

Universidade de São Paulo
Departamento de Ciência Política

Crises and challenges in contemporary Europe

Curso de pós-graduação FLS6427
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Course description

Europe is often explicitly or implicitly used as a reference point in social science research. Many theoretical approaches to study political institutions were developed on the basis of European cases, and the European Union has long been considered a model for integration processes in other world regions. However, the current crises in Europe have questioned this picture and have made Europe appear like just one crisis-ridden world region among others.

In Brazil, recent developments in Europe such as Brexit, the rise of populist parties and separatism in Catalonia have attracted considerable academic and media attention, yet they are seldom studied in more depth. Therefore, this course aims to complement the curriculum to give a foundation to discussions about contemporary Europe.

The course will study crises and challenges in contemporary European politics and society and will analyze how they can be managed in a system of multi-level governance. Although it discusses the role of the European Union (EU) in facing challenges like the Eurozone and migration crises, it explicitly goes beyond an introduction into European integration or EU politics by examining the role of a wide range of actors such as international organizations, individual states, sub-state entities and civil society organizations. The course will familiarize students with a variety of theoretical lenses on how to study Europe, including critical approaches. Departing from the study of Europe as a particular world region, it also explores similarities and differences to crisis symptoms in other regions and identifies trends that transcend the European region.

Objectives

The course is relevant for students interested in European studies and current political, social, economic, and legal developments in Europe and the European Union. The course will be held mostly in English (most of the readings and presentations of the professor will be in English), but it will include guest lectures on a variety of topics, some of which will be in Portuguese. Depending on students' needs, written assignments can be done in Portuguese.

The course will also offer a space for intense discussion of readings as well as student papers. It is therefore essential for students to prepare the assigned materials prior to the session so that they can actively participate.

Requirements

Participation in class discussions, two critical reviews of the literature on a session topic of your choice, final paper combining the reviews with your dissertation or thesis topic (due after the end of the course).

Contents

Topics to be discussed include: the contested demarcation of Europe and its borders; the rise and decline of Europe in world history; the image of Europe as a “community of values” or “normative power” which is increasingly put into question by populism and the crisis of democracy; European institutions for human rights and minority protection; challenges in the European neighborhood, such as the conflict in Ukraine and political instability and wars in North Africa and the Middle East; challenges and crises facing the European Union and its member states, such as the Eurozone crisis, the migration and refugee crisis, and questions of identity and cohesion as manifested by the rise of Euroscepticism, nationalism, isolationism, separatism and secessionism.

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