

# Politics of the European Union

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Last Updated: Mon, 01/05/2026

**Course prefix:** INTA

**Course number:** 2221

**Section:** A

**CRN**

35066

**Instructor first name:** Vicki

**Instructor last name:** Birchfield

**Semester:** Spring

**Academic year:** 2026

**Course description:**

The aim of this course is to provide an in-depth introduction and overview of the history and politics of the European Union from its inception to continuous development under the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon and the post-Brexit era. The course is organized into three main parts. **Part one** traces the evolution of European integration with a special focus on the fundamental debates about the nature and scope of European unification and its character as both a political and economic project. **Part two** examines the EU's institutions, decision-making processes and the scope and content of EU law and policy through the evolution of its treaties over the past seven decades of its history. After gaining deeper knowledge of the historical background of the EU and the nuts and bolts of what the EU is and how it works, **Part three** explores the extent to which the growing supranational and transnational nature of the EU challenges traditional concepts of domestic politics (citizenship, sovereignty, democracy) as well as foreign policy and international relations. This part of the course will also draw on the concepts of globalization and Europeanization inviting students to think comparatively and critically as they consider French and European politics and society in global perspective and in contrast to their own cultural and national backgrounds. Additionally, the course examines contemporary debates and policy challenges within the European Union such as the rise of Euroscepticism, democratic backsliding and the consequences of "Brexit" and the war in Ukraine. Finally, the course compares the EU with the United States as a model of democracy and political economy as well as a global actor and a diplomatic force in world politics. Overall, the course offers a dynamic learning experience that provides both traditional lectures with discussion-oriented classes complemented by field trips, film screenings, and visits to museums and historical sites.

**Academic honesty/integrity statement:**

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

**Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):**

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion