

HC 434H: EUROPE TODAY

University of Oregon – Winter 2024 – CRN [22420](#)

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Meeting times: MW 10:00-11:50 in 301 CHA

Course website: <https://canvas.uoregon.edu/courses/234144>

Office hours: MW 12:00-1:00 and F 10:00-12:00. Use signup sheet at <https://bit.ly/3fNfWDY> by 9:00 the night before.

Course description

Taken together, the countries of the European Union (EU) constitute the world's third-largest economy and third-largest political entity by population size. Europe also boasts an enviable quality of life, even as it confronts many of the same challenges we do in the United States. As America's political system wallows in dysfunction, Europe's unique experiment in pluralistic trans-national democracy, however flawed it too may be, can be an inspiration as we sort through some of the greatest problems of our time.

This course will take the form of a term-long role-playing game. You will assume the identities of [actual, real-life Members of the European Parliament \(MEPs\)](#) from various countries. Each of you will be assigned to one of seven European-wide Political Groups ranging from far left to far right. In a series of mock parliamentary sessions, you will write about and orally debate a series of major contemporary issues drawn from today's headlines. (Note that you may have to defend positions that you disagree with in real life.)

Along the way, you will get a taste of what life in Europe today is actually like. Through what I call "virtual fieldtrips," you'll find an apartment and a neighborhood, master shopping and public transportation, find a job, and visit a church, museums, and an ethnic restaurant. This course is good preparation for study or travel in Europe and counts for social science and global perspectives credit.

Requirements

- Four online quizzes (5% each, due 1/15, 2/5, 2/19, and 3/4)
- Two letters to your constituents (10% and 1000 words each, due 1/31 and 3/18)
- One major speech (20%, 15 minutes or ~2,000 words, variable due dates from 1/31 to 3/11)
- Five virtual fieldtrips (3% each, due 1/17, 1/29, 2/14, 2/28, and 3/13)
- Class participation (25%)

Expected learning outcomes

1. Experience a democratic political system with more than two political parties, each one pursuing a coherent policy agenda.
2. Develop research and communications skills in a variety of oral and written genres pertinent to politics, policy, and ideology.
3. Conduct negotiations with both allies and rivals to solve problems in a climate of clashing interests and discordant values.
4. Learn collectively through role-playing: espouse *one* side of an issue in order to appreciate *all* sides of it through dialogue.

Class dynamics and participation

Your mission in the game is to win policy victories for your Political Group. You must pursue the victory objectives for your specific role while always remaining faithful to that role. The class begins with a two-week crash course on European politics. I'll throw you into the deep end with a lot of reading. Don't panic: it's all to prepare you for your roles, which you'll receive in week one and begin to play during week two. Weeks three and four are for a diagnostic pre-game exercise. We'll do a test-run on an issue that's both familiar and highly controversial (abortion) so that you can get used to parliamentary procedures and game dynamics. When it's over, you'll break character for a day to debrief and regroup. You'll continue researching your role and caucusing with your Group.

Then comes the main event: three issue-driven debates, each lasting two weeks, in which players give speeches, engage in spirited Q&A, caucus, bargain, bicker, and ultimately vote on policy proposals. I'll lurk in the background, playing the role of journalist and posting stories on Canvas to nudge your game play in productive directions. During week 11, we'll use our final exam slot to debrief, make peace, and hold a class party where I'll award each student a "most likely to XYZ" prediction based on their game play.

Quizzes test your understanding of the readings; they are fact-based and objective but do require thought. The two letters to your constituents help you to first prepare for your roles and then to process your experiences. The high point for each of you will be a carefully prepared 15-minute speech, followed by Q&A, on a major policy problem during the issue-driven debates in weeks 5-10.

The class participation grade reflects your Q&A and caucus performances across your 11 *non-speech* days. Each of you will be given five (5) five-minute Q&A slots worth 5% apiece to use strategically over the course of the three debates. I'll grade each of your Q&A performances A, B, or C based on your depth of engagement with the assigned materials and the extra resources I've provided. I may adjust that grade up or down based on what I observe in caucus sessions and any out-of-class activity. To incentivize cooperation and dealmaking, I will award *bonus points for publicly announced cross-Group coalitions and pacts that result in voting victories*.

Class attendance is required: the game will not function in your absence. If you must miss a class, especially during game play, you must concoct a plausible and politically effective alibi *and* figure out a way to contribute in absentia. See me regarding emergencies.

ROLES

There are [19 roles](#) in the game: 17 MEPs plus the Presidents of the [EU Parliament](#) (also an MEP) and of the [European Commission](#).

Group	Votes	Germany	France	Spain	Poland
Leftists	37		Manon Aubry 37		
Socialists	141	Birgit Sippel 52		Iratxe García Pérez 67	Łukasz Kohut 22
Greens	72	Terry Reintke 49	Mounir Satouri 23		
Liberals	101	Svenja Hahn 18	Stéphane Séjourné 60	Jordi Cañas 23	
Conservatives	178	Manfred Weber 80	Laurence Sailliet 20	Antonio López-Istúriz White 35	Jerzy Buzek 43
Right wing	66			Margarita de la Písa Carrión 9	Ryszard Legutko 57
Far right	60	Christine Anderson 21	Philippe Olivier 39		

Numbers in smaller font indicate the size of each MEP's bundle of votes. **Bold** indicates which Spanish surname to use in speaking.

- Each of the five largest EU countries (excluding Italy, to make room for an Eastern European country) receives a number of roles in proportion to its population size: Germany (6), France (5), Spain (4), and Poland (3). There is one extra, from Malta.
 - [Roberta Metsola](#), a Conservative MEP from Malta, serves as non-voting, non-partisan [President of the EU Parliament](#).
 - [Ursula von der Leyen](#), the sixth German but not an MEP, serves as [President of the European Commission \(EC\)](#).
- Each of the [seven Political Groups](#) in the [EU Parliament](#) of [2019-2024](#) receives a number of votes matching its [real-life number of MEPs](#), and each MEP controls a bundle of votes proportional to their country's real-life representation in the Group.

Group	EU Parliamentary Group name	Abbrev.	Europarty name
Leftists	The Left	Left	Party of the European Left
Socialists	Socialists and Democrats	S&D	Party of European Socialists
Greens	Greens/European Free Alliance	Greens	European Greens
Liberals	Renew Europe	Renew	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
Conservatives	European People's Party	EPP	European People's Party
Right wing	European Conservatives and Reformists	ECR	ECR Party
Far right	Identity and Democracy	ID	Identity and Democracy Party

SCHEDULE

Date	Activity	Homework (do before class)
1/8	Introduction to the course: Europe today	Start reading Intro Packet (5 PDFs)
1/10	Introduction to the game: rules and roles	Read Role sheet ; take role survey
1/15	MLK Day (no class)	Finish Intro Packet and do quiz #1
1/17	Discussion followed by political cocktail hour	Keep researching your role; virtual fieldtrip #1
1/22	ISSUE #0: ABORTION (diagnostic pre-game exercise begins)	Read Packet #0
1/24	Debate and discussion continue, then final vote	You figure it out!
1/29	Break character to debrief and fill gaps in your knowledge	Extra readings TBD; virtual fieldtrip #2
1/31	EP President opens Parliament; Groups caucus in class	Letter to your constituents #1; Metsola speech
	ISSUE #1: CLIMATE CHANGE and PROSPERITY	Read Packet #1 and do quiz #2
2/5	Greens present	Speeches by Reintke and Satouri
2/7	Liberals counter-present	Speeches by Cañas and Hahn
2/12	Conservatives offer amendments and EC President responds	Speeches by Buzek and von der Leyen
2/14	Open discussion and vote	More politicking; virtual fieldtrip #3
	ISSUE #2: IMMIGRATION and CITIZENSHIP	Read Packet #2 (w/extra) and do quiz #3
2/19	Far right presents	Speeches by Anderson and Olivier
2/21	Left and Socialists counter-present	Speeches by Aubry and Sippel
2/26	Conservatives offer amendments	Speeches by López-Istúriz and Sailliet
2/28	Open discussion and vote	More politicking; virtual fieldtrip #4
	ISSUE #3: YOUNG and OLD	Read Packet #3 and do quiz #4
3/4	Right wing presents	Speeches by Legutko and de la Piza
3/6	Socialists counter-present	Speeches by García and Kohut
3/11	Conservatives and Liberals offer amendments	Speeches by Weber and Séjourné
3/13	Open discussion and vote	More politicking; virtual fieldtrip #5
3/18	(10:15) Debrief & class party (with “most likely to XYZ” awards)	Letter to your constituents #2

RESOURCES

Locate and download the [Reading Packets](#) on Canvas under [Files](#). There you can also find [Country profiles](#), [Group profiles](#), and [Issue profiles](#). You should consult these folders when researching your constituency letters, policy speech, and Q&A interventions. See Canvas for detailed instructions on these assignments.

Use the hyperlinks on the “Roles” page above and on the role sheet to research (a) your activities as an MEP, (b) your national political party, (c) your Group, and (d) the larger, cross-national [Europarty](#) with which it is affiliated. Most Group and party websites have lots of position papers, manifestos, resolutions, news bulletins, and other materials to guide your political education. I’ve already harvested some of the most useful of these documents and posted them within the Group and Issue profiles on Canvas.

Choose from the (free) news sources below to follow events in Europe and in your home country.

Politico.eu	quick, inside-baseball coverage of European politics and current events
TLDR News EU	short, well-produced YouTube videos on current European politics
The Guardian	UK newspaper with excellent coverage of Europe
Deutsche Welle	headlines from Germany
France 24	headlines from France
Notes from Poland	headlines from Poland
El País	headlines from Spain
TheLocal.com	everyday news-you-can-use from Europe

Oodles of [streaming and recorded videos](#) are online to familiarize you on with the style and substance of recent plenary and committee meetings. (Typically they are live-translated into English.) The EU Parliament [newsroom](#) also continually updates its pages on [climate change](#), [migration](#), [social inclusion and security](#), [gender equality](#), and other subjects.

You do *not* need to do any outside research beyond the links, documents, and other resources that I’ve provided. But if you do want to go deep, the EU Parliament has an in-house [Think Tank](#) with all types of briefings, fact sheets, and analytical reports on every issue under the sun. You can also read summaries of [EU legislation](#) by topic. Hardcore policy geeks can also peruse the [Journal of European Public Policy](#), [Journal of Contemporary European Studies](#), [Journal of Common Market Studies](#), and [Eurostat Statistical Atlas](#).

Just about everything EU-related is in English. But if you do need to translate materials in other languages, try [deepl.com](#), [translate.google.com](#), or [gptonline.ai/chatgpt-online](#). Google Translate is built into Safari and Chrome browsers.