation & Paper	40% (20% each)
Class Participation	10%

### Grading Scale

A	93-100 %	B-	80-82.9 %	D+	67-69.9 %
A-	90-92.9 %	C+	77-79.9 %	D	63-66.9 %
B+	87-89.9 %	C	73-76.9 %	D-	60-62.9 %
B	83-86.9 %	C-	70-72.9%	F	Below 60 %

### Course Outline

Module	Topic
Module 1	What even is Europe, anyway? An Introduction to the EU and its institutions <i>Reading Assignment: Black, Introduction &amp; VSI Ch 1, Ch 3</i>
Module 2	Classical Europe, Medieval Europe <i>Reading Assignment: Black, Ch 2-4</i>
Module 3	Renaissance, Reform, Absolutism, Enlightenment

	<i>Reading Assignment: Black, Ch 5</i>
Module 4	Revolution, Political Movements, Concert of Europe, birth of Conservatism, Liberalism, Socialism, Communism. 1789-1848 <i>Reading Assignment: Black, Ch6</i>
Module 5	Nationalism and Empire: 1848-1918 <i>Reading Assignment: Black, Ch 8</i>
Module 6	Age of Anxiety and Mental Breakdown: 1918-1945 <i>Reading Assignment: Black, Ch 8</i>
Module 7	Cold War and the beginning of the EU: 1945-2023 <i>Reading Assignment: Black, Ch 9, VSI Ch 2 &amp; 4</i>
Module 8	Project Europe: Triumphs and Challenges in the Construction of a European Community <i>Reading Assignment: VSI, Ch 11</i>
Module 9	Economics and the EU: The ties that bind <i>Reading Assignment: VSI, Ch 4, 5, 6</i>
Module 10	The United States of Europe? Federalism, Confederation, and Identity <i>Reading Assignment: VSI, Ch 7</i>
Module 11	Europe and the World: Interests, Values, Realities <i>Reading Assignment: VSI, Ch 8-10</i>
Module 12	What place for Nationalism in Europe?: Immigration, the complicated inheritance of Colonial Empires, The Rise of the Far Right, and Illiberal Democracy
Module 13	Russian Imperialism: The Long Roots of the Ukrainian Invasion <i>Reading Assignment: Plokhy Article (<a href="#">link</a>)</i>
Module 14	The current economic, social, cultural, and political environment in Europe
Module 15	The current economic, social, cultural, and political environment in Spain and Italy
Module 16	The current economic, social, cultural, and political environment in Switzerland
Module 17	The current economic, social, cultural, and political environment in France
Module 18	The current economic, social, cultural, and political environment in the Netherlands

## **Academic Integrity**

The Forum-Nexus program places a high value on the integrity, good conduct, and academic honesty of all students. Students are expected to maintain high standards of academic integrity at all times. Any instance of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will result in a grade of F for the course.