

PLSC 347: The European Union - Syllabus

John Felice Rome Center

Spring 2026

Professor Claudio Lodici

Tuesdays & Thursdays.

2:15 – 3:30 p.m.

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Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays (by appointment)

Course description:

PLSC 347 is a course focusing on the politics and current institutions of the European Union (EU) and the historical process that led to it. Like an international organization, the EU was originally founded through a series of treaties between six West European nation states, represented by their governments, and the member states retain the final say on many issues. But much also has changed since the 1950s. Over time, more and more countries decided to join. A further 22 countries have since joined the EU, including a historic expansion in 2004 marking the re-unification of Europe after decades of division. The union reached a temporary size of **28 member countries** with the accession of Croatia on July 1, 2013 although the United Kingdom left the EU on January 31, 2020.

Meeting in the "European Council" or "Council of Ministers," national governments take binding decisions on an increasing number of issues by majority vote rather than unanimity, and they share executive powers with a supranational European institution, the European Commission. Is the EU thus a state in the making? How might we understand the current politics and policies of the European Union as well as the historical process that led to it? In this course, we will examine a range of theoretical perspectives that might help us explain the EU and the process of European integration. We will read the classics of integration theory, but also examine the EU comparatively as an instance of more common political phenomena, drawing on general theories of international relations, state formation, and comparative (domestic) politics. Empirically, assigned readings focus on the history and current institutions of the EU and cover a few key policy areas in general; for the research papers, student should conduct empirical analyses of a particular aspect of the process of European integration or analyses of EU politics in a specific issue area. PLSC 347 is an upper level undergraduate course.

Learning outcomes:

This course will address core questions of European integration from the origins of the European Union to its current economic crisis. The unifying theme is the question: How alike politically do countries have to be for economic integration to work? More specifically, we will ask: Are there fundamental tensions between economic integration and political integration? If so, how might they be managed? Does the EU have a "democratic deficit" or, on the contrary, has it strengthened democracy among its members, especially in the new members from post-communist Eastern Europe? What are the challenges of integrating post-communist countries into the EU? Last, what does the ongoing economic crisis reveal about

the project of creating a single currency, the Euro? In addressing these questions, the class will take an interdisciplinary approach.

At the end of this course and having completed the essential reading students should be able to: demonstrate a thorough understanding of the European Union, its institutional processes and policies and their impact on European, as well as non-European states and citizens; demonstrate an understanding of the main political processes of the EU; assess the present and future processes of European Integration in light of the main theories, models and concepts used in the EU studies demonstrate a critical understanding of the EU's key policies and their impact on the outside world.

Course procedure:

Students are expected to have completed their reading before the end of the semester. They are also expected to actively participate in all sessions, and their participation will be taken into consideration. Some sessions are in seminar format.

Required Text:

Understanding the European Union, A Concise Introduction, 8th edition, by John McCormick, ((Palgrave Macmillan, 14/11/2020).

Recommended text:

Leadership in the Eurozone, The Role of Germany and EU Institutions, Magnus G. Schoeller, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). **On reserve in the library**

www sources:

www.europa.eu

EU ABC <http://en.euabc.com/>

UACES <http://www.uaces.org/>

Agence Europe is a long running publication on the EU:

<http://www.agenceurope.com/EN/index.html>

[Politico.EU](https://politico.eu.com) <https://politico.eu.com>

Journals:

With the growth of interest in the EU there has also been an increase in journals. Journals are excellent for giving precise information and insights into specific issues such as trends in institutional behavior or core concepts and therefore will help you to organize your thoughts. You should familiarize yourself with them not only because they may be addressing the issues you are concerned with but also because they provide more rigorous analysis and data than many of your text books.

Journal of Common Market Studies.

Journal of European Public Policy.

Comparative European Politics

European Union Politics.
West European Politics.
European Journal Of Political Research.
International organization.
European Journal Of International Relations.
International Affairs

Evaluation:

Class participation, attendance, and questions. Students will be expected to bring to class each Thursday one question related to the chapter from the McCormick's text for that week. As you read the chapter[s], there should be something that either is of interest to you or that is not clear to you. The success of this class depends upon the quality of the dialogue in class. It is expected that students will attend every class and that they will be fully prepared to discuss the material assigned for that day. Class participation grades will reflect their attendance record, the frequency of their contributions to class discussions, and the quality of their questions, observations, and conclusions. **Class participation counts for 5 percent of the final grade.**

There will be a **term project worth 15 percent of the final grade.** Each student will write a paper of approximately 3000 words (or about 12 double-spaced typewritten pages) analyzing one aspect of EU politics. Students *must* choose their topic in consultation with the instructor. The completed paper will be due by **April 9.**

The following schedule will be strictly observed:

- Consultation with the instructor on your research idea (by **February 3**).
- A typed project proposal, including the central questions, a plan for research, and a preliminary bibliography (due **February 12**).
- A rough draft of the paper (due **March 19**).
- A final draft (due **April 9**).

There will be three **multiple-choice quizzes worth 6 percent of the final grade.** Quizzes will relate to current *and previous* topics. A quiz may be given at the beginning of a class. There will be no make-up quizzes -- none even later during the same class period. Quizzes will be announced 1 week in advance.

Each student will write a book review of approximately 600 words. Students will have the ability to make their own choice as long as the book deals with **European politics and policies.** This will be submitted no later than **April 2.** Each review should include a brief synopsis, followed by the reader's reaction. What was the author's point? What did the editor provide? What do you think of the book? What did you learn? What did you like about the book? What didn't you like about it? Why was the assignment worthwhile? Why wasn't the assignment worthwhile? *This assignment must be word processed, spell checked and proof read.* Failure to follow these directions will result in either a lowered grade or having the

assignment returned ungraded to be resubmitted. Late assignments (including those returned for resubmission) may have points deducted for each day late.

Reviews count for 4 percent of the final grade.

Plagiarism:

Students of this university are called upon to know, to respect, and to practice a high standard of personal honesty. Plagiarism is a serious form of violation of this standard. Plagiarism is the appropriation for gain of ideas, language, or work of another without sufficient public acknowledgement that the material is not one's own. Plagiarism on the part of a student in academic work or dishonest examination behavior will result in failure and will be reported to the Office of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

Examinations:

There will be two examinations (Midterm: essay, with some choice--3 of 5, e.g.; Final: 10 short answer essays). The **Midterm exam will count 30 per cent of the final grade**, the final exam will be worth **40 percent of the final grade**.

Travel plans or other personal commitments may not interfere with examinations.

The first exam will cover the first half of the class; the final exam will be cumulative.

In-class tests (mid-term exam, final exam, and quizzes) are **closed book/notes**. Quizzes may include multiple choice, true/false, or short answer questions. No exams are dropped or replaced.

Caveat: student may not miss any exams. Missed exams, without verifiable appropriate documentation, will be recorded as a zero. The final exam must be taken to receive credit in the course. Tests and exams are cumulative.

All graded material will have to be returned to the instructor in a timely manner for archiving.

Grading:

94-100:	A
90-93:	A-
87-89:	B+
84-86:	B
80-83:	B-
77-79:	C+
74-76:	C
70-73:	C-
67-69:	D+
60-66:	D
59 or lower:	F

The minimum passing grade for a course taken under the Pass/Fail option will be C minus (C-)

I Incomplete
W Withdrawal
WF Withdrawal Failure

The minimum passing grade for a course taken under the Pass/Fail option will be C minus (C-)

Percentage-Based Grading System:

Class participation	5 %
Quizzes	6 %
Book review	4 %
Term paper	15 %
Midterm exam	30 %
Final exam	40%

Grading philosophy:

A Excellent. Indicates the highest level of achievement in the subject and an outstanding level of intellectual initiative.

B Good. Indicates a good level of achievement, intelligent understanding and application of subject matter.

C Satisfactory. Indicates academic work of an acceptable quality and an understanding of the subject matter.

D Poor. Minimum credit. Indicates the lowest passing grade, unsatisfactory work and only the minimum understanding and application.

F Failure. Indicates the lack of even the minimum understanding and application.

Attendance Policy:

In accordance with the Rome Center mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, and in compliance with full-time student visa status, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy.

Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student and synonymous with academic success. Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Lateness or leaving class early will impact the course grade at the professor's discretion.

All absences, including medical absences, will be treated the same, unless they are documented long-term conditions or emergencies. Such situations will be evaluated case-by-case by the Academic Affairs office.

Twice-a-week classes:

- After 2 absences, a 2% final grade reduction will be applied for each missed class.
- Missing 6 classes or more will result in an automatic failure (F)

There are no make-up exams, tests, or quizzes unless students demonstrate in advance that a significant life-event prevents them from attending class or if they have a documented emergency. The following are *not* acceptable excuses: scheduled flights or trips, job interviews, picking up relatives at the airport, etc.

Attendance and punctuality are basic requirements for an effective course. Beyond that, each person's frequency and quality of contribution to the class discussion will be assessed and reflected in the class participation score. If students cannot attend a class it is a courtesy to inform me in advance if possible.

The collective health of the JFRC is everyone's responsibility. Do not attend class if you are ill.

Disagreement:

Political attitudes and opinions tend to reflect one's social background and self-interest, and since we all have different backgrounds and interests there is no reason why we should be expected to agree. A student does not have to agree with the professor to get a grade in this class. It is both legitimate and desirable for you to disagree with me and independently and critically evaluate the material. I will exercise my academic freedom and say what I think is accurate about politics; you have the same right. Political Science is a way of thinking about politics, not a set of right answers and airing your disagreements is an excellent way to learn how to think. So please, if you feel I am wrong, challenge me. Former Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn had two bits of advice for the new members: "*Learn to disagree without being disagreeable*", and "*Don't turn political differences into personal differences*".

Behavior:

Civility and toleration are essential for an academic atmosphere conducive to learning. Incivility in the classroom will not be tolerated. Students should make sure to turn off cellular phones and other electronic devices before class. Students are not allowed to eat, drink, or smoke in the classrooms.

Honor Code:

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our honor code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Examinations:

As stated above, travel plans or other personal commitments may not interfere with midterm and final examinations.

Privacy Statement:

Assuring privacy among faculty and students engaged in online and face-to-face instructional activities helps promote open and robust conversations and mitigates concerns that comments made within the context of the class will be shared beyond the classroom. As such, recordings of instructional activities occurring in online or face-to-face classes may be used solely for internal class purposes by the faculty member and students registered for the course, and only during the period in which the course is offered. Instructors who wish to make subsequent use of recordings that include student activity may do so only with informed written consent of the students involved or if all student activity is removed from the recording. Recordings including student activity that have been initiated by the instructor may be retained by the instructor only for individual use.

Intellectual Property:

Unless otherwise noted, all lectures, notes, and other instructional materials in this course are the intellectual property of the professor. As a result, they may not be distributed or shared in any manner, either on paper or virtually, without my written permission. Recorded lectures may not be shared without my written consent. Recognizing that your work, too, is your intellectual property, I will not share or distribute your work in any form without your written permission.

Course outline

Week 1 (January 20-22):

What is the European Union? The E.U. and the international system; The dynamics of regional integration.

Week 2 (January 27-29):

Explaining the E.U. today. Federalism vs. confederalism. The idea of Europe: Europe's changing identity.

Week 3 (February 3-5):

Where is Europe? What is European? The evolution of Europe. Postwar Europe. First steps toward integration. The European Economic Community.

Week 4 (February 10-12):

Focus on the single market. From Community to Union. To Lisbon and the Eurozone crisis.

Week 5 (February 17-19):

The European institutions. A constitution for Europe. The European Council; The European Commission.

Week 6 (February 24-26):

The Council of the E.U.; The European Parliament; The European Court of Justice.

Week 7 (March 3):

The E.U. and its citizens. Public opinion and Europe; Euroscepticism; The people's Europe.

Midterm Examination: March 5

Spring semester break: Friday-Sunday (March 6-15)

Week 8 (March 17-19):

Participation and representation. European elections; Referenda; Interest groups.

Week 9 (March 24-26):

The E.U. policy process. Compromise and bargaining; Political games; Multi-speed integration; Incrementalism. The E.U. budget.

Week 10 (March 31-April 2):

Economic policy. The single market; European business and the single market; The Eurozone.

Easter Recess: Thursday-Monday, April 3-6 (No Classes)

Week 11 (April 7-9):

Internal policies. Regional policy; Employment and social policy; Agriculture and fisheries; Environmental policy.

Week 12 (April 14-16):

Justice and home affairs; External policy. Foreign policy; Relations with the U.S.; Relations with the neighborhood; Development cooperation.

Week 13 (April 21-23):

Security policy; Trade policy.

Final Exam Period: April 28-May 1): April 27-30