

Course title:	The Making of Europe: From the 20th to the 21st Century
Instructor:	Dr. Dörte Ohlhorst
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Track:	D-Track
Language of instruction:	English
Contact hours:	48 (6 per day)
ECTS credits:	6
Prerequisites:	Students should be able to speak and read English at the upper intermediate level (B2) or higher.

Course description

This course provides an overview of the political, socio-economic, and cultural developments that shaped Europe throughout the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century. This will mainly be done by looking through the prism of European integration and the evolution and current challenges of the European Union across different policy fields. Many deeply impacting developments occurred over the course of the 20th century: Two World Wars were fought, the birth of the European Union and the fall of Communism, just to name a few. Being such a crucial city in Europe's history in the 20th and 21st century, Berlin is the most logical location for this course. Special emphasis will also be given to Germany's role in the middle of the continent. The city of Berlin, with all its tangible historical remains, will be dealt with as a city of former crisis with great promises for a better future.

In this course we will try to identify the democratic values that have shaped the rebirth of Europe and discuss the challenges with which present-day Europe is faced. The course will reflect on Europe's place in the global, multi-polar world of the 21st century.

Several excursions will be organized in which you will visit some key historic sites as well as prominent EU and German institutions based in Berlin.

Student profile

The course is open to undergraduate students from different fields of study with an interest in culture, society and politics. A general background in the social sciences may help, but no specific expertise is required.

Course requirements

Students must attend classes, actively engage in class discussions, and regularly contribute ideas to the class to successfully complete this course. There will be a mid-course exam on Monday in the second week in the form of a written in-class test with short open answers. The final exam will take place in class on the last day of class and consists of a multiple-choice section, a section with short open answers as well as a section where students must answer an essay question.

Required language skills

The language of instruction is English. Language proficiency on an advanced intermediate level (B2) is a prerequisite for participation. For orientation purposes, you can assess your language skills here (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168045bb52>

Attendance

Each class consists of six teaching modules (45 minutes each). If you miss 6 modules (unexcused), your final course grade will drop by one grade. Coming more than 20 minutes late counts as one missed module (this also applies to excursion days). If you come late to class six times (up to 20 minutes) your entire course grade will also drop by one grade. If you miss 14 modules or more (unexcused), you will fail the class. Excused absences, such as those with medical documentation, do not count toward these totals.

Grading

Active participation: 40%

Mid-course exam: 20%

Final exam: 40%

Readings

A digital reader will be provided.

Course schedule

Date	Program*
Monday, August 3, 2026	Topic of the Day: Recent history of Europe Introduction: Overview of the content, social science perspective on the EU, aims and the logistic parameters of the course: grading, attendance, short mid-course exam, final exam, visits to museums/excursions Session I: Europe in the 18th and 19th century Session II: Europe and the First World War Session III: Europe and the Second World War
Tuesday, August 4, 2026	Topic of the Day: The making of the European Union (EU): interests, ideas and institutions Session I: History of the idea about the EU Session II: EU institutions Session III: Decision-making in the EU Field trip: Holocaust memorial, Brandenburg Gate
Thursday, August 6, 2026	Topic of the Day: History of migration to and from Europe and the current immigration challenge

	Session I: Europe as a continent of emigration and immigration; historical perspective Session II: Internal migration within the EU Session III: Current immigration crisis and the EU response Field trip: Documentation Center for Escape, Expulsion, and Reconciliation
Friday, August 7, 2026	Topic of the Day: EU foreign and security policy Session I: Development of the EU common foreign policy Session II: EU security policy Session III: Future prospects
Monday, August 10, 2026	Topic of the Day: EU climate and energy policy Mid-course Exam Session I: History of the global environmental movement Session II: Evolvement of the EU as a climate and energy leader in the international arena Session III: Current status and prospect of the EU common energy and climate policy Field trip: Futurium
Tuesday, August 11, 2026	Topic of the Day: Social rights and economic integration in the EU Session I: Development of social rights in the EU Session II: Creation of the common EU market Session III: The challenges of the single currency Field trip: The Berlin Wall Memorial
Thursday, August 13, 2026	Topic of the Day: Enlargement of the EU: experience and future prospects Session I: History of the EU enlargement

	Session II: Current status Session III: Prospects of enlargement
Friday, August 14, 2026	Topic of the Day: Democratic deficit and the future of the EU Session I: Is there a democratic deficit in the EU? Session II: What is the future for the EU? Final Exam

*Field trips are subject to change depending on the availability of appointments and speakers. On field trip days, class hours may be adjusted.