

SYLLABUS

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Present Challenges in Europe

IDST-3030 (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 investigates contemporary political, social, and economic issues that challenge the European project and impact the daily lives of Europeans. Topics include the refugee crisis, immigration policies, the rise of right-wing populism, economic inequality, and illiberal democracies. Students will analyze how different nations have responded to these challenges and the broader implications for European integration, regional stability, and global influence. Through experiential learning opportunities, students will gain an understanding of policy debates and political conflicts shaping Europe's present landscape.

Learning Outcomes

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

- 1. Analyze major contemporary political and social challenges affecting European countries.
- 2. Compare national responses to shared issues such as migration, populism, and economic inequality.
- 3. Evaluate the consequences of political polarization and illiberalism for European governance.
- 4. Engage with stakeholders and policy practitioners to contextualize current events.
- 5. Demonstrate policy literacy through critical analysis, informed debate, and constructive dialogue on policy issues and their real-world impacts.

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 traditions 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 journalling. 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

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 students has an explicit academic accommodation based on a documented learning difference. Illegible entries will receive no credit; if concernd about penmenship, 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 Future of Europe course. For this course, the grade will be based on the entries dedicated to Present Challenges in Europe experiences and concepts.

Policy Analysis (15%)

learning experience.

Students will select a EU policy topic relevant to a present challenge (e.g., housing, climate, public health, migration, or other approved topic) and analyze how it is framed, implemented, and debated in the UK. The brief should include:

- A clear articulation of the problem the policy addresses
- Description of the policy and institutional actors involved
- Key data and stakeholder perspectives
- o Analysis of the policy's effectiveness and social implications

Students will communicate this information in 5-minute oral briefing in a round table setting, accompanied by a visual format (such as an infographic or digital poster).

Policy Debates (30%)

Informed by their London policy briefs, students will be divided into oppositional teams to debate how the same policy issue is addressed in Spain. Students must draw on comparative research and promote a position using both Spanish and broader European perspectives.

- Team roles include: opener (introduces issue and position), evidence presenter (key data and policy points), rebutter/synthesizer
- Students must anticipate counterarguments and use cultural/contextual nuance in persuasion
- After each debate, peers will provide feedback on persuasiveness and pose questions

Policy Dialogues (30%)

Students will shift from adversarial debate to deliberative dialogue. Each group will facilitate a 45-minute policy roundtable that:

- o Explores ethical dilemmas, trade-offs, and regional implications of the policy
- o Invites collaborative thinking about policy implications in the EU context
- o Applies principles of inclusive and respectful dialogue

After the roundtable, each student will write a **1,000-word reflective essay** that addresses:

- What they learned by moving from debate to dialogue
- How cultural and political differences shaped policy solutions
- Their evolving position on the issue and takeaways for civic and global engagement

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%	Α	74-76%	С
90-93%	A-	70-73%	C-
87-89%	B+	67-69%	D+
84-86%	В	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 <u>Library resources and research</u> <u>support</u>, <u>Accessibility Services</u>, <u>Counseling Services</u>, <u>Title IX information</u>, and <u>Equity</u>, <u>Diversity</u>, <u>and Inclusion</u> 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: Framing Europe's Present Challenges

Topics: Introduction to comparative politics. Overview of course themes across program sites and the continent.

Readings:

O'Neil, P. H. (2024). Introduction. In Essentials of comparative politics (8th ed., pp. 2–26). W. W. Norton & Company.

Assignment: Select a present challenge / course theme to serve as the basis of the policy analysis, debate, and dialogue.

Module #2: Democracy and Rule of Law

Topics: Brexit's challenges to democracy, rule of law, and constitution.

- Södersten, A. (2023). Rule of Law crisis: EU in limbo between federalism and flexible integration. In: Engelbrekt, A.B., Ekman, P., Michalski, A., Oxelheim, L. (eds) The EU between Federal Union and Flexible Integration. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-22397-6
- Mabbett, D. (2017). Parliamentary Sovereignty and Brexit. *Political Quarterly*, 88(2). https://10.1111/1467-923X.12364

- O'Neill, A. (2020). BREXIT, democracy and the rule of law. European Law Journal, 26(6), 458–469. https://doi.org/10.1111/eulj.12375
- Blick, A., & Salter, B. (2021). Divided culture and constitutional tensions: Brexit and the collision of direct and representative democracy. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 74(3), 617–638. https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsz049

Learning on Location: Field trip to Houses of Parliament

Assignment: Experiential Learning Journal Entry #1

Module# 3: Populism and Political Polarization

Topics: UKIP and populist movements, political polarization, rise of right-wing groups, misinformation and propoaganda

Readings:

- Carter, T. (2024). The United Kingdom and Brexit: A case study in affective polarization.
 Sigma: Journal of Political and International Studies, 41(1), Article 5.
 https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/sigma/vol41/iss1/5
- Tournier-Sol, K. (2021). From UKIP to Brexit: The right-wing populist surge in the UK.
 In: Tournier-Sol, K., Gayte, M. (eds) The Faces of Contemporary Populism in Western Europe and the US. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53889-7 1
- Foster, R., & Feldman, M. (2021). From 'Brexhaustion' to 'Covidiots': The United Kingdom and the populist future. *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 17(2). https://doi.org/10.30950/jcer.v17i2.1231
- Faulkner, S., Guy, H., & Vis, F. (2021). Right-wing populism, visual disinformation, and Brexit: From the UKIP 'Breaking Point' poster to the aftermath of the London Westminster Bridge attack. In *The Routledge Companion to Media Disinformation and Populism* (pp. 198–208). Routledge.

Learning on Location: guest lecture from government, non-profit, or scholar on efforts to combat misinformation

Assignment: work on Policy Analysis

Module #4: Economic Inequality and Social Cohesion

Topics: inequality, austerity, and housing

Readings:

 Borkowska, M., & Laurence, J. (2021). Coming together or coming apart? Changes in social cohesion during the Covid-19 pandemic in England. *European Societies*, 23(S1), S618–S636. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2020.1833067

- Koch, I., Fransham, M., Cant, S., Ebrey, J., Glucksberg, L., & Savage, M. (2021). Social polarisation at the local level: A four-town comparative study on the challenges of politicising inequality in Britain. *Sociology*, *55*(1), 3–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038520975593
- Ortega-Alcázar, I., & Wilkinson, E. (2020). 'I felt trapped': young women's experiences of shared housing in austerity Britain. Social & Cultural Geography, 22 (9), 1291–1306. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2020.1829688
- Angel, S., & Gregory, J. (2021). Does housing tenure matter? Owner-occupation and wellbeing in Britain and Austria. *Housing Studies*, 38(5), 860–880. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2021.1912714

Learning on Location: neigborhood tour and discussion with community leaders adovating for affordable housing

Assignment: work on Policy Analysis

Module #5: Migration and Integration

Topics: borders, migration, and refugee and asylum policies Readings:

- Hutter, S., & Kriesi, H. (2021). Politicising immigration in times of crisis. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 48(2), 341–365.
 https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1853902
- Walsh, P. W. (2021). Asylum and refugee resettlement in the UK. Migration Observatory briefing, COMPAS, University of Oxford. https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migration-to-the-uk-asylum/
- Portes, J. (2022). Immigration and the UK economy after Brexit. Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 38(1), 82–96. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxrep/grab045
- Welander, M. (2020). The politics of exhaustion and the externalization of British border control: An articulation of a strategy designed to deter, control and exclude. *International Migration*. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12778

Learning on Location: visit to refugee services NGO

Assignment: Policy Analysis Due

LOCATION #2: MADRID (weeks 6-10)

Module #6: Democracy and Rule of Law

Topics: EU Rule of law and Spain, human rights, regional autonomy Readings:

• Spanish National Human Rights Institution. (2024). The state of the rule of law in the European Union: Report from national human rights institutions—Spain (ENNHRI cycle

- report). European Network of National Human Rights Institutions. https://ennhri.org/wpcontent/uploads/2024/04/Spain Country-Report Rule-of-Law-2024.pdf
- Měšťánková, P. (2023). The Impact of Soft Tools of EU Rule of Law on Member States: The Case of Spain. Slovenská politologická revue, 23(2), 94-118.
- Ubillos, J. M. B. (2024). Spain as a democratic state governed by the rule of law and the Catalan secessionist process. Hague Journal on the Rule of Law, 16(1), 3–30. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40803-024-00207-6
- Hernández, G., & Closa, C. (2022). The challenge of Catalan secessionism to the European model of the rule of law. Hague Journal on the Rule of Law, 14(2), 257–285. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40803-022-00177-7

Learning on Location: Spanish Parliament tour

Assignment: Experiential Learning Journal Entry #2; form groups for Policy Debate

Module #7: Populism and Political Polarization

Topics: rhetoric and discourse, electoral shifts, populism and political parties

Readings:

- Pérez-Escoda, A., Boulos, S., Establés, M. J., & García-Carretero, L. (2023). Polarization in media discourses on Europeanization in Spain. *Politics and Governance*, 11(2), 221–234. https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v11i2.6419
- Rodríguez-Teruel, J. (2022). Polarisation and electoral realignment: The case of the right-wing parties in Spain. In *The Politics of Polarisation* (pp. 127-156). Routledge.
- Marcos-Marne, H., Plaza-Colodro, C., & O'Flynn, C. (2021). Populism and new radicalright parties: The case of VOX. Politics, 44(3), 337–351. https://doi.org/10.1177/02633957211019587
- Roch, J., & Cordero, G. (2023). A moral or class divide for populist parties? 'The people' in the discourse of Podemos and Vox in Spain. South European Society and Politics, 28(4), 469–497. https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2024.2369463

Learning on Location: facilitated workshop on social media and populist propaganda

Assignment: debate preparation

Module #8: Economic Inequality and Social Cohesion

Topics: unemployment and housing across rural and urban areas

- Ayala, L., Jurado, A., & Pérez-Mayo, J. (2020). Multidimensional deprivation in heterogeneous rural areas: Spain after the economic crisis. *Regional Studies*, *55*(5), 883–893. https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2020.1813880
- Hernández-Ramírez, M., Cáceres-Feria, R., & Ruiz-Ballesteros, E. (2021). Housing tactics: Searching for community resilience in depopulated rural contexts (Huertas, South West Spain). Sociologia Ruralis, 62(1), 153–174. https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12367
- Domínguez-Mujica, J. (2021). The urban mirror of the socioeconomic transformations in Spain. *Urban Science*, *5*(1), 13. https://doi.org/10.3390/urbansci5010013
- Fernandez, B., & Hartt, M. (2021). Growing shrinking cities. Regional Studies, 56(8), 1308–1319. https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2021.1975032
- Yrigoy, I. (2020). The Political Economy of Rental Housing in Spain: The Dialectics of Exploitation(s) and Regulations. *New Political Economy*, 26(1), 186–202. https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2020.1723515

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

Assignment: debate preparation

Module #9: Migration and Integration

Topics: diverging perspectives on the "migration crisis," rhetoric, and social inclusion

- Ali, F. (2024). Migration policies in the EU and Spain. In *Policy, Media, and the Shaping of Spain-Morocco Relations* (pp. 53–86). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-64017-9
- Perl, G. (2024). Under pressure: Moods, affects and the violence of everyday life in a Spanish migrant detention centre. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *51*(4), 1058–1074. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2024.2377864
- Gemignani, M., & Jiménez Carrasco, B. (2023). "Keep them out to save our inside:"
 Discourses on immigration by the Spanish far right. Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 17(3), e12746. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12746
- Hellgren, Z., & Gabrielli, L. (2021). Racialization and aporophobia: Intersecting discriminations in the experiences of non-Western migrants and Spanish Roma. Social Sciences, 10(5), 163. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10050163
- Roman Etxebarria, G., Berasategi, N. S., Idoiaga-Mondragon, N., & Legorburu
 Fernandez, I. (2024). Migrant perceptions of their social inclusion, social networks, and
 satisfaction with life in Northern Spain. Societies, 14(1), 3.
 https://doi.org/10.3390/soc14010003

Learning on Location: visit to Madrid For Refugees (MFR) to learn about their work, challenges, successes, and setbacks in advocating for refugees

Assignment: debate preparation

Module #10: Policy Debates

Assignment: policy debates

LOCATION #3: VIENNA (weeks 11-15)

Module #11: Democracy and Rule of Law

Topic: Rule of Law Report, rising authoritarianism and democracy

Readings:

- European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers. (2024, July 24). Commission Staff Working Document: 2024 Rule of Law Report—Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Austria (SWD(2024) 820 final). In 2024 Rule of Law Report: Communication and country chapters (Annex). European Commission. https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/bcfe8b8e-4c42-461d-b560-efcff1f29e87 en?filename=46
- Satanakis, S. M. (2020, November 27). Why the rule of law matters so much to Austria.
 European Council on Foreign Relations. https://ecfr.eu/article/why-the-rule-of-law-matters-so-much-to-austria/
- Katsambekis, G. (2023). Mainstreaming authoritarianism. *The Political Quarterly*. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13299
- Wodak, R. (2022). Entering the 'post-shame era': The rise of illiberal democracy, populism and neo-authoritarianism in Europe. In *The Limits of EUrope* (pp. 207-227). Bristol University Press. https://doi.org/10.51952/9781529221817.ch019

Learning on Location: Visit to Parliament

Assignment: Experiential Learning Journal Entry #3

Module #12: Populism and Political Polarization

Topic: right-wing populist movements, policy, gender

Readings:

• Wodak, R. (2023). Analyzing the shift to the far right: The Austrian case. *International Politics*, 60(3), 482–491. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-023-00443-x

- Eder, F. (2024). The nature of a populist and radical-right foreign policy: Analysing the freedom party's participation in the right-wing Austrian government. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, *26*(4), 1100-1120. https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481231224265
- Liebhart, K. (2022). Right-wing populism in Austrian politics: Traditional and recent aspects. In *Political Science and Public Policy 2022* (pp. 24–38). https://doi.org/10.4337/9781802205534.00009
- Sauer, B. (2024). Women, gender and right-wing authoritarian populism. In Law 2024 (pp. 288–307). https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035324705.00022

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

Assignment: dialogue preparation

Module #13: Economic Inequality and Social Cohesion

Topics: workforce challenges, housing and social inclusion

Readings:

- Bekhtiar, K. (2022, June). Robotization, internal migration and rural depopulation in Austria (IHS Working Paper Series No. 41, 73 pp.). Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS). https://irihs.ihs.ac.at/id/eprint/6194
- Bekhtiar, K. (2025). The decline of manufacturing employment and the rise of the farright in Austria. *Journal of Public Economics*, 242, 105315. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2025.105315
- Kössl, G. (2022). Affordable housing and social inclusion The case of Vienna and Austria. In O. Heckmann (Ed.), *The future of modular architecture* (Chapter 6). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119734895.ch6
- Friesenecker, M., & Kazepov, Y. (2021). Housing Vienna: The socio-spatial effects of inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms of housing provision. *Social Inclusion*, 9(2), 77–90. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i2.3837

Learning on Location: neighborhood walking tour and visit to housing justice NGO, such as Volkshilfe Wien: A non-profit commissioned by the City of Vienna to assist individuals in various areas, including homelessness and eviction prevention.

Assignment: dialogue preparation

Module #14: Migration and Integration

Topic: internal migration, irregular migration, refugees

- Jestl, S., Moser, M., & Raggl, A. K. (2021). Cannot keep up with the Joneses: How relative deprivation pushes internal migration in Austria. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 49(2), 210–231. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSE-03-2021-0181
- Drüeke, R., Klaus, E., & Moser, A. (2019). Spaces of identity in the context of media images and artistic representations of refugees and migration in Austria. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 24(1), 160-183. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549419886044
- Landini, I. (2022). The exclusion of migrants and refugees from welfare programs in Austria: The legitimizing explanations across different policy areas. *International Journal* of Sociology & Social Policy, 42(1–2), 159–176. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-10-2020-0486
- Rudolph, L., & Wagner, M. (2022). Europe's migration crisis: Local contact and outgroup hostility. European Journal of Political Research, 61(1), 268–280. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12455

Learning on Location: site visit to migrant right's group, such as Refugees for Refugees (R4R), an organization run by refugees that focuses on integrating refugees into Austrian society through cultural and social activities.

Assignment: Policy Dialogues

Module #15: Europe's Present Tense

Topics: comparison, synthesis, and reflection on present challenges, EU strategic frameworks, and member state responses

Assignment: Policy Dialogue reflections