

Spanish Economics and European Integration

ECON-3060 (3 credits)

Spain: Choose Your Track—Climate, Psychology, Economics OR Cinema

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

Spain's journey from European periphery to EU core member represents one of the most successful cases of European integration and regional transformation. This course examines how Spanish regions have leveraged EU membership, structural funds, and single market access to build competitive economies while maintaining distinctive territorial identities. Using Sevilla and Andalucía as primary case studies—regions that exemplify Spain's transformation from agricultural periphery to integrated EU innovation hubs—students explore how European integration shapes regional development strategies, cross-border collaboration, and knowledge transfer networks. The course emphasizes the intersection of EU regional policy, Spanish territorial planning, and local innovation strategies in creating competitive regional economies within the broader European space.

Learning Outcomes

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

- **Analyze EU-Spain regional dynamics** specific to Spanish territorial development, including structural fund impacts, and single market effects on regional competitiveness
- **Evaluate European integration strategies** implemented across Spanish regions, from EU cohesion policy utilization to participation in European innovation networks
- **Assess multi-level governance effectiveness** that integrates EU policy frameworks, Spanish autonomic system, and regional development initiatives
- **Examine territorial cohesion dimensions** of EU integration, particularly how European policies affect regional disparities and convergence patterns within Spain
- **Apply European integration theory** to understand the interconnections between EU membership, regional development, and territorial competitiveness in Spanish contexts

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English.

Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of a *concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

Required Texts

See the course schedule for a full list of reading assignments.

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence -- such as illness -- must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). 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.

Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1. In-Class Participation and Field Engagement (10%): Active participation is essential for learning in this course. Students are expected to engage meaningfully in class discussions, field activities, and interactions with guest speakers and local organizations. Students will be evaluated on the quality of their contributions, critical thinking skills, respectful engagement with diverse perspectives, and ability to connect field experiences to economic theory.

2. EU-Spain Integration Debate Series (25%): Students research and participate in structured debates on key EU-Spain integration issues (e.g., "Has EU membership benefited all Spanish regions equally?"). Students are assigned positions and must develop evidence-based arguments using course readings and independent research. **Format:** Oxford-style debates with opening statements, rebuttals, and audience Q&A.

3. European Best Practices Showcase (30%): Students research and present one inspiring EU-Spain integration example from any Spanish region. Students explain how European frameworks enabled regional transformation, why the collaboration succeeded, and what lessons apply to other EU-Spanish partnerships. The focus is on clear analysis of European integration dynamics and creative presentation. Students will deliver a 15-minute presentation using any format (video, interactive poster, demonstration, etc.).

4. EU Regional Development Strategy Plan (35%): Students develop a practical strategic plan (5 to 7 pages) for enhancing EU-Spain cooperation in their study region. Based on their field research and analysis of successful European examples, students propose realistic interventions that could be implemented through EU structural funds or European Territorial Cooperation initiatives. The plan includes EU policy analysis, stakeholder assessment, implementation steps following EU programming guidelines, and evaluation metrics.

Grading Scale

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

Program Expectations

- **Show up prepared.** For an interactive course to succeed, you must be present, on time, and have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Being prepared with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone. Moreover, the content of this course is learned collaboratively, meaning that when a student isn't here, they take away from everyone's opportunity to learn. The only way to maximize our collective learning potential is if we are all here contributing. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program
- **Submit assignments on time:** SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field- based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). 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.
- **Bring your curiosity:** Ask questions in class. Engage the guest lecturers, as these are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak. Remember, there are no foolish questions, and your inquiries might help others in class who have similar ideas/thoughts. By actively participating and showing curiosity, you demonstrate respect for our guests and contribute to creating a dynamic learning environment for everyone.
- **Maintain academic Integrity:** As members of a learning community, we all want to submit work that reflects our own ideas and efforts. Even if it is unintentional, plagiarism can have serious consequences. Before you submit each assignment, ask yourself these questions:

- Did I reference ideas, quotes, phrases, or facts I read about in a book, article, or website, without citing the author and year of the source where I read about them?
 - Did I paraphrase by changing only a word or two or moving the words around?
 - Did you answer “yes” to any of the above questions? If so, you are committing plagiarism and need to give credit to appropriate sources before you submit your assignment
- **Principled Disagreement:** Learning often involves discomfort. Some discomfort can facilitate personal and collective growth. You, your peers, guest lecturers, instructors, and local constituents, have diverse experiences, values, beliefs, affiliations, and identities. Reflecting on these differences can be emotionally challenging, even when it deepens self-awareness and mutual understanding. In this course, we aim to encourage brave spaces where principled disagreement is encouraged rather than avoiding difficult conversations. *This is challenging work, and we will inevitably make mistakes.* Our goal is to thoughtfully critique ideas rather than attacking individuals. We aim to embrace productive discomfort and minimize unproductive discomfort, striving for principled disagreement.
 - **Content Considerations:** Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a brave 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.
 - **Our social identities** – Our social identities - race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual identity, religion, mental and physical ability, size, national origin, citizenship status, and more – shape how we are perceived, represented, and treated. They also influence what knowledge and learning is deemed valuable and legitimate. To challenge hegemonic paradigms and perspectives, this course intentionally includes readings, topics, videos, and assignments from authors and perspectives of diverse backgrounds. However, there may be gaps we have overlooked. Your constructive feedback is always welcome on how to make this course more inclusive and transformative.
 - **Storing 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 to 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. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
 - **Course Communication:** 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.
 - **Classroom 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.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and 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 Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability 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.*

Module 1: Foundations of Spanish-EU Regional Integration

This module establishes the theoretical foundation for understanding regional development within the European integration framework. Students explore core concepts from European integration theory, EU cohesion policy, and multi-level governance while gaining hands-on exposure to how Sevilla and Andalucía have transformed through EU membership. Using Andalucía as a primary case study, students observe how regions leverage European opportunities to build competitive advantage through EU structural funds, European Territorial Cooperation, and participation in European networks across diverse economic sectors.

Readings:

- Dinan, D. (2007). Fifty years of European integration: A remarkable achievement. *Fordham International Law Journal*, 31(5), 1118-1142.
- Hansen, P. (2002). European integration, European identity and the colonial connection. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(4), 483-498.
- Moradiellos, E. (2016). Franco's Spain and the European integration process (1945-1975). *Journal of the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historic Studies*, 41(1), 13-25.
- Powell, C. (2015). *The long road to Europe: Spain and the European Community, 1957-1986*. Royal Elcano Institute.

Module 2: EU Funding and Knowledge Transfer

This module examines how Spanish regions leverage European funding mechanisms and knowledge networks to drive innovation and competitiveness. Field experiences showcase how European frameworks enable technology transfer, cross-border collaboration, and participation in European value chains that position Spanish regions within broader European innovation ecosystems.

Readings:

- Alesina, A., Angeloni, I., & Schuknecht, L. (2005). What does the European Union do? *Public Choice*, 123(3-4), 275-319.
- Piedrafita, S., García, C., & Alemany, A. (2007). The Europeanisation of Spain 1986-2006. *Royal Elcano Institute*.
- Iglesias, M. O., Steinberg, F., & Fuentes, G. (2016). The Spanish financial crisis. *Royal Institute Elcano*, Informe 20. [Executive Summary, Introduction, and Conclusions]

Module 3: Multi-level Governance and European Territorial Cooperation

This module focuses on how effective regional development within the EU requires coordination across multiple governance levels and strategic participation in European networks. Students examine Spain's autonomous community system within EU multi-level governance, and how regions like Andalucía develop distinctive strategies while participating in European Territorial Cooperation initiatives. Field experiences emphasize understanding how EU policies, Spanish national strategies, and regional initiatives align through engagement with policy makers implementing European programs at regional and local levels.

Readings:

- Bindi, F. (2010). European Union foreign policy: A historical overview. In F. Bindi (Ed.), *The foreign policy of the European Union* (pp. 13-41). Brookings Institution Press.
- Follesdal, A., & Hix, S. (2006). Why there is a democratic deficit in the EU: A response to Majone and Moravcsik. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 44(3), 533-562.
- Hix, S., & Hoyland, B. (2012). *The political system of the European Union* (3rd ed.). Macmillan. [Chapters 1 & 5]
- Risco Oliva, J. A. (2006). Regional powers and the Europeanization process in Spain. *Association for International Affairs*, 1-26.

Module 4: Integrated Solutions and Future Pathways

This final module synthesizes learning into strategic thinking about Spain's evolving role within European integration and builds capacity for ongoing engagement with EU-Spain development networks. Students apply European integration theory to analyze Andalucía's position within European territorial cooperation, explore financing mechanisms for regional transformation, and examine how Spanish regions contribute to European strategic autonomy initiatives while addressing contemporary challenges including economic recovery, demographic change, and geopolitical pressures.

Readings:

- Jones, E., Kelemen, R. D., & Meunier, S. (2021). Failing forward? Crises and patterns of European integration. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28(10), 1519-1536.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2021.1954068>
- Knight, L. (2012, May 18). Spanish economy: What is to blame for its troubles? *BBC News*.
- Oxfam. (2013). A cautionary tale: The true cost of austerity and inequality in Europe. *Oxfam Briefing Paper*, 1-29.
- Rosnick, D., & Weisbrot, M. (2015). *Has austerity worked in Spain*. Center for Economic and Policy Research.

