SYLLABUS

The European Union's External Action and Foreign Policy

2025-2026 academic year

Máster Universitario en Diplomacia y Organizaciones Internacionales

DESCRIPTION SHEET

COURSE DETAILS	
CODE	574412
NAME	The European Union's External Action and Foreign Policy
NATURE	Optative ("Economic European and International Relations" pathway)
TRAINING METHOD	Face-to-face
TERM	First term: 29/09/2025 – 15/12/2025
SCHEDULE	Mondays, 11:45h-13:45h
LANGUAGE	English
ECTS CREDITS	3.0

SUPERVISOR
Dr. Diego Badell, Lecturer at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and Research Fellow at the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals

TEACHERS
Dr. Diego Badell, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona Dr. Adrià Rivera, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya Dr. Claudia Rives, Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals Dr. Oscar Fernández, Maastricht University

AIMS AND SCOPE

The European Union's external relations are one of the *raisons d'être* of the European integration process. Its evolution over the years has incepted a complex external action, involving multiple actors and endowed with myriad instruments for its strategic planning and implementation. Thus, this course aims at familiarizing the students with the most advanced theoretical and political debates on EU behavior in the international context; to study the EU's external action from its various dimensions (political, economic and security-related); to acquire theoretical knowledge on the European Union's external action from the analysis of readings and documents on fundamental aspects of such action; and to analyze the instruments of external action through case studies, with special emphasis on their versatility, limits and effectiveness.

With these aims in mind, the course is structured in three main blocks. The first deals with theoretical issues, focusing on the academic literature of Foreign Policy Analysis and then reflecting on the European Union as an international actor. The second block focuses on the institutional elements of the EU's external relations (competences, institutional architecture and actors involved, and public policy instruments used). Finally, the third block focuses on specific areas of development of the EU's external relations such as development cooperation, humanitarian aid, international promotion of human rights, security and defense, neighborhood or the participation of the EU in multilateral international organizations.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

K04 - Describe the political analysis tools used in the study of international relations.

K05 - Distinguish the instruments and norms intended to maintain international peace and security.

K07 - Identify the key actors in international relations.

K10 - Explain the role of international organizations in conflict resolution.

K14 - Detail the decision-making processes of different international organizations.

K15 - Identify the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization.

K16 - Mention the most important diplomatic events in history.

K18 - Identify the organizational structure of the different institutions of the United Nations system.

H01 - Express yourself orally and in writing effectively in Spanish and English, with command of specialized languages in the field of international relations and international law.

H02 - Write rigorous documents in the field of international relations and international law.

H03 - Analyze the interests of the actors involved in each international context,

including all their political, economic, and legal elements.

H04 - Use information sources critically and responsibly in diplomacy and international organizations.

K – Knowledge or content
H – Skills or abilities
C - Competences

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (Monday, September 29th): Introduction to Foreign Policy Analysis: Theorizing the EU's actorness as a foreign policy actor

Studying external relations: Theoretical frameworks and conceptual definitions. Internal and external conditioning factors. Perceptions, influence and cognitive elements in foreign policy decision-making. Foreign policy instruments: Diplomacy, economic resources, military resources, public diplomacy and intelligence.

Prof. Diego Badell

Compulsory reading:

- VALERIE M. HUDSON & B. S. DAY, "Introduction: The situation and evolution of Foreign Policy Analysis: A road map", in *Foreign Policy Analysis. Classic and contemporary theory,* 3rd ed., Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020, pp. 1-36.

Recommended readings:

- LAURA NEACK, "International Relations theories and foreign policy", in *Studying foreign policy comparatively. Cases and analysis,* 4th ed., Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, pp. 137-159.

- JEAN-FRÉDÉRIC MORIN & JONATHAN PAQUIN, "Do decision-makers matter?", in *Foreign Policy Analysis. A Toolbox,* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 69-99.

- KAREN AGGESTAM & JACQUIE. TRUE, "Gendering Foreign Policy: A Comparative Framework for Analysis", *Foreign Policy Analysis,* vol. 16, no. 2, 2020, pp. 143-162.

WEEK 2 (Monday, October 6th): The institutionalization of cooperation: from the EPC to Lisbon

European foreign policy at the crossroads of International Relations, European Integration and Foreign Policy: a three-level analysis. European integration and high

politics, a contradiction in terms? Cleavages: intergovernmentalism vs. supranationalism (institutional approach), Atlanticism vs. Europeanism (strategic dimension); civilian power vs. military power (identity dimension). Diplomacy and security in the European integration agenda: the emergence of European Political Cooperation (EPC).

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Compulsory reading:

- *CHRISTOPHER HILL., MICHAEL SMITH., & SOPHIE VANHOONACKER, "The European Union in World Politics. An Historical Overview", in Hill, C., Smith, M and Vanhoonacker, S., International Relations and the European Union, Oxford U.P. (4th edition), 2003 pp. 22-44.*

Recommended readings:

- *STEPHAN KEUKELEIRE., & TOM DELREUX, "European Integration and Foreign Policy: A Historical Overview", in Keukeleire, S. and Delreux,T, The Foreign Policy of the European Union, Bloomsbury Academic (3rd edition), 2022, pp. 35-60.*

- *ULRICH. KROTZ & R. MAHER,. International Relations Theory and the Rise of European Foreign and Security Policy", World Politics, vol. 63, no. 3, 2001, pp. 548-579.*

- *ESTHER BARBÉ, "La Unión Europea en las Relaciones Internacionales. Debates para el análisis" en Barbé, E. (dir.), La Unión Europea en las relaciones internacionales, Madrid, Tecnos, 2014, pp. 17-31.*

WEEK 3 (Monday, October 13th. 11h45): Institutional architecture of the EU's External Action Critical actors in the EU's External Action decision-making process.
The EU Commission, the High Representative/ Vice-President and the European External Action Service. The European Council and its presidency. The Foreign Affairs Council. The EU Parliament. The European Court of Justice. The CFSP decision-making process.

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Compulsory reading:

- CHRISTOPHER HILL, "The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe's International Role", Journal of Common Market Studies, vol. 31, no.3, 1993, pp. 305-328.

Recommended readings:

- MICHAEL. SMITH, "Europe's Foreign and Security Policy. The Institutionalization of Cooperation", Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 17-22 and 63-89.

- SIMON NUTALL. European Foreign Policy, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000

- JOSEPH JUPILE & JAMES A. CAPORASO, "States, Agency and Rules: The European

Union in Global Environmental Politics" in C. Rhodes (ed.) The European Union in the World Community, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, pp. 213-229.

WEEK 4 (Monday, October 20th): The EU as a power in international relations

How does the EU wield its power? From being a normative power to evolving into an actor that "speaks the language of power," the European Union has undergone significant transformations. The EU's geopolitical Commission has positioned it as a leader in green and digital power. This shift is reflected in its tools, instruments, and relationships with major global players like the US, China, and Russia. Additionally, the EU faces challenges in the current crisis of the international liberal order, raising questions about its role in multilateralism and its broader influence on the international stage.

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Compulsory reading:

- *ANU BRADFORD. The Brussels Effect: How the European Union Rules the World. Oxford University Press, 2020*
- *AYDAN HYDE-PRICE, 'Normative' power Europe: A realist critique. Journal of European Public Policy, vol.13, no. 2, 2006, pp. 217–234.*
- *IAN MANNERS, Normative Power Europe: A contradiction in terms. Journal of Common Market Studies, vol. 40, no. 2, 2002, pp. 235–258.*

WEEK 5 (Monday, October 27th): The EU's foreign policy towards China

The EU-China relationship is framed by the European Commission's 2019 strategy paper, EU-China – A Strategic Outlook, which defines China as a cooperation partner, economic competitor, and systemic rival.

Prof. Claudia Rives (IBEI).

Compulsory reading:

- EUROPEAN COMMISSION, "EU-China – A Strategic Outlook," March 12, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf.

Recommended reading:

- EUROPEAN THINK THANK NETWORK ON CHINA, Quest for Strategic Autonomy? Europe Grapples with the US - China Rivalry, June 2025.

merics.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/ETNC%20Report%202025%20Quest-for-strategic-autonomy-europe-grapples-with-the-us-china-rivalry.pdf

WEEK 6 (Monday, November 3rd): The EU's foreign policy strategies

From the European Security Strategy (2003) to the EU Global Strategy (2016), the European Union's role as a foreign policy actor has evolved significantly, shaped by the contents, context, and changing international environment. These strategies reflect the shifting strategic cultures within the EU and its member states, as well as responses to internal crises. The evolution of decision-making mechanisms highlights the dynamic nature of the EU's foreign policy and external action system. In light of recent challenges, such as the conflict in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic, the question arises: does the EU need a new external action strategy?

Prof. Diego Badell

Compulsory reading:

- ESTHER BARBÉ & POL MORILLAS, The EU global strategy: the dynamics of a more politicized and politically integrated foreign policy, Cambridge Review of International Affairs, 2019, DOI: 10.1080/09557571.2019.1588227. Open Access: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09557571.2019.1588227.

Recommended readings:

- SVEN BISCOP, No peace from corona: defining EU strategy for the 2020s, Journal of European Integration, vol. 42, no. 8, 2021, pp. 1009-1023, DOI: 10.1080/07036337.2020.1852230.

- EUROPEAN COUNCIL, 'A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy', European Union, 2003.

- EUGS, 'Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy', European External Action Service, 2016. <https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf

WEEK 7 (Monday, November 10th): The EU and security.

The European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is a key framework for addressing security challenges and promoting stability. Established under the Treaty of Lisbon, it enables the EU to undertake crisis management, peacekeeping, and humanitarian missions. Key initiatives include Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) for enhanced defense collaboration and the European Defence Fund (EDF) for research and innovation. Recent developments, like the 2022 Strategic Compass, aim to strengthen EU strategic autonomy amid evolving threats, including hybrid warfare and geopolitical tensions.

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Compulsory reading:

- STEPAHNIE ANDERSON, "The European Union Defence Debate: What kind of power is it?", in K. E. JORGENSEN *et al.* (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of European Foreign Policy,* London: SAGE, 2015, pp. 928-944.

Recommended reading:

- GIOVANNI FALEG, "Ideas that changed the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy", in *The EU's Common Security and Defense Policy. Learning communities in international organizations,* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 1-12.

- EUROPEAN UNION, *A Strategic Compass For Security And Defence,* Brussels: EU, 2022. Available online at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-0_en

WEEK 8 (Monday, November 17th): The EU and migration

On the one hand, the European Union is often depicted as a liberal normative power. On the other hand, Migration has been instrumentalized by right-wing populists to securitize the Union's stance on the issue. In this session we will analyse the role that the EU and its member states played during the negotiations of the 2018 UN Global Compact for Migration (the first international agreement on migration). How was the EU position drafted? How did the EU react when external actors contested its negotiating position? How did the EU react when internal actors contested its negotiating position?

Prof. Diego Badell

Compulsory reading:

- DIEGO BADELL, The EU, migration and contestation: the UN Global Compact for migration, from consensus to dissensus, Global Affairs, vol. 6, no. 4-5, 2020, pp. 347-362, DOI: 10.1080/23340460.2020.1871301

Recommended readings:

- ADRIÀ. RIVERA, Populist challenges to EU foreign policy in the Southern Neighbourhood: an informal and illiberal Europeanisation?, Journal of European Public Policy, vol, 27, no. 8, 2020, pp. 1195-1214, DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2020.1712459

- LINA VOSYLIUTE, What is the EU's role in implementation of the Global Compact for Migration? CEPS Papers in Liberty and Security in Europe, 2019

- LEONARD SCHUETTE & HYLKE DIJKSTRA, The show must go on: The EU's quest to sustain multilateralinstitutions since 2016. Journal of Common Market Studies, vol. 61, no. 5, 2023, pp. 1318-1336

WEEK 9 (Monday, November 24th): The EU and democracy promotion

The European Union (EU) promotes democracy globally through its foreign policy, funding, and diplomacy. Key tools include the Enlargement and Neighborhood Policies that encourage democratic reforms in candidate and neighboring countries. The EU integrates democracy into trade agreements and development aid, emphasizing free elections, independent media, and rule of law.

Prof. Adrià Rivera (UOC)

Compulsory reading:

- RAFFAELLA DEL SARTO (2016), Normative Empire Europe: The European Union, its Borderlands, and the 'Arab Spring', JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies, 54:2, 215-232, https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12282.

Recommended readings:

- ELISABETH JOHANSSON-NOGUÉS & ADRIÀ RIVERA ESCARTIN (2020), Supporting the Tunisian transition? Analysing (in)consistencies in EU democracy assistance with a tripartite nexus model, Democratization, 27:8, 1376-1393, https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1792886

- HELENE SJURSEN (2023), Rethinking liberal order: the EU and the quest for global justice, International Affairs, 99:6, 2203-2220, https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiad240

WEEK 10 (Monday, December 1st): The EU and gender equality

The EU's foreign policy towards gender equality has been characterized, in certain areas, by a permissive consensus, notably in the case of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). In this session, we will examine the evolution of this issue on the EU's foreign policy agenda. How was the permissive consensus reached? How did the EU navigate instances of contestation? What is the current status of SRHR within EU foreign policy?

The European Commission and the EU's External Action. The practical perspective on the role the High Representative and the European External Action Service on external relations.

Prof. Diego Badell

Compulsory reading:

- DIEGO BADELL, Norm contestation in EU foreign policy: understanding the effects of opposition and dissidence, Cambridge Review of International Affairs, 2023 DOI: 10.1080/09557571.2023.2287078

Recommended readings:

- ANNA MICHALSKI & AUGUST DANIELSON, Overcoming Dissent: Socialization in the EU's Political and Security Committee in a Context of Crises, Journal of Common Market Studies, 2021

- ANNE JENICHEN, The Politics of Normative Power Europe: Norm Entrepreneurs and Contestation in the Making of EU External Human Rights Policy. Journal of Common Market Studies, 2020.

WEEK 11 (Friday, December 12th): The EU and global health

The European Union plays a significant role in global health, balancing regional health policies with international cooperation. The EU's health policy primarily supports member states through coordination, funding, and regulation, as health is a national competence under EU treaties. Globally, the EU contributes through development aid, strategic documents like the Global Health Strategy (2022), and support for organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO).

Prof. Oscar Fernández (Maastricht University)

Compulsory reading:

- *BERGNER (2023)*. The role of the European Union in global health: The EU's self-perception(s) within the COVID-19 pandemic, Health Policy, 127, pp. 5-11

Recommended readings:

- OSCAR FERNANDEZ. (2025). The European Union's Global Health Actorness: A Research Agenda for a New Age of Pandemics, JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies, 63(3), pp. 1008-1021.

- CLARE WENHAM JOSHUA W. BUSB, JEREMY YOUDE AND ASHA HERTEN-CRABB. (2023), From Imperialism to the "Golden Age" to the Great Lockdown: The Politics of Global Health Governance, Review of Political Science, pp. 431-450.

WEEK 12 (Monday, December 15th): The EU in the world

In 2018, Donald Tusk, then President of the European Council, reacted to President Trump's latest decisions by stating, "With friends like that, who needs enemies?" This sentiment reflected the EU's growing concerns about its relationship with the US. Meanwhile, in 2019, the EU officially defined China as a cooperation and negotiating partner, economic competitor, and systemic rival. By 2021, the European Commission and the High Representative expressed their determination to push back against any efforts to undermine the international liberal order in a Joint Communication. This session, which is student led, will thus explore the key topics in the EU's foreign relations with major world powers, , within the current global geopolitical context.

Prof. Diego Badell

Recommended readings:

- VOLKER PERTHES, Dimensions of rivalry: China, the United States, and Europe. China International Strategy Review. vol. 3, 2021, pp. 56–65

- HUGO MEIJER & STEPHEN BROOKS, Illusions of Autonomy: Why Europe Cannot Provide for Its Security If the United States Pulls Back, International Security, vol. 45, no. 4, 2021, pp. 7-43.

PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

- GIOVANNI GREVI, "Shockwaves: How does the War in Ukraine Impact the EU's Grand Strategy?", CSDS In-Depth paper n. 5, 2023

RELATION TO OTHER MASTER'S COURSES

No enrollment restrictions. This course is part of the Master's module "The European Union as International Actor", together with "Institutions and Decision-making in the European Union. The European Civil Service".

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Those students from alternative undergraduate studies than those specified in the foundational re
the Master's must have been enrolled in the following "Pre-Program Training Courses":

- Introduction to International Law and International Organizations (2 ECTS)
- Introduction to International Relations and International Politics (2 ECTS)
- Introduction to Global Economy and Trade (2 ETCS)

TEACHING METHODS

This course is mainly structured through in-class activities organized around theoretical sessions and a seminar. The theoretical sessions are taught through the teacher's explanation of the thematical schedule above, offering as well methodological guidelines for the independent development of the contents by the students.

The seminar sessions will serve to deepen specific aspects of the topics covered through discussion and resolution of issues raised by the texts indicated in the program. Students must get prepared prior to each session following the precise instructions that will be provided to them.

GRADING

This course offers two evaluation options: comprehensive evaluation or continuous evaluation. Students must select their preferred option within the deadlines set by CEI regulations by submitting a form available at the affiliated center's secretary's office. A minimum attendance of 80% of the sessions is mandatory for both evaluation types.

Under the continuous evaluation system, the final grade is composed of two equally weighted components: 50% from continuous assessment activities (such as seminars, presentations, and other tasks assigned by the instructors) and 50% from a final exam. In order to pass the course, students must obtain a minimum grade of 5 out of 10 in both blocks. Additionally, attendance and active participation will be taken into account and may positively influence the final grade.

For a comprehensive evaluation, the final grade consists of a written exam (50%) and an oral exam (50%). The oral exam will take place after the written exam.

For justified absences from an assessed activity, the instructor may, at their discretion, offer an alternative assessment opportunity or exclude it from the final grade calculation. Unjustified absences for assessed activities will result in a grade of 0/10.

REASSESSMENT

In the case of continuous evaluation, the retake option applies only to the final exam. For comprehensive evaluation, both the written and oral exams may be retaken if the grade in either is below 5 out of 10.

If the grade obtained in the reassessment is lower than the grade from the regular assessment, the higher of the two will be retained.

WORKLOAD

EXPECTED HOURS COMMITTED	
TOTAL	75
THEORETICAL CLASSES AND SEMINARS	25
SUPERVISED PERFORMANCE	25
INDEPENDENT PERFORMANCE	25

BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY

- J. BORRELL, *European Foreign Policy in Times of Covid-19,* Luxembourg: European Union External Action, 2021 [Especially Chapters 3 & 4].

- S. GSTÖHL & S. SCHUNZ, *The External Action of the European Union. Concepts, Approaches, Theories,* London: Red Globe Press, 2021.

- C. HILL, M. SMITH & S. VANHOONACKER, International Relations and the EU, 4th ed., 2023, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- K. E. JORGENSEN et al. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of European Foreign Policy*, London: SAGE, 2015.

- F. ALDECOA, N. CORNAGO & V. RODRÍGUEZ, *Teoría y Práctica de la Diplomacia Común Europea,* Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación de España, 2020. Available online at: http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/Ministerio/EscuelaDiplomatica/Documents/CED24.pdf

- T. SCHUMACHER & D. BOURIS, *The Revised European Neighbourhood Policy. Continuity and change in EU foreign policy,* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

- D. THOMAS (ed.) *Making EU Foreign Policy. National preferences, European norms and common policies,* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Other resources (Podcasts, Online classes & seminars…)

D. EK, *POLITICO's EU Confidential,* Podcast Series, 2021. Available online at: https://www.politico.eu/eu-confidential-podcast/