Institutions and Decision-Making in the EU. The European Civil Service

Code 574411 · Academic year 2026-2027 · Master's Degree in Diplomacy and International Organizations

Course details

Type	Mandatory
Format	In-person
Period	First term
Schedule	On Thursdays from 9:30h to 11:30h
Language(s)	English (with some sessions in Spanish)
ECTS credits	3.0

Coordination

Dr. Andrea Noferini

He holds a PhD in Economics from the Università degli Studi di Firenze and an MA in Political Science from Universitat Pompeu Fabra, and is a faculty member at CEI International Affairs, where he directs the Preparation for the Diplomatic Career programme, as well as a lecturer in the Department of Political Science at Universitat Pompeu Fabra. His research focuses on public policy, multi-level governance and European Union policies.

Teachers

Dr. Andrea Noferini

He holds a PhD in Economics from the Università degli Studi di Firenze and an MA in Political Science from Universitat Pompeu Fabra, and is a faculty member at CEI International Affairs, where he directs the Preparation for the Diplomatic Career programme, as well as a lecturer in the Department of Political Science at Universitat Pompeu Fabra. His research focuses on public policy, multi-level governance and European Union policies.

Guest lecturers

Dra. Montserrat Pi, Associate professor of Public International Law, UAB
Dr. Manuel Cienfuegos, Full-time professor of Public International Law, UPF
Dra. Marta Konovalova, (TBC) Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Kyiv, Ukraine)
Mr. Mel Ravelo Cordovés, DG MENA, European Commission

Course objectives

The European Union represents an advanced model of regional integration between sovereign states and a peculiar political system which involve supranational and state-level organizations and institutions. Basically, the course aims to provide students with the analytical tools and practical skills required to understand how the EU policy-making and decision-making systems do work.

The course focuses on the institutional design of the EU as a supranational institution, the relations among its main institutions and organizations, decision-making processes, the role of central governments of the Member States as well as some current debates of particular relevance such as rising populisms, the respect of the rule of law and the present and the future of the Union.

Degree learning outcomes

K04 - Describe the political analysis tools used in the study of international relations.

K05 - Distinguish the instruments and norms intended to maintain international peace and security.

K07 - Identify the key actors in international relations.

K10 - Explain the role of international organizations in conflict resolution.

K14 - Detail the decision-making processes of different international organizations.

K15 - Identify the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization.

K16 - Mention the most important diplomatic events in history.

K18 - Identify the organizational structure of the different institutions of the United Nations system.

H01 - Express yourself orally and in writing effectively in Spanish and English, with command of specialized languages in the field of international relations and international law.

H02 - Write rigorous documents in the field of international relations and international law.

H03 - Analyze the interests of the actors involved in each international context, including all their political, economic, and legal elements.

H04 - Use information sources critically and responsibly in diplomacy and international organizations.

K – Knowledge or content

H – Skills or abilities

C - Competences

Module learning outcomes

K18 Identify the main institutional actors and their interinstitutional dynamics in EU decision-making.

K19 List the political deliberation processes of the European Union.

K20 Classify the instruments of the European Union’s foreign policy and their application.

K21 Detail the EU’s relations with international organizations and other global actors.

H15 Draft position papers on EU policies.

H16 Effectively interpret the processes and common language within the framework of EU institutions.

H17 Use political analysis tools to interpret EU dynamics.

H18 Evaluate the impact of EU decisions on the external relations of Member States.

K – Knowledge or content

H – Skills or abilities

C - Competences

Course schedule

Topic 1: The EU as a political system

Thursday, October 1, 2026 · Dr. Andrea Noferini

I. Introduction II. On the nature of the EU (not a super/state not a federal system) III. What a political system is IV. Beyond the debate on the nature of the EU

Readings:

- (from pg. 1-16) Börzel, Tanja A. (2011),” Comparative Regionalism: A New Research Agenda”, KFG Working Paper Series, No. 28, August 2011, Kolleg-Forschergruppe (KFG) “The Transformative Power of Europe “, Freie Universität Berlin
- Hix, Simon and B. Hoyland. (2022) ´Explaining the EU Political System`, in The Political System of the EU, Chapter 1, 4th ed., London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

Topic 2: Understanding the EU Institutional Triangle I: the fundamentals

Thursday, October 8, 2026 · Dr. Andrea Noferini

I. The role of the three main institutions: the Council, the Parliament, the Commission. The Functions, interests and compositions of the three main institutions of the Parliament and its composition, III. The democratic deficit.

Readings:

- 2025 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen
- ARCHICK, Kristin. The European Union: questions and answers. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2024

Topic 3: Understanding the EU Institutional Triangle II: the legislative process

Thursday, October 15, 2026 · Dr. Andrea Noferini

I. Councilthe ordinary legislative procedure explained,

II. Interests and negotiations in the decision making.

III. Voting systems IV.

The role of the Commission and the legislative initiative

Readings:

- Simon HIX y Bjørn HØYLAND, “Executive Politics”, in S. HIX y B. HØYLAND, The Political System of the European Union, 4th ed., London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

Topic 4: SEMINARIO 1: El proceso de adopción de decisiones (*in Spanish) (Seminar)

Thursday, October 22, 2026 · Dra. Montserrat Pi · **There is an assessment in this session**

I. De qué manera se toman las decisiones en la UE? II. El rol de las tres principales instituciones de la UE, III. Las dificultades de la relacione interinstitucionales en el entramado de la UE.

Materials will be delivered by the instructor prior to the seminars

Topic 5: The European Budget and the new Multiannual Financial Framework: where does money come from and how are they allocated?

Thursday, October 29, 2026 · Dr. Andrea Noferini · **There is an assessment in this session**

I. How big (or small) is the EU budget? II. Where do the money come from and where are they spent? III. The new Multiannual Financial Perspective 2021/2027, IV. An unprecedented effort: The Next Generation EU - the fund for the recovery of Europe after the pandemic caused by the COVID 19.

MID TERM EXAM (Multiple Choice Test on the first part of the course)

Readings:

- 2018, HIGH LEVEL GROUP ON OWN RESOURCES Executive summary and Recommendations
- Buti, M. and Fabbrini, S. (2023) “The Political Determinants of Fiscal Governance in the EU: Towards a New Equilibrium”, Politics and Governance 11(4): 112-21.
- Acedo Montoya, L. (2023) “Rethinking the EU Financial Architecture”, Intereconomics 58(6): 289-294.
- Buti, M. (2023) “Towards a Reform of the EU Budget”, Intereconomics 58(6): 286-287.

Topic 6: The European Court of Justice and the implementation of EU law (In Spanish)

Thursday, November 5, 2026 · Dr. Manuel Cienfuegos

I. The role of the European Court of Justice in the EU law, II. Composition and functions of the ECJ, III. The EJC and the judicial power in the EU

Readings:

- Simon HIX y Bjørn HØYLAND, “Judicial Politics and the European Court of Justice”, in S. HIX y B. HØYLAND, The Political System of the European Union, 4th ed., London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

Topic 7: A challenge to the European values? The rise of populism(s) and nationalism(s) in the EU

Thursday, November 12, 2026 · Dr. Andrea Noferini

I. Rising populisms and nationalisms in the EU, II. A radiography of populist movements and parties in the EU, III. Populist parties in the European Parliament, IV. The impact of nationalisms and populisms on the process of European integration.

Readings:

- Rooduijn, Matthijs, Andrea L. P. Pirro, Daphne Halikiopoulou, Caterina Froio, Stijn Van Kessel, Sarah L. De Lange, Cas Mudde, and Paul Taggart. ThePopuList: A Database of Populist, Far-Left, and Far-Right Parties Using Expert-Informed Qualitative Comparative Classification (EiQCC). British Journal of Political Science 54, no. 3 (2024): 969–78.
- LET THE PEOPLE RULE! DEFINITIONS AND THEORIES OF POPULISM by Diego Muro (pg.9-16)
- POPULISM “MADE IN THE EU”, Carme Colomina (pg.23-26) in Eckart Woertz (coord.), POPULISM IN EUROPE: FROM SYMPTOM TO ALTERNATIVE? CIDOB REPORT #01, Barcelona, April 2017, ISSN: 2564-9086

Topic 8: Inequality, social cohesion and redistribution within the European Union: The European Cohesion Policy explained

Thursday, November 19, 2026 · Dr. Andrea Noferini

I. Is inequality rising in the EU? II. Inequality and social exclusion revisited, III. Territorial differences among the Member States, regions and cities, IV. Does a regional policy serve for the convergence of EU territories?

Readings:

- European Parliament, 2023, The future of EU cohesion policy: The emerging debate, Briefing 04-10-2023
- Forging a sustainable future together. Cohesion for a competitive and inclusive Europe: report of the High-Level Group on the Future of Cohesion Policy, February 2024

Topic 9: Geopolitical tensions, international trade and sustainability

Thursday, November 26, 2026 · Dr. Andrea Noferini

I. EU trade policy: fundamentals and institutional actors; II. EU trade agreements; Sustainability, The EU green Deal;

Readings:

- Tosun, J. (2023) “The European Union's Climate and Environmental Policy in Times of Geopolitical Crisis”, Journal of Common Market Studies (61): 147-156.
- Almeida, D.V., Kolinjivadi, V., Ferrando, T., Roy, B., Herrera, H., Vecchione, M. and Van Hecken, G. (2023) “The “greening” of empire: The European Green Deal as the EU first agenda”, Political Geography 105: 102925.
- Oberthür, S. and Von Homeyer, I. (2023) “From emissions trading to the European Green Deal: the evolution of the climate policy mix and climate policy integration in the EU”, Journal of European Public Policy 30(3): 445-468.
- Claire, D. et al (2023) ‘Three decades of EU climate policy: Racing toward climate neutrality?’, Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews.

Topic 10: The new Pact for the Mediterranean.

Thursday, December 3, 2026 · Mr. Mel Ravelo Cordoves

I. Basic facts and goals of the New Pact for the Mediterranean; II. The Euro Mediterranean partnership explained; The role of the EU in the mediterranean regions

Materials from the instructor

Topic 11: Special Session on EU Enlargement and the Consequences of the Conflict in Ukraine (Seminar)

Thursday, December 10, 2026 · Dr. Andrea Noferini

Ukraine applied for EU membership in February 2022 and was granted EU candidate status in June 2022. After many years of impasse, EU enlargement has gained a new momentum for its geopolitical consequences. Ukraine has been rapidly granted the candidate state while many Balkans state have lasted years for the same reward. What extent can the EU be enlarged? And what are the consequences of enlargement processes? And finally: Can really Ukraine join the EU? And, if yes, when?

A debate with PhD Marta Konovalova, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

Topic 12: The present and the future of the European process of Integration.

Thursday, December 17, 2026 · Dr. Andrea Noferini

I. Overview and resume of the course; II. Overlook at the main contents, topic and themes analysed through the course; III. Debate on the current state of the Union and future perspectives.

Prior knowledge / requirements

RELATION TO OTHER MASTER’S COURSES

There are no specified enrolment restrictions with other subjects of the curriculum.

ENTRY requirements

Students with no previous knowledge of Public International Law and International Organizations, International relations and International Politics, Economics and International Trade must take the following mandatory complementary courses:

- Introduction to Public International Law and International Organizations (2 ECTS)
- Introduction to International Relations and International Politics (2 ECTS)
- Introduction to Economics and International Trade (2 ETCS)

Teaching methodology

The teaching will combine the theoretical exposition of the professor with the participation of the students in the discussions and debates. For each session, a mandatory reading will be assigned.

Assessment system

Students will be able to choose between continuous assessment and single assessment within the deadline set by CEI's own regulation through the registration of a form available at CEI Secretariat. Students must attend no less than 80% of the classes in order to qualify for any assessment. No single assessment test will have more than 60% of the final grade of the course.

The evaluation criteria for the continuous assessment of this course will be as it follows*:

- 35% MID TERM EXAM (multiple choice test)
- 25% Seminar during the session by Montserrat Pi
- 40% FINAL ASSIGNMENT/FINAL EXAM

*According to the number of students, the evaluation model can be adjusted. The definitive model of evaluation will be closed during the first week of the course

1st type of activity (35%): MID TERM EXAM (multiple choice test) | 2nd type of activity (25%): Seminar during the session by Montserrat Pi | 3rd type of activity (40%): FINAL EXAM | Total 100%

Resit / re-assessment

The obtention of an overall failing grade in this subject entitles the student to reassessment, consisting in a single exam worth 100% of the final grade. In case the student fails said exam, the higher grade of the two (the overall ordinary grade or the reassessment grade) will be kept.

Type of activity (%): In presence oral exam on a selected list of mandatory materials from the course

Workload

Total hours	75
Lecture/practical hours	25
Supervised work hours	25
Independent work hours	25

Core bibliography

- ABELLÁN HONRUBIA, Victoria.; VILÀ COSTA, Blanca (dir): Lecciones de Derecho Comunitario Europeo, Ariel Derecho, Barcelona, 6 ª ed., 2011.
- ALCAIDE FERNANDEZ, Joaquin (coord.), Curso de Derecho de la Unión Europea, Tecnos, Madrid, 2014
- Araceli Mangas Martín, Diego J. Liñán Nogueras, Instituciones y Derecho de la Unión Europea, Tecnos, Madrid, 2016.
- BAQUERO CRUZ, Julio. What's left of the law of integration?: Decay and resistance in European Union, 1st ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Cini, M., & Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, N. (2016). European Union Politics (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Elizabeth E. Bomberg, John Peterson, Richard Corbett, The European Union. How does it work?, 3rd. ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- FONTAINE, Pascal., Europe in 12 lessons, Brussels: OPOCE, 2014.
- Hix, S., & Høyland, B. (2022). The Political System of the European Union (4th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hubert ZIMMERMANN y Andreas DÜR, A. Key controversies in European integration, 2nd ed., London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

- Jones, R. A. (2001). The Politics and Economics of the European Union (2nd ed.). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Klaus-Dieter Borchardt, The ABC of the European Union Law, Brussels: OPOCE, 2010
- Lelieveldt, H., & Princen, S. (2023). The Politics of the European Union (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- McCormick, J. (2020). European Union Politics (3rd ed.). Red Globe Press.
- Nugent, N. (2006). The Government and Politics of the European Union (6th ed.). Duke University Press.
- ORTEGA GÓMEZ, Marta, La Comisión Europea y el gobierno de la Unión, Marcial Pons, 2013.
- SARMIENTO, Daniel, Derecho de la Unión Europea, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2018.
- Toje, A. (2010). The European Union as a Small Power: After the Post–Cold War. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Verdun, A., Hurrelmann, A., & Brunet-Jailly, E. (2023). European Union Governance and Policy-Making (2nd ed.). University of Toronto Press.
- Hubert ZIMMERMANN y Andreas DÜR, “The European Union: Success of Failure”, in H. ZIMMERMANN y A. DÜR ZIMMERMANN, Key controversies in European integration, 2nd ed., London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. Government and Opposition, 39(4), 541–563.
- Rooduijn, M. (2018). What unites the voter bases of populist parties? Comparing the electorates of 15 populist parties. European Political Science Review, 10(3), 351–368.
- 2022, Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.), Ambre Maucorps, Roman Römisch, Nina Vujanovic (The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw)), Thomas Schwab (Bertelsmann Stiftung), The Future of EU Cohesion. Effects of the Twin Transition on Disparities across European Regions