COMILLAS
UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA
CIHS

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course: POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF EUROPE

COURSE DATA

Degree	Diploma in Humanities and Global Challenges
Academic Year	2026-27
Credits	6
Course type	Elective
Departament	International Relations
Language of instruction	English
Name and email of instructor	Emna Memmi ememmi@comillas.edu

SHORT DESCRIPTION

This course explores the geopolitics of Europe, tracing the continent's long evolution of conflict and cooperation through key historical and contemporary events. It covers a wide array of themes that have defined its identity and realities, including Ancient Greece and Rome, Christianity, the emergence of the modern state system, the Age of Exploration and Empire, revolutions, the rise of nationalism, and war. In addition, we explore the post-1945 development of the European Union, examining its origins, motivations, structure, functioning, milestones, and setbacks. Finally, the course reflects on the current state of Europe and its most significant challenges and opportunities for the future. Through comprehensive lectures and engaging discussions, students will gain an in-depth understanding of the forces shaping the continent's past and present geopolitics.

CONTENTS AND STRUCTURE

TOPIC 1: EUROPEAN POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY: WHAT DISTINGUISHES IT FROM THE REST?

TOPIC 2: KEY EVENTS IN THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF EUROPEAN CULTURE, IDENTITY, AND POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

SUB-THEMES: ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME, CHRISTIANITY, THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE, THE MODERN EUROPEAN STATE SYSTEM, THE AGE OF EXPLORATION AND EMPIRE, RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION, WARS OF RELIGION, THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR AND GLORIOUS REVOLUTION, THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, THE ENGLIGHTENMENT AND FRENCH REVOLUTION, NAPOLEON'S EUROPE, THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA, LIBERALISM AND CONSERVATIVISM, THE RISE OF GERMANY.

TOPIC 3: WORLD WAR I (1914-1918), THE INTERWAR YEARS (1918-1939), AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1939-1945)

SUB-THEMES: MILITARISM, IMPERIALISM, ALLIANCES, NATIONALISM, LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM, PARIS PEACE CONFERENCES, TREATY OF VERSAILLES, LEAGUE OF NATIONS, GREAT DEPRESSION, RISE OF FASCISM, REALISM, WAR

TOPIC 4: COLD WAR GEOPOLITICS

SUB-THEMES: SUPERPOWER RIVALRY, DIVISION OF GERMANY AND BERLIN, CHURCHILL AND THE IRON CURTAIN, CLASH OF IDEOLOGIES, NUCLEAR WEAPONS, TRUMAN DOCTRINE, MARSHALL PLAN, BERLIN BLOCKADE, NATO AND THE WARSAW PACT, HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION, PROXY WARS, KOREAN WAR, MAO'S PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, ANTI-COLONIAL INDEPENDENCE, RISE OF THE BERLIN WALL, PRAGUE SPRING, REAGAN DOCTRINE, GORBACHEV AND REFORM, FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL, COLLAPSE OF THE USSR, REUNIFICATION OF GERMANY

TOPIC 5: THE SCHUMAN DECLARATION AND THE CONCEPT OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

SUB-THEMES: EUROPEAN VISIONARIES, LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM, PEACE, ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION AND INTERDEPENDENCE, SUPRANATIONALISM, MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES, COLD WAR POLITICS

TOPIC 6: THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

SUB-THEMES: PEACE, COLD WAR POLITICS, TRUMAN DOCTRINE, ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION AND INTERDEPENDENCE, DECOLONIZATION, IDENTITY AND POWER, SUEZ CRISIS, FRENCH-ALGERIAN WAR

TOPIC 7: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

SUB-THEMES: REALISM, LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM, NEOFUNCTIONALISM, ERNST HAAS, INTERGOVERNMENTALISM, STANLEY HOFFMAN, ALAN MILWARD, MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE, GARY MARKS, LIESBET HOOGHE

TOPIC 8: MILESTONES AND SETBACKS IN EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

SUB-THEMES: ECSC, EUROPEAN DEFENSE COMMUNITY, TREATIES OF ROME, CAP, EMPTY CHAIR CRISIS, ENLARGEMENT, ECONOMIC CRISIS, EUROSCLEROSIS, SINGLE EUROPEAN ACT, COLLAPSE OF THE USSR, TREATY OF MAASTRICHT, EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK, EURO, CONSTITUTION, LISBON TREATY, BREXIT, RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

TOPIC 9: EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS AND POLICY-MAKING

SUB-THEMES: EUROPEAN COUNCIL, COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, EUROPEAN COMMISSION, EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK, EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

TOPIC 10: EUROPEAN POLITICAL ECONOMY

SUB-THEMES: ECONOMIC INTEGRATION, THE SINGLE MARKET, MONETARY UNION AND EURO, TRADE, ECONOMIC DISPARITIES AND COHESION, LABOR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT, FINANCIAL CHALLENGES, INNOVATION AND COMPETITIVENESS, THE

GREEN ECONOMY, COOPERATION AND COMPETITION WITH THE US, CHINA, JAPAN, AND INDIA

TOPIC 11: MIGRATION AND BORDERS IN EUROPE

SUB-THEMES: IMMIGRANTS, REFUGEES, INTERNAL FREE MOVEMENT, EXTERNAL BORDER SECURITY AND MANAGEMENT, THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS, ASYLUM, HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION, THE EXTERNALIZATION OF IMMIGRATION POLICY, HUMAN RIGHTS, SOLIDARITY AND BURDEN-SHARING, PARTY POLITICS, THE FAR RIGHT

TOPIC 12: EUROPEAN FOREIGN POLICY

SUB-THEMES: JOSEPH NYE, SOFT AND HARD POWER, EUROPEAN DEFENSE COMMUNITY, CFSP, ESDP, TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS AND NATO, EU RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA, EU RELATIONS WITH CHINA, ENP, TRADE AND ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY, INTERNATIONAL AID AND DEVELOPMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY PROTECTION, CLIMATE DIPLOMACY, CRISIS MANAGEMENT, STRATEGIC AUTONOMY, ENERGYSECURITY

METHODOLOGY

This course titled The Political Geography of Europe will be taught in person. The professor will deliver a series of lectures on as many of the key themes above as time permits. This will be enriched by student contributions (questions, commentaries, discussions, presentations) inside the classroom as well as readings, research and writing outside.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Assessment type	Assessment criteria	Percentage
FINAL EXAM	In-depth knowledge and application of the course topics stated under Content and Structure above.	**40%**
RESEARCH ESSAY	See the PDFs titled *Essay Requirements and Guidance* and *Essay Rubric* on Moodle. The due date will be announced at the beginning of the semester	30%
ORAL PRESENTATION	See rubric titled *Oral Presentation* on Moodle. The due date will be announced at the beginning of the semester.	25%
ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION	**Attendance and active participation.**	15%

- Committing any serious academic misconduct, such as **plagiarism** of previously published material, or **copying** in the exam or any other graded activity, **will imply not being able to pass the course in the ordinary assessment period.**
- The **use of AI** to create complete works or relevant parts, without citing the source or the tool or without being expressly allowed in the description of the work, will be considered plagiarism and regulated according to the General Regulations of the University.

- At the beginning of the term the professor will announce the office hours for the course. Tutorials are an essential part of the development of the course, and students may attend tutorials during the course within those office times, but it is recommended that they are arranged in advance with the professor.

- Any non-face-to-face learning activity that requires the submission of an assignment/document, etc. will be submitted by the student through Moodle, always in PDF format.

- To be able to take the final exam, students must not have missed **more than one third of the classes without justification**. If this requirement is not met, the student may lose the right to be assessed both in the ordinary and extraordinary assessment period (art. 93-1 of the General Regulations). Failure to attend to the first hour of a two-hour lecture, means having missed the whole session in terms of attendance, regardless of whether or not the student the second hour.

- Students are expected to arrive to class on time and stay until the end of each session

- **AI USE REGULATIONS:** Detection of illegal use of AI will carry a sanction (art.168.2.e, Reglamento General de la Universidad). In group assignments, the sanction will apply to all members of the team

STUDENT WORKLOAD (in hours)		
CONTACT HOURS	OUTSIDE CLASSROOM	OVERALL
60	90	150

READING LIST / RELEVANT REFERENCES
Mckay, John et al. A History of World Societies, 12th Edition. Boston: Bedford/St Martin's, 2021.
Marshall, Tim. Prisoners of Geography. London: Elliot and Thompson, 2015.
Wells, H.G., A Short History of the World. New York: Penguin, 2007.
Jenkins, Simon. A Short History of Europe. From Pericles to Putin. London: Viking, 2018
Marshall, Tim. The Power of Geography. London: Elliot and Thompson, 2021.
Marshall, Tim. The Future of Geography. London: Elliot and Thompson, 2023.
Milward, Alan. The European Rescue of the Nation-State. London: Routledge, 1999.
Blouet, Brian. The EU and Neighbors: A Geography of Europe in the Modern World.
Hix, Simon, and Bjørn Høyland, The Political System of the European Union. London: Bloomsbury, 2022.
Nugent, Neil. The Government and Politics of the European Union. London: Bloomsbury, 2017
Guzzini, Stefano. The Return of Geopolitics in Europe? Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.