



The EU in the Contemporary Global Order

Summer Semester 2026

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Course Number: 143350722 (Seminar)

Language: English

Course description:

The contemporary global order is undergoing profound transformation. Rising multipolarity, the growing influence of emerging powers, the proliferation of alternative governance formats, and increasing geopolitical competition challenge the role of the EU as a global actor. At the same time, the EU's multifaceted foreign policy machinery, spanning institutions and member states, decision-making procedures, and policy domains, complicates its ability to act coherently. The seminar explores this complex setup, drawing on three complementary entry points: (1) Theoretical and conceptual approaches from International Relations, Global Governance, and European integration. (2) The EU's legal and institutional architecture for foreign policy-making. (3) Key policies of external action, such as the CFSP, trade, enlargement, climate diplomacy, and digital governance. Empirical examples will include recent EU initiatives and geopolitical developments, such as trade agreements, enlargement dynamics, or EU engagement in global forums such as the G20. Particular attention is given to the EU's ongoing attempts to build new partnerships with emerging powers.

The seminar follows an interactive learning design that combines theoretical and conceptual grounding with applied, practice-oriented methods. Sessions combine input from the lecturer, student group presentations, and seminar discussions based on academic literature, policy documents, and current media sources. Open and structured exchange (e.g. Oxford debate) encourage critical engagement with competing perspectives and foster collaborative learning. A concluding element of the course is the preparation of a policy brief, enabling students to justify and evaluate own positions, and translate theoretical insights and empirical analysis into impact-oriented recommendations.

Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of the seminar, students will be able to:

- demonstrate a critical understanding of characteristics and trends of the contemporary global order and the EU's position therein;
- analyse and evaluate EU external action with major global actors and regional groupings, applying theories and concepts from different schools of thought;
- apply research designs and methods relevant for evidence-based policy advice to draft solution-oriented, politically relevant policy briefs;
- present, justify and discuss complex ideas and own positions in English in written and oral formats, including structured debate and seminar presentations;
- organise their learning processes independently and reflect on their performance, responding constructively to feedback.

Course dates:

4.5.2026

14h-17h30

Introduction: The EU and the contemporary global order, current crises and power shifts, structure of sessions & assignments

Readings:

- Carney, M. (2026), *Special address at the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting 2026, Davos, 20 January.*
- Esteban, M., Otero-Iglesias, M. and de Esperanza, C. (eds.) (2025), *Quest for Strategic Autonomy? Europe Grapples with the US-China Rivalry. European Think-Tank Network on China Report.*
- Nye, J. S. Jr. (1990), *The Changing Nature of Power, Political Science Quarterly, 105(2) (Summer), pp. 177-192.*

11.5.2026

14h-17h30

Policy Advice and the EU's foreign policy making system: Legal foundations, institutions, member states' interests

Readings:

- Keukeleire, S. and Delreux, T. (2022), *The Foreign Policy of the European Union. 3rd ed. London: Bloomsbury Academic.*
- von der Leyen, U. (2024), *Europe's Choice - Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024–2029, Strasbourg, 18 July.*

1.6.2026

14h-17h30

EU external action I: Common Foreign and Security Policy, enlargement and neighbourhood policy

Readings:

- Dimitrova, A.L. and Sedelmeier, U. (2025), *Enlargement: New Geopolitical Dynamics and Persistent Constraints, in Wallace, H., Pollack, M.A. and Young, A.R. (eds.): Policy-making in the European Union. 9th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.*
- Juncos, A.E. and Pomorska, K. (2025), *Foreign, Security, and Defence Policy: Towards a stronger global role, Ibid.*
- Lonardo, L. (2022), *EU Common Foreign and Security Policy After Lisbon: Between Law and Geopolitics. Cham: Springer.*

8.6.2026

14h-17h30

EU external action II: Trade policy and the EU's digital agenda

Readings:

- European Commission and High Representative (2025), *An International Digital Strategy for the European Union, JOIN(2025) 140 final, Brussels, 5 June.*
- Newman, A.L. (2025), *Digital Policy-Making in the European Union: The struggle to build an innovative & safe information society, in Wallace, H., Pollack, M.A. and Young, A.R. (eds.) Policy-making in the European Union. 9th ed. Oxford: Oxford University.*
- Young, A.R. (2025), *Trade Policy: The rise of geoeconomics, Ibid.*

15.6.2026
14h-17h30

EU external action III: Development Cooperation & Climate Diplomacy;
preparations for the Oxford debate

Readings:

- Oberthür, S. and Dupont, C. (2021), *The European Union's international climate leadership: towards a grand climate strategy?*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28(7), pp. 1095–1114.
- Orbie, J. and Bougrea, A. (2025), *International Development: A Distinct and Challenged Policy Domain*, in Wallace, H., Pollack, M.A. and Young, A.R. (eds.) *Policy-making in the European Union*. 9th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

22.6.2026
14h-17h30

Conclusions: Theorising and debating EU external action in a changing world order

Readings:

- Bradford, A. (2020), *The Brussels Effect: How the European Union Rules the World*, New York: Oxford Academic
- Manners, I. (2002), *Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?*, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(2), pp. 235–258.

Examination: (Registration for exams via KLIPS)

- 1) Group Presentation (45%)
- 2) Policy Brief (55%)

Reading Assignments:

Assignments will be discussed in the introduction session.

Registration (via KLIPS):

<https://klips2.uni-koeln.de/co/ee/ui/ca2/app/desktop/#/slc.tm.cp/student/courses/566514>