

Course description of the elective special course within Political Science II

Note! Not all Special Courses are given each semester, more information regarding the elective courses is given at the introduction.

European Politics

This course examines European integration and cooperation. The main emphasis is placed on the European Union (EU) by closely assessing its historical trajectory, its core venues and institutions, its policymaking procedures, and the role of non-state actors. Moreover, the course examines central theories and critical perspectives, addresses notable socio-economic events, and assesses policy examples that frame and explain European integration and dis-integration.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Account for the most important events, interests, and conflicts regarding the development of European cooperation.
- Understand the driving forces behind the European integration.
- Have a good grasp of central theories used to assess European (dis-) integration.
- Account for member states' perspectives on European cooperation.
- Understand the role and mandate of EU institutions.
- Have a good grasp of EU policymaking procedures.
- Appreciate the EU's interaction and engagement with national and global issues.
- Critically and independently analyse developments in European politics.

International Relations

The course provides a broad introduction to the actors, structures, and processes of international relations, with a particular focus on international security, international political economy, and international organizations. The course covers empirical questions about causes and consequences in international relations, as well as normative questions about the way in which international relations ought to be organized. What makes a problem a security issue and how can security be achieved? Why do wars arise and to what extent can they be justified? What are the political consequences of economic globalization? How could the global economy be made more fair? What is required for states to successfully cooperate in solving common problems? To what extent can and should international organizations be democratic? The course aims to provide a proper understanding of key trends, important drivers, and significant normative questions within international relations. Central concepts in the course include states, non-state actors, security, war, conflict, globalization, economic relations, cooperation, international organizations, fairness, and democracy.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Account for key trends and developments in international security, international political economy, and international organizations.
- Understand and apply central concepts and theories in the empirical study of international security, international political economy, and international organizations.
- Understand and discuss significant normative questions pertaining to international security, international political economy, and international organizations.

Politics and Development in the Global South

This course ties into the current debate on the concept of development and how it connects to the discussion on the roles of state, markets and civil society on global, regional and local levels. The theoretical departure point is the concept of “development” and how it is applied and contested in the context of the Global South. By introducing a number of ongoing local conflicts, the course aims to connect local resistance strategies within civil society, as well as the actions of multilateral institutions, transnational companies, and both national and local governments, to economic and political development. Some of the themes that are in the focus are sustainability, environment, human rights, democratic participation and gender.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student should be able to:

- Identify different perspectives on and theories of development in the Global South
- Identify similarities and differences in how states, multilateral institutions, and civil society actors develop strategies to defend or contest various forms of development
- Present, both orally and in writing, independent analyses of the relationships addressed in the course.

The Politics of the Environment and Sustainability

This course introduces the foundations of contemporary research on environmental politics, and specific (e.g. climate, biodiversity, forests) and general issues and institutions in sustainability governance (e.g. the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals). Using literature from a variety of subfields, including green political theory, governance studies, and political economy, students explore actors, structures and processes of environmental politics in a multi-level governance context. The course examines the interplay between states, citizens, markets and civil society. Upon completion of this course, students will have a deep understanding of the central issues and debates in the environmental politics, particularly on agenda setting, decision making and implementation of policies, regulation and legislation in national, global, transnational governance context, including the European Union and the United Nations.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students are expected to be able to:

- Identify different perspectives on and theories of sustainable development;
- Understand the key concepts in the field in various levels;
- Compare and contrast major perspectives and worldviews on environmental politics;
- Identify key findings and results from empirical studies in environmental politics;
- examine and evaluate arguments on how to manage and/or solve environmental threats advocated by different perspectives

Voters, Representatives, and Political Decision Making in Comparative Perspective

This course delves into key debates in comparative politics, tracing the connection between individual voters and political representatives through the decision-making process – and back. The course begins with an introductory lecture and unfolds across three interrelated themes: (1) voters and parties, (2) political representation, and (3) lawmaking, with an emphasis on their interconnectedness.

The first theme deals with voter characteristics and how they shape the behavior of both parties and voters. It does so by contrasting various explanations for how preferences are formed, how parties compete, and what factors that ultimately shape voter choices on election day. The second theme explores what it means for elected politicians to be representative, including various criteria for assessing democratic representation and their empirical applications. The third theme analyzes executive and legislative decision-making, discussing theories on agenda-setting, veto players, and legislative gridlock.

Although each theme is dealt with separately, with different course readings, emphasis will be put on how they are interconnected: both how (1) affects (2), how (2) affects (3), and how (3) affects (1). The themes will also be interlinked by bringing up similar policy areas, such as tax policies, migration and political inequality. Empirically, the course primarily deals with advanced industrialized democracies.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Articulate an understanding of the central debates and theoretical frameworks that underpin the study of the linkage between voters and political representatives within comparative politics.
- Describe the voter characteristics, party dynamics, and legislative processes/institutions that influence political decision-making in advanced industrialized democracies.
- Analyze how individual voter behavior impacts party strategies and political representation using comparative political theories.
- Assess the legislative decision-making process, including the roles of agenda-setting, veto players, and legislative gridlock, within various political systems.

- Critique and evaluate the strengths and limitations of different theoretical perspectives on political representation and lawmaking.
- Formulate well-supported arguments regarding the implications of various institutional arrangements for the linkage between voter preferences and policy outcomes