

Meet the Europeans: Politics and Society in the European Union

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Spring 2026

Wednesday 12:00-15:00

Course Description:

Who are the Europeans and why did they create the European Union? How did the EU, a unique partnership of 27 states, become an ever more important international actor? Which European histories shape the EU's present? This course covers the main political, social and economic developments in Europe since the mid-20th century. It reviews promises and achievements of European integration, including peace, democracy, economic prosperity and protection of human rights. Our journey begins in 1945, when the end of the Second World War recast debates about independence and interdependence of states and people. We will study the emergence of supranational institutions during the Cold War and their transformation after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. The course invites participants to explore how the collapse of authoritarian structures in the East paved the way toward deeper integration with the West and sparked fascinating debates about catching up, belonging (identity) and possible futures. Our reading will take us through post-socialist transformations to the themes shaping the most recent decade. The course covers current events in European politics and EU's role in the world, offering analytical lenses for thinking about them in historical perspective. The current affairs sections pay particular attention to migration, gender and climate change. Course reader consists of interdisciplinary literature in European Studies, including International Relations, Political Theory, Economics, History and Anthropology.

Course Objectives:

After taking this course students will have an advanced understanding of the key ideas and interests that shape European integration. They will also have gained insight into the many ways in which Europeans and their neighbors negotiate their belonging and cooperation. The course aims to strengthen understanding of:

- European political system, including constitution and checks and balances; cultural and social aspects of belonging and the historical context of the emergence of the EU.
- Dynamics of interplay between national, regional, international/global frameworks, with a focus on the European experience.

Classes are interactive, students are expected to be familiar with the required reading and encouraged to critically engage with the studied material through discussions, written assignments and group projects.

Assignments and Grading:

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| 1. Participation, homework and small in-class assignments | 35 % |
| 2. Mid-term exam (in-class) | 30 % |
| 3. Final exam (take-home & in-class) | 35 % |

Course materials are available on the course website. Some texts can be found in the school library, most can be accessed electronically. The reading list might be amended during the course. Notifications about changes will be emailed in advance. Assignment guidelines and instructions for preparation for exams will be provided in class.

This course is designed as a conversation. While structure of sessions may vary, a typical session consists of a warm-up debate reflecting current events relevant to the course material, a lecture introducing key issues scheduled for the day and reading-based discussions and exercises. Some weeks we will alternate shorter lecture and discussion segments. Additional text and audiovisual material will be provided in class.

Your experience in this course depends on preparation before class and active participation in it. Please follow weekly reading, think about the texts, take notes of any questions you would like the class to address. I encourage you to approach the course material critically. Regular work on assignments is likely to result in deeper knowledge and higher grades than occasional intense attention to the course. Feel free to propose any additional themes or issues that you would like the class to explore.

The course adheres to overall AEP policies, which include guidelines on attendance and academic integrity. Please note that respecting these policies is an essential part of succeeding in the course. Failure to adhere to them will result in point deduction and could potentially lead to an F grade. Submission of late work without relevant excuse provided by the AEP office will also result in point deduction.

If you encounter difficulties with some of the material or need more guidance, do not hesitate to arrange an appointment with your lecturer. Students requesting special accommodation have to contact AEP office in advance.

Unless specifically instructed to discuss in pairs or small groups, please respect the 'one conversation at a time' rule. Likewise, please refrain from use of electronic devices (phones, laptops) and any other activity that might be disturbing to your fellow students while the course is in session.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A+	97-100	Excellent Work
A	93-97	Outstanding Work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

Grading Policy:

Mandatory Completion Policy

Note that all mandatory assignments and exams must be completed to the best of your ability in order for your final grade to be issued. Failure to complete a mandatory assignment or exam may result in a failing grade.

AEP Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the development of knowledge and learning is encouraged at many stages of the learning process. While we value technology for educational purposes, we also value originality and the retainment of knowledge, and thus using AI for assignments and examinations, even if rephrased, is strictly prohibited and considered an academic integrity violation, unless the instructor explicitly allows for it in the context of evaluated work

AEP Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy

The AEP program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristics, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

AEP Diversity Policy

AEP is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming community that values diversity in all its forms. We believe that one of the most meaningful lessons of studying abroad is learning to navigate and appreciate differences with curiosity and an open mind. While engaging across differences can sometimes be challenging or uncomfortable, these moments are essential for growth and learning. We recognize that every member of our community, even with the best intentions, may occasionally make missteps. Our commitment is to provide a supportive environment where respectful and honest dialogue helps us learn from these experiences, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive and broaden their perspective.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

CEE Introductory Lecture Series

AEP Introductory Lecture Series

Week 2

February 18, 2026

Introduction to the course. Themes, methods, homework, rules and rights. Europe as an idea and as a political community. Politics, policy and polities in the European Union.

Required reading:

- Anna Triandafyllidou and Ruby Gropas, *What is Europe?* (Routledge, 2023), pp. 29-46.
- David Herszenhorn, "Thousands Demand Resignation of Ukraine Leader", *The New York Times*, December 1, 2013, <http://nyti.ms/ICFuS4>
- Frantz Fanon, "Conclusion", in Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Penguin 2001; orig. 1963), pp. 251-255.
- Articles 2, 3 and 49, Treaty on the European Union (available in the course reader).

Optional reading:

- Jeremy Rifkin, *European Dream* (Penguin, 2003), excerpts, 5 p.
- Simona Guerra, "The Early Women of European Integration", May 16, 2022, (7 min) <https://euradio.ideason europe.eu/2022/05/16/the-early-women-of-european-integration/>

Week 3

February 25, 2026

Who are the Europeans? National and transnational communities and belongings. Actions and institutions that facilitated the emergence of European transnational identity. Belonging as an analytical lens. Writing about EU-rope: introduction to sources.

Required reading:

- Cris Shore, "Creating the people's Europe: symbols, history and invented traditions." *In: Shore Building Europe: the Cultural Politics of European Integration* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 40-65.
- Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the politics of belonging." *Patterns of Prejudice* 40, no. 3(2006): 197-209.
- Richard Ivan Jobs, *Backpack Ambassadors: How Youth Travel Integrated Europe* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 125-136.
- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 1-7.

Optional reading:

- Michael Billig, "Nations and Languages", In: Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (Sage, 2005), pp. 13-36.

Week 4

March 4, 2026

Western European 'Postwar.' Destruction and longing for "normalcy." Planning. Schuman declaration and early institutions. Sovereignty and supranationalism. Significance of migration for the European project.

Required reading:

- Tony Judt, *Postwar: a history of Europe since 1945* (London: William Heinemann, 2005). Sections in chapters 1-5: Ch.1 (pp. 13-40), Ch. 3 (pp.67-77), Ch. 4 (pp. 109-117) Ch. 5 (pp.156-159)
- The Schuman Declaration of May 9, 1950
http://ec.europa.eu/publications/booklets/eu_documentation/04/txt07_en.htm#declaration
- UNHCR (2011) *The 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol*, 16p.

Week 5

March 11, 2026

The US and Western European integration: the NATO and the Marshall Plan. Questions of independence and interdependence. Economic recovery. Decolonization and its impact on West European integration.

Required reading:

- Judt, *Postwar*, Chapter 3 (pp. 90-99 Marshall Plan), Chapter 10 (pp.324-353)
- *Address given by J.F.K in Philadelphia, July 4, 1962* (2 pages)
http://www.ena.lu/address_given_john_kennedy_philadelphia_july_1962-020002861.html
- Kalypto Nicolaidis, "Southern Barbarians," In: Nicolaidis, K., B. Sebe and G. Maas. Eds. *Echoes of Empire: Memory, Identity and Colonial Legacies* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), pp. 283-304.

Optional reading:

- Judt, Chapter 17 (pp. 535-558)

Week 6

March 18, 2026

Stillness and stirrings in the Eastern bloc. Dissidents, Charter 77, "power of the powerless" and strategies of survival on the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain. Democracy as a right.

Reading:

- Robert Brier, "Gendering Dissent: Human Rights, Gender History and the Road to 1989", *Eurozine*, September 2019, <https://www.eurozine.com/gendering-dissent/?pdf=>
- Vaclav Havel, 'Power of the Powerless' (1978). (excerpts).
- John Dryzek, "Can There Be a Human Right to an Essentially Contested Concept? The Case of Democracy." *The Journal of Politics* 78, no. 2 (2016): 357-367.
- Judt, *Postwar*, sections in chapter 9 (pp. 309-323), chapter 18 (pp.559-584)

Optional reading:

- Slavenka Drakulic, *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*. New York: Harper Perennial 2016 [1993]. (excerpts)

Week 7

March 25, 2026

Midterm exam (in-class quiz and short essay questions). Instructions for preparation will be provided in advance. **Reading for this week (week 7) is NOT covered by the midterm exam.**

The exam takes place in the first part of regular course session. After the exam, the class resumes.

The East Meets the West. Introduction to the socio-political processes that shaped the integration of the two formerly hostile blocs.

Reading:

- Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* no. 16 (1989): 3-18
- Dace Dzenovska and Nicolas De Genova, "Desire for the political in the aftermath of the Cold War." *Focaal – Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 80 (2018): 1-15.

Optional reading:

- Tony Judt, Chapter 21 (pp. 665-700)

Week 8

April 1, 2026

EU's Big Bang Enlargement: Integration of post-socialist states into the European Union. Rights, interests and catching up with the West. Democratization as a contested goal and outcome.

Required reading:

- Helen Sjursen, "Why Expand? The Question of Legitimacy and Justification in the EU's Enlargement Policy." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no 3(2002): 491-513.
- Daniel Kelemen, "Europe's Other Democratic Deficit: National Authoritarianism in Europe's Democratic Union" *Government and Opposition* 52, No. 2(2017): 211-238.
- Visegrad declaration, 1991, <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/visegrad-declarations/visegrad-declaration-110412>

Optional reading:

- Yuson Jung, "The Inability Not to Follow: Western Hegemonies and the Notion of 'Complaisance' in the Enlarged Europe." *Anthropological Quarterly* 83, no 2(2010): 317-353.
- Lucia Najslova, "Refugees and Fish Fingers: How Visegrad Policymakers Used Emancipatory Narratives to Establish a 'Right to Reject'." *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures (Berghahn)* 30, No 1 (2021): 52-73.

Note: AEP Semester break is scheduled for April 6-10, 2026. Classes do not meet during the semester break.

Week 9

April 15, 2026

EU's inside and outside. Turkey: A case study in EU enlargement and foreign policy. Transformation and migration partnership. Negotiation of domestic and foreign policy objectives.

Required reading:

- Nathalie Tocci, "Turkey and the European Union: A Journey into the Unknown," Turkey Project Policy Paper No. 5. Washington DC: The Brookings Institution.
<https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Turkey-and-the-European-Union.pdf>
- Senem Aydin Duzgit and Alper Kaliber, "Encounters with Europe in an Era of Domestic and International Turmoil: Is Turkey a De-Europeanizing Candidate Country?" *South-European Society and Politics*, 21(1): 1-14.
- European Council, "EU-Turkey Statement", March 16, 2016.
- Jef Huysmans, "The European Union and the Securitization of Migration," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 38 (5): 751-77.

Optional reading:

- Ahmet İçduygu and Aysen Ustübiçi, "Negotiating Mobility, Debating Borders: MigrationDiplomacy in EU-Turkey Relations". In: Schwenken, H. and Russs-Sattar, S. (Eds). *New Border and Citizenship Politics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. pp. 44-59.
- International Crisis Group (2018) Turkey's Syrian Refugees: Defusing Metropolitan Tensions. Report No. 248, January 29, 2018, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/248-turkeys-syrian-refugees-defusing-metropolitan-tensions>

Week 10

April 22, 2026

Norms, knowledge, power and conflict resolution. Addressing climate change. A story told through water, conflict, and one of EU's divided member states.

Required reading:

- Luk Van Langenhove, "Who Cares? Science Diplomacy and the Global Commons" *Australian Quarterly* 90(4): 18-27.
- Triandafyllidou and Gropas, Chapter 9, (pp. 214-235)
- Michael Mason and Rebecca Bryant, *Water Technology and Sustainability in North Cyprus*, LSE and PRIO Cyprus Centre Report, 2017, <https://www.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile.ashx?id=1361&type=publicationfile>

Optional reading:

- Chad Damro, "Market Power Europe." *Journal of European Public Policy* 19, no. 5(2012):682-699.
- Costas Constantinou and Yannis Papadakis, "The Cypriot state(s) in situ." In: Diez, T. (ed.) *The European Union and the Cyprus conflict*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002. pp. 73-97.
- Nina Caspersen, "Democracy, nationalism and (lack of) sovereignty: the complex dynamics of democratization in unrecognized states", *Nations and Nationalism* 17, no. 2(2011): 337-356.

A selection of shorter texts covering recent EU climate action is available on the course website.

Week 11

April 29, 2026

European debates on socio-economic (in)equality. Historical context, geographical divides and case study of a recent policy action.

Required reading:

- Anna Triandafyllidou and Ruby Gropas, "The social dimension of Europe." In: Triandafyllidou and Gropas, *What is Europe?* (Routledge: London and New York, 2023), p.183-209.

- Barbara Havelkova, "Women on Company Boards: Equality Meets Subsidiarity", *Cambridge Yearbook of European Legal Studies* 21(2019), pp. 187-216.
- European Parliamentary Research Service (2021) "Women in European Politics: State of Play", [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/689345/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)689345_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/689345/EPRS_BRI(2021)689345_EN.pdf)

Optional reading:

- Gabriele Abels and Heather McRae, "Gender Approaches". In: Bigo, D. et al (Eds). *The Routledge Handbook of Critical European Studies*. London: Routledge, 2021, pp. 112-124.
- Chad Bryant, "Global City" In Bryant, C. *Prague: Belonging in a Modern City*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2021, pp. 203-248.

Week 12

May 6, 2026

European crises. Sovereignty, solidarity, democracy and accountability. Cases: Brexit, eurozone/Greece and mobility conflict.

Required reading:

- Cris Shore, "Britain, Brexit and Euroskepticism." *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* 30, no. 2 (2021): 1-22.
- Mark Blyth, "Europe: Too Big to Bail?" In: Blyth, *Austerity: History of a Dangerous Idea* (Oxford, OUP 2013), pp. 51-96.
- Amelie Kutter, "A Catalytic Moment: the Greek Crisis in the German Financial Press", *Discourse and Society* 25, No. 4 (2014): 446-466.
- Luuk Van Midelaar, "The Return of Politics – The European Union after the Crises in the Eurozone and Ukraine", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 54, no. 3 (2016): 495-507.

Optional reading:

- Kalypso Nicolaidis and Robert Howse, "This is My EUtopia.. Narrative as Power." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no.4 (2002): 767-92.
- Benjamin Martill and Uta Steiger, "Introduction." In: Martill, B. and U. Steiger (Eds.) *Brexit and Beyond: Rethinking the Futures of Europe* (London: UCL Press, 2018).
- Daniel Wincott, "Symposium Introduction: The Paradox of Structure: The UK State, Society and 'Brexit'", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 58(6): 1578-1586.
- Maurizio Albahari, "Genealogies of Care and Confinement". In: Albahari, *Crimes of Peace: Mediterranean Migrations and the World's Deadliest Border* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), pp. 35-59.

Week 13

May 13, 2026

Final Exam (instructions will be provided in class)

The exam has a take-home and in-class part.