

The Future of Europe

EURO-3054 (4 credits)

Contemporary Politics in Europe

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

This course focuses on key trends shaping Europe's future, including the sustainability of the European Union, economic shifts, climate governance, and the transformation of the welfare state. Students will examine critical debates on the European Monetary Union, neoliberal policies, and the balance between national sovereignty and regional cooperation. Topics include deindustrialization, economic migration, the role of technology in politics, and the impact of demographic shifts. The course also explores potential scenarios for Europe's political evolution and global standing in the coming decades.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze major economic, political, and technological trends impacting the future of Europe.
2. Compare how different European countries respond to common challenges.
3. Interpret the evolving relationship between national sovereignty and regional cooperation.
4. Evaluate Europe's global role, particularly in relation to the United States.
5. Simulate plausible futures for Europe using strategic foresight.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English.

Instructional Methods

SIT's philosophy of education is rooted in experiential learning model, which drives the design of this class. Each module allows for experience, reflection, and application. Experiences range from critical analyses of datasets to site visits and conversations with local experts. These experiences are framed by readings, multimedia texts, and class discussion. Reflection occurs throughout the learning process in various forms, such as verbal debriefs after learning

on location experiences to reflexive components in papers/projects. Through reflection, students are encouraged to become aware of their process of learning, to make sense of their experiences, and connect the learning acquired on the program with previous experiences and information. Application activities reinforce learning by practicing communication skills, experimenting with theories, and preparing to transfer learning to future contexts.

Required Texts

- Book chapters and articles on Course Reserve
- Europe 2040 Scenario Summaries

Assignments and Evaluation

- **Participation & Professional Engagement (10%)**
Includes attendance, contribution to field discussions, cultural site visits, and group collaboration during workshops.
- **Experiential Learning Journal (15%, 3 entries @ 5%)**
Many forms of experiential learning are embedded into this course (site visits, hands-on learning experiences, simulations, etc.) alongside more traditional methods of teaching (lectures, seminars, readings, etc.). To synthesize the learning from disparate forms of teaching and learning, students will reflect on their learning experiences through reflective journaling. Students will write entries detailing significant learning experiences, focusing on description of the experience, reflection on the experience, connection to existing knowledge or other sources of information, and application of the learning experience.

Because of the cognitive benefits of writing longhand (improved memory, critical thinking, and creativity to name a few), this assignment is low-tech, using manual writing tools and paper. Exceptions are only allowable when a student has an explicit academic accommodation based on a documented learning difference. Illegible entries will receive no credit; if concerned about penmanship, write in all caps (it's not a sign of aggression, it's the way architects write so everyone can read and understand plans).

Note: this assignment is shared with the Present Challenges course. For this course, the grade will be based on the entries dedicated to Future of Europe experiences and concepts.

- **Stakeholder Mapping (30%, 3 @ 10%)**
To underscore the importance of stakeholder engagement in policymaking, students will conduct a detailed analysis of diverse stakeholders to a selected EU policy area relevant to the challenges and opportunities facing the future of Europe. In each program site, they will identify different stakeholder groups (e.g., industry associations,

NGOs, national governments, citizens, etc.) and map their influence, interests, and potential conflicts. The form of the map can be an infographic, chart, matrix, or salience model. Accompanying the map will be suggestions for levels of stakeholder engagement within the policymaking process.

- **Scenario Simulation (45%)**

This assignment challenges students to synthesize what they have learned across the course themes and across all three program locations. Working in groups, students will collaboratively build plausible, evidence-based scenarios for what Europe could look like in 2040 based on one of the course themes. Each group will explore the drivers, uncertainties, and policy options that shape that future, integrating comparative insights from all three countries, using historical trajectories, institutional responses, and stakeholder perspectives gathered during the program.

This assignment is divided into two sections:

1. Scenario Brief & Visual (Pre-Simulation Submission):

- Narrative: 750–1,000 words outlining
 - Key drivers and uncertainties (technological, political, demographic, etc.)
 - Comparative insights from **UK, Spain, and Austria** that inform the scenario
 - One or two plausible futures for your chosen theme
- Visual: 1-page visual illustrating the trajectory of events across countries and EU institutions (e.g., timeline, policy web, geostrategic map)

2. Simulation Design & Facilitation (Final Week):

- Choose a simulation format (e.g., EU Council summit, civil society forum, multi-stakeholder negotiation).
- Design 3–5 stakeholder roles, drawing from national and EU-level actors observed during site visits (e.g., UK Home Office, Spanish Constitutional Court, Austrian Interior Ministry, Frontex).
- Prepare decision points, documents, and trade-offs reflecting a future Europe influenced by **UK, Spanish, and Austrian precedents**.
- Facilitate a **15-minute in-class simulation** with peer participation.
- Conclude with a **3-minute debrief** on key takeaways and implications for policy.

Note on Attendance and Participation: Due to the nature of this experiential program, full participation in all classes and program activities is required. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the Program Director or other designated staff person. Absences impact

academic performance, which may impact grades. Excessive, unexcused absences could result in program dismissal. Alternative work for absences will be expected.

Note on Late Assignments: IHP programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program. Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis with approval from the Program Director or other designated staff person. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. Students who do not submit their work within the extension period will receive a failing grade.

Grading Scale

94-100%	A	74-76%	C
90-93%	A-	70-73%	C-
87-89%	B+	67-69%	D+
84-86%	B	64-66%	D
80-83%	B-	below 64	F
77-79%	C+		

Program Expectations

In order to make the most of the opportunities presented in program, communicate respectfully, prepare for student success, and demonstrate best possible engagement, SIT has the following expectations of students:

- **Content Considerations:** The texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- **Learning Community:** Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across differences and consider other perspectives with respect.

- **Presence.** Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- **Engage.** Ask questions in class. Interact with the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- **Be Honest.** Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- **Store Your Work:** Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- **Personal Technology Use:** Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable, especially during a guest lecture or presentation from a peer. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- **Course Communication:** Course documents and assignments will be posted on the learning management system, Canvas. Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.
- **Recording Policy:** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use. Documented academic accommodations may supersede this policy.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the Policies section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late

assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Accessibility Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

Course Schedule

**Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs*

Note: This is a suggested sequence of modules and topics where each location explores parallel modules with a comparative focus. Local faculty should appropriately adapt how these topics are taught and select local texts, case studies, guest speakers, and site visits that are relevant to the context and course themes.

LOCATION #1: LONDON (weeks 1-5)

Module #1: Cross-Continental Perspectives on Europe's Future

Topics: Overview of course themes across program cities and the continent. Introduce foresight methodology and comparative analysis frameworks.

Readings:

- European Commission. (2023). *Strategic foresight report: Sustainability and people's wellbeing at the heart of Europe's open strategic autonomy* (Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2023%3A270%3AFIN>
- European Commission. (n.d.). *Strategic foresight*. Retrieved June 16, 2025, from https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-foresight_en
- Europe 2040 Scenario Summaries

Assignment: Form groups for Scenario Simulations based on common interests.

Module #2: Technology and Political Innovation

Topics: digital transformation of UK governance, including data privacy laws and the evolving role of AI in political decision-making

Readings:

- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology & Government Digital Service. (2025, January 21). *A blueprint for modern digital government: A long-term vision for digital public services, a six-point plan for reform and the role of the new digital centre of government* (CP 1252). GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-blueprint-for-modern-digital-government/a-blueprint-for-modern-digital-government-html>
- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology & Government Digital Service. (2025, January 21). *State of digital government review: A review of technology and data in the public sector: Successes, challenges and root causes* (CP 1251). UK Parliament. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-digital-government-review/state-of-digital-government-review>

Learning on Location: Field trip to Houses of Parliament

Module# 3: Welfare State Transformation and Demographic Change

Topics: UK's responses to aging populations and health system strains

Readings:

- OECD. (2024). *Promoting better career mobility for longer working lives in the United Kingdom*. Ageing and Employment Policies. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/2b41ab8e-en>
- OECD (2024), *Is Care Affordable for Older People?*, OECD Health Policy Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/450ea778-en>.
- Barton, C., Sturge, G., & Harker, R. (2024, July 16). *The UK's changing population*. Economic situation: Research in brief for the 2024 Parliament. UK Parliament House of Commons Library. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/the-uks-changing-population/>
- Khan, H. T. (2019). Population ageing in a globalized world: Risks and dilemmas? *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*, 25(5), 754–760. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jep.13071>

Learning on Location: Walking Tour: "London and the Welfare State."

Assignment: Experiential Learning Journal Entry #1

Module #4: Economic Shifts and the European Monetary Union

Topics: structure and critiques of the EU monetary system, with a focus on the UK's experience exiting it (Brexit). Neoliberalism and economic restructuring.

Readings:

- Enria, A. (2023, January 26). *Brexit and the EU banking sector: From the fundamental freedoms of the Internal Market to third country status*. Contribution to *Revue*

d'économie financière (Special Issue on Brexit). European Central Bank.

https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS_a_00679

- Siddiqui, K. (2025). Neoliberalism and the performance of the UK economy: A critical review. *World Review of Political Economy*, 16(2), 224–251. <https://doi.org/10.13169/worlrevipoliecon.16.2.0003>
- Bayliss, K., Fine, B., Robertson, M., & Saad-Filho, A. (2024). Reports of my death are greatly exaggerated: The persistence of neoliberalism in Britain. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 27(4), 540–560. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13684310241241800>

Learning on Location: Field trip to London Museum Docklands, emphasis on the role of trade on London's economic growth and subsequent shifts in economic drivers. The meaning of trade post-Brexit.

Assignment: Stakeholder Map #1

Module #5: UK's Global Role and the Transatlantic Relationship

Topics: UK's changing relationship with the US and global partners, including NATO, trade, and diplomacy. Students explore Brexit's global implications.

Readings:

- Ewers-Peters, N. M. (2020). Brexit's implications for EU-NATO cooperation: Transatlantic bridge no more? *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 23(4), 576–592. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1369148120963814>
- Hayward, T. (2025, April 7). *Mercantilist diplomacy: The UK's transatlantic dilemma*. Bloomsbury Intelligence & Security Institute. <https://bisi.org.uk/reports/mercantilist-diplomacy-the-uks-transatlantic-dilemma>
- Hadfield, A., & Whitman, R. G. (2023). The diplomacy of 'Global Britain': Settling, safeguarding and seeking status. *International Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-023-00489-x>

Learning on Location: guest lecture and discussion on the future of British diplomacy

LOCATION #2: MADRID (weeks 6–10)

Module #6: Technology and Political Innovation

Topics: Spain's approach to digital innovation and regional governance, particularly Catalonia.

Readings:

- Department for Digital Transformation and the Civil Service (Spain). (2022, August). *España Digital 2026: Spain's national digital strategy 2020–2026* [PDF]. España Digital. <https://espanadigital.gob.es/en/documentos>

- European Commission. (n.d.). *Digital connectivity – Spain*. In *Digital strategy* (Europa). Retrieved June 16, 2025, from <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-connectivity-spain>
- Robles, J. M., Torres-Albero, C., & Villarino, G. (2021). Inequalities in digital welfare take-up: lessons from e-government in Spain. *Policy Studies*, 43(5), 1096–1111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2021.1929916>
- Del Pino, E., & Colino, C. (2024). Subnational governance in Spain. In *Handbook on Subnational Governments and Governance* (pp. 375-392). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781803925370.00036>
- Cancela, E., & Goikoetxea, J. (2023). Spanish fake sovereignty: From privatising the nation-state to becoming a digital colony. *Ethnopolitics*, 24(1), 54–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2023.2275882>

Learning on Location: Spanish Parliament tour

Module #7: Welfare State Transformation and Demographic Change

Topics: Spain's welfare state responses to economic migration, aging, and rural depopulation.

Readings:

- Spijker, J., & Zueras, P. (2020). Old-age care provision in Spain in the context of a new system of long-term care and a lingering economic crisis. *Journal of Population Ageing*, 13(1), 41-62. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12062-018-9232-8>
- Alloza, M., Brunet, J., Forte-Campos, V., Moral-Benito, E., & Pérez, J. J. (2022, September 9). *Government spending in Spain from a European perspective* (Banco de España Occasional Paper No. 2217). Banco de España. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4357914>
- Pinilla, V., & Sáez, L. A. (2021). What do public policies teach us about rural depopulation: The case study of Spain. *European Countryside*, 13(2), 330–351. <https://doi.org/10.2478/euco-2021-0021>
- Repetti, M., Phillipson, C., & Calasanti, T. (2018). Retirement migration in Europe: A choice for a better life? *Sociological Research Online*, 23(4), 780–794. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780418782243>

Learning on Location: site visit to municipal office or NGO addressing urban sprawl and rural depopulation

Assignment: Experiential Learning Journal Entry #2

Module #8: Economic Shifts and the European Monetary Union

Topics: Spain's engagement with the Eurozone and post-2008 recovery; youth unemployment and labor precarity

Readings:

- Simionescu, M., & Cifuentes-Faura, J. (2022). Forecasting national and regional youth unemployment in Spain using Google Trends. *Social Indicators Research*, 164, 1187–1216. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-022-02984-9>
- Ferreiro, J., & Gómez, C. (2023). Undesired consequences of labour market reforms: From temporary to precarious jobs – the case of Spain. *Panoeconomicus*, 70(4), 523–549. <https://doi.org/10.2298/PAN2304523F>
- Azqueta-Gavaldón, A., Hirschbühl, D., Onorante, L., & Saiz, L. (2023). Sources of economic policy uncertainty in the euro area. *European Economic Review*, 152, 104373. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2023.104373>
- Marín, C., & Martínez, D. (2024). The public debt of the Spanish regions. Estimates of their fiscal consolidation efforts and scenarios of future evolution. *Estudios de Economía Española*, 15.
- Pallarés Maymús, G., García de Sivatte, M., & Nogal Otero, L. (2024). Decoding the digital euro: Reshaping funding costs for Spanish banks. *Contabilidad y Dirección*, (37).

Learning on Location: Visit local NGO, such as Fundación Tomillo, dedicated to supporting employment opportunities for youth in vulnerable neighborhoods of Madrid.

Assignment: Stakeholder Map #2

Module #9: Spain's Global Role and the Transatlantic Relationship

Topics: Spain's foreign policy and EU security strategy

Readings:

- Bueno, A. (2023). (Mis)Understandings of defence diplomacy as public diplomacy: Insights from three Spanish elites. *Communication & Society*, 36(2), 325–338. <https://doi.org/10.15581/003.36.2.325-338>
- García Cantalapiedra, D. J. (2024). The US-Spain relation and their impact on European security. In D. J. García Cantalapiedra (Ed.), *Spain, Europe, and Western Security Policy* (Chapter 5). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-58550-0_5
- Hernández Sola, N. (2024). Europe and Spanish security and defence policy from within. In D. J. García Cantalapiedra (Ed.), *Spain, Europe, and Western Security Policy* (Chapter 2). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-58550-0_2

Learning on Location: guest lecture and discussion on Spanish diplomatic strategy

LOCATION #3: VIENNA (weeks 11–15)

Module #10: Technology and Political Innovation

Topic: Austria's position in EU digital regulation, Austrian digital governance frameworks

Readings:

- Liu, T.-C. (2021). Digital policy in European countries from the perspective of the Digital Economy and Society Index. *Policy & Internet*, 13(4), 556–573.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.274>
- Hölzl, W., Bärenthaler-Sieber, S., Bock-Schappelwein, J., Friesenbichler, K., Kügler, A., Reinstaller, A., ... & Gruber-Risak, M. (2019). *Digitalisation in Austria: State of play and reform needs* (Final Report). European Union. <https://www.wifo.ac.at/www/pubid/61892>
- Edelmann, N., & Höchtl, B. (2022). Chapter 16: e-Participation in Austria: Digital Agenda Vienna. In *Political Science and Public Policy 2022* (pp. 225–243). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800374362.00023>
- Edelmann, N., & Mergel, I. (2021). Co-production of digital public services in Austrian public administrations. *Administrative Sciences*, 11(1), 22.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci11010022>

Learning on Location: Visit to Parliament

Module #11: Welfare State Transformation and Demographic Change

Topic: demographics trends and Austria's pension reforms and integration policies

Readings:

- Riederer, B., Buber-Ennser, I., & Haindorfer, R. (2020). Trends in demography and migration in Austria. In *Demography and migration in Central and Eastern Europe* (Chapter 1, pp. 9–27).
- Gruber, E., Fassmann, H., & Humer, A. (2015). Demographic change changing SGI demands: The example of Austria. In H. K. Anheier, M. L. Casanova, & R. Toia (Eds.), *Services of general interest and territorial cohesion: Experiences and challenges in Europe* (pp. 149–166). Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG.
<https://doi.org/10.14220/9783737004718>
- Schmidhuber, L., Fechter, C., Schröder, H., & Hess, M. (2021). Active ageing policies and delaying retirement: Comparing work-retirement transitions in Austria and Germany. *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, 37(2), 176–193.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/ics.2021.1>

Learning on Location: visit Das Haus der Geschichte Österreich (The House of Austrian History)

Assignment: Experiential Learning Journal Entry #3

Module #12: Economic Shifts and the European Monetary Union

Topics: Austria's economic positioning as a Central European hub

Readings:

- Rostan, P., & Rostan, A. (2020). Where is Austria's Economy Heading?. *Economic and Business Review*, 22(1). <https://doi.org/10.15458/ebr97>
- Haiss, P., Mahlberg, B. & Michlits, D. Industry 4.0—the future of Austrian jobs. *Empirica* 48, 5–36 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10663-020-09497-z>
- Astrov, V. (2024). *Austria's economic relations with the EU Eastern Partnership countries and Russia* (No. 81). Policy Notes and Reports. The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw). <https://hdl.handle.net/10419/299394>
- Marino, A., & Pariso, P. (2020). Comparing European countries' performances in the transition towards the Circular Economy. *Science of The Total Environment*, 729, 138142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2020.138142>

Learning on Location: guest speaker on Austria and the EU

Assignment: Stakeholder Map #3

Module #13: Austria's Global Role and the Transatlantic Relationship

Topic: challenges to neutrality, European defense, diplomatic relations

Readings:

- Robinson, E. (2025). Holding the line: Austrian neutrality in the shadow of the war in Ukraine. *Cooperation and Conflict*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00108367251327685>
- Müller, A. T. (2024). The Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU: Perspectives from Austria. In *The Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU* (pp. 101–116). Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG. <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748945437>
- Puntischer Riekman, S. (2024). Austria's EU narrative: From economic pragmatism to bold self-assertiveness. In H. Kassim & A. Schout (Eds.), *National government narratives of the EU* (pp. 253–280). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-19986-8_10
- Polyakova, A., & Haddad, B. (2019). Europe alone: What comes after the Transatlantic Alliance. *Foreign Affairs*, 98, 109–120.

Learning on Location: visit Archives of the Austrian Resistance

Assignment: Scenario Brief & Visual Due

Module #14: Synthesis Europe's Past as Prologue

Topics: Scenario Simulations and comparative analysis-synthesis

Assignment: scenario simulations