

Contemporary issues in international relations

Academic year 2025/2026

University of Wrocław

CONTENT OF THE COURSE

Class dates:

- **06.10.2025** — Introduction to the course
- **13.10.2025** — “European nationalism as a centrifugal force in modern Europe”
- **20.10.2025** — “When trade becomes leverage: From trade balance and protectionism to political pressure in U.S. Foreign Policy”
- **27.10.2025** — “It’s Too Much Winning? Costs, Losers, and Market Shocks of U.S. Tariff Policy”
- **03.11.2025** — “Transhumanism, Artificial Intelligence, and the condition of the human being of the future” Lecture with discussion (no literature needed).
(10.11.2025: rector’s day – no classes)
- **17.11.2025** — “Foundations and Evolution”
- **24.11.2025** — “Politics, Controversies, and Strategic Implications”
- **26.11.2025** — “Regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe”
- **01.12.2025** — “CFSP as the EU’s trump card? Institutional context and analytical background”
- **08.12.2025** — “Can the EU defend itself? CFSP in the global context”
- **15.12.2025** — “Regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe” (pt.2)
(22.12.2025, 29.12.2025, 05.01.2026 – Christmas break)
- **12.01.2026** — “Illiberal Turns in Central Europe – Democratic Backsliding and Its Impact on EU Cohesion”
- **19.01.2026** — “Redefining Sovereignty in Times of Crisis – Between National Interests and European Solidarity”
- **26.01.2026** — Consultations for those who have not passed course modules.
- **02.02.2026** — Completion of the course, summary of classes, awarding of grades.

Additionally:

- **26 November 2025 (Wednesday)** – Monday classes will be held.

Detailed contents of the course:

13.10.2025 - “European nationalism as a centrifugal force in modern Europe”

Coordinator: M.A. Aleksander Krejckant

Course block:

Conditions:

Attendance on both sessions is mandatory; absences without proper justification will result in a fail. No final exam; grades will be based on active class participation and discussions.

- Introduction: why it matters?
- Theoretical approach to nationalisms.
- The diversity of nationalisms and the European question.
- Nationalist Comintern? A network of nationalist groups in Europe.
- Q&A / short group discussion.

LITERATURE:

- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso Books.
- Smith, Anthony D. (2010 2nd ed.). *Nationalism. Theory, Ideology, History*. Polity Press.
- Gellner, E. (2006 ed.). *Nations and Nationalism*. Blackwell
- FitzGibbon J., Leruth B., Startin N. (2016). *Euroscepticism as a Transnational and Pan-European Phenomenon*. Routledge

20.10.2025 - “When trade becomes leverage: From trade balance and protectionism to political pressure in U.S. Foreign Policy”

Coordinator: M.A. Aleksander Ogrodnik

Course block: Donald Trump and (re)new U.S. Trade Policy

Conditions:

Attendance on sessions is mandatory; absences without proper justification will result in a fail. No final exam; grades will be based on active class participation and discussions.

- Introduction: why it matters?
- Theoretical approaches to trade and protectionism
- From trade balance to political leverage: U.S. tariff policy
- Case studies: China, EU, and NAFTA/USMCA
- Q&A / short group discussion

LITERATURE:

- Irwin, D. A. (2017/2020). *Clashing over Commerce: A History of U.S. Trade Policy*. University of Chicago Press.
- Bown, C. P., & Irwin, D. A. (2019). *The Trump Trade War: A Timeline*. Peterson Institute for International Economics.
- Smith, A. (1776/1999). *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Modern Library.
- List, F. (1841/2005). *The National System of Political Economy*. Anthem Press.

27.10.2025 - “It’s too much winning? Costs, losers, and market shocks of U.S. Tariff Policy”

Coordinator: M.A. Aleksander Ogrodnik

Course block: Donald Trump and (re)new U.S. Trade Policy

Conditons:

Attendance on sessions is mandatory; absences without proper justification will result in a fail. No final exam; grades will be based on active class participation and discussions.

- Introduction: why it matters?
- Who pays? Consumers, producers, and trading partners
- Economic costs: prices, supply chains, productivity
- Market shocks: Nasdaq and global investor reactions
- Case studies: U.S.–China trade war, steel/aluminum, semiconductors
- Softpower erosion: how tariffs undermine U.S. credibility and global leadership
- Q&A / short group discussion

LITERATURE:

- Smith, A. (1776/1999). *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Modern Library.
- Amiti, M., Redding, S. J., & Weinstein, D. (2019). The impact of the 2018 tariffs on U.S. prices and welfare. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 33(4), 187–210.
- Fajgelbaum, P. D., Goldberg, P. K., Kennedy, P. J., & Khandelwal, A. K. (2020). The return to protectionism. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 135(1), 1–55.
- Cavallo, A., Gopinath, G., Neiman, B., & Tang, J. (2019). Tariff passthrough at the border and at the store. *American Economic Review: Insights*, 1(1), 19–34.
- Peterson Institute for International Economics (2025). Trump’s tariffs would cost the typical US household over \$1,200 a year. *PIIE Chart*.

03.11.2025 - Transhumanism, Artificial Intelligence, and the condition of the human being of the future” Lecture with discussion (no literature needed)

Coordinator: M.A. Aleksander Krejckant

Course block:

- The significance of pop culture in creating visions of the future.
- Examples of dystopian visions of potential reality created in selected games, films, and television series.
- Discussion.

17.11.2025 - “Foundations and Evolution”

Course block: The EU–Mercosur Association Agreement

Coordinator: M.A. Angelo Biazus Marin Kramer

Conditions: attendance on both sessions, absences without proper justification will result in a failure. No final exam, grades will be based on class participation and on the final group exercise.

Class 1: Foundations and Evolution (90 min) - November 17th, 9h45.

- I. Introduction: why it matters?
- II. Mercosur and Regional Integration in Latin America
- III. EU External Action and Association Agreements
- IV. Negotiation History
- V. Main Content of the Agreement
- VI. Q&A

24.11.2025 - “Politics, Controversies, and Strategic Implications”

Course block: The EU–Mercosur Association Agreement

Coordinator: M.A. Angelo Biazus Marin Kramer

Class 2: Politics, Controversies, and Strategic Implications (90 min) - November 24th, 9h45.

- I. Recap and Introduction
- II. The Political Economy of the Agreement
- III. The Environmental and Normative Debate
- IV. Geopolitical Dimensions
- V. Simulation Exercise: Ratify or reject?

BASIC LITERATURE

Arima, E., Barreto, P., Taheripour, F., & Aguiar, A. (2021). Dynamic Amazonia: The EU–Mercosur Trade Agreement and Deforestation. *Land*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land10111243>.

Del Pupo, E. (2024). Consultation not Contestation: Brazilian civil society in EU-Mercosur Association Agreement negotiations, *Journal of Civil Society*, 20(1), 57-73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2023.2264404>.

Grieger, G. (2025). EU-Mercosur Partnership Agreement: Trade pillar. European Parliament (Briefing no. PE 769.537). Retrieved from: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/769537/EPRS_BRI\(2025\)769537_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/769537/EPRS_BRI(2025)769537_EN.pdf)

Kehoe, L., Reis, T., Meyfroidt, P., Bager, S., Seppelt, R., Kuemmerle, T., Berenguer, E., Clark, M., Davis, K., Ermgassen, E., Farrell, K., Friis, C., Haberl, H., Kastner, T., Murtough, K., Persson, U., Romero-Muñoz, A., O’Connell, C., Schäfer, V., Virah-Sawmy, M., De Waroux, Y., & Kiesecker, J. (2020). Inclusion, Transparency, and Enforcement: How the EU-Mercosur Trade Agreement Fails the Sustainability Test. *One Earth*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2020.08.013>.

Timini, J., & Viani, F. (2020). A Highway Across the Atlantic? Trade and Welfare Effects of the EU-Mercosur Agreement. *International Economic Law eJournal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3659242>.

26.11.2025 – Regional Cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe (pt. 1)

Course block: Regional organizations in CEE region: history, aims and functioning

Coordinator: M.A. Gabriela Rzepka

Conditions of passing the course as the rest of the lecturers

- Introduction - what and where is CEE and why it matters
- Regional cooperation of Baltic Assembly, Visegrad Group, Lublin Triangle, Slavkov Triangle : history of formation, aims, formula
- The meaning of the cooperation for the region
- Obstacles for functioning of the cooperations
- The EU impact / impact on the EU

Literature:

CLASS 1:

On CEE region:

M. Kundera “The tragedy of Central Europe”,
https://dl1.cuni.cz/pluginfile.php/656024/mod_resource/content/1/Kundera%20The%20Tragedy%20of%20Central%20Europe.pdf

Lublin Triangle:

“Regional Alliance - Lublin Triangle: geopolitical priorities and dynamics of foreign policy transformation in the context of security challenges and threats”
<https://lcpijournal.panschelm.edu.pl/index.php/lcpi/article/view/5>

Visegrad 4:

Visegrad Declaration: <https://www.visegradgroup.eu/home/documents/visegrad-declarations/visegrad-declaration-110412-2>

Kromeriz Declaration (2004) from the website of V4: <https://www.visegradgroup.eu/home/documents>

Baltic Assembly:

Riga Declaration: https://www.baltasam.org/uploads/1st_finaldoc_.pdf

S3 & general cooperation in the region: https://ies.lublin.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/riesw_2020-1-05.pdf

01.12.2025 - “CFSP as the EU’s trump card? Institutional context and analytical background.”

Course block: Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU. The European Union as a security and defense actor.

Coordinator: M.A. Maciej Maślanka

The aim of this course block is to learn about the institutional framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU and critically evaluate its effectiveness in the context of contemporary threats. Students will learn to apply various theoretical approaches (i.e. differentiated integration, geopolitics, intergovernmentalism) in critical debate on the CFSP.

- Introduction: What is CFSP and why it matters?
- Brief historical background and institutional context
- Introduction to key concepts: differentiated integration, intergovernmentalism, normative power Europe
- 2022's shock therapy and its results

Recommended readings:

Dijkstra, H., & Vanhoonacker - Kormoss, S. (2017). The Common Foreign and Security Policy. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.155>
https://www.europeanpapers.eu/en/system/files/pdf_version/EP_eJ_2022_3_SS1_9_Benjamin_Martill_Monika_Sus_00611.pdf

Course block's literature:

Nicholas Wright, *The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy in Germany and the UK*, Palgrave 2019

George Voskopoulos (ed.), *European Union Security and Defence Policies, Operations and Transatlantic Challenges*, Springer 2021

Knud Erik Jrgensen et al (ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of European Foreign Policy: Two Volume Set*, SAGE Publications Ltd, 2015

08.12.2025 - "Can the EU defend itself? CFSP in the global context."

Course block: Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU. The European Union as a security and defense actor.

Coordinator: M.A. Maciej Maślanka

- EU's security in relation to NATO
- The question of geopolitical shift
- European capacity building
- Toward strategic sovereignty?

Recommended readings:

<https://ies.lublin.pl/en/policy-papers/nato-after-the-summit-in-the-hague-strategic-challenges-and-regional-adaptation/>

Chapter 2: *The dilemma of US strategic absence in Europe.*

15.12.2025 – Regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe (pt.2)

Course block: Regional organizations in CEE region: history, aims and functioning

Coordinator: M.A. Gabriela Rzepka

- Introduction -recap of the previous class on this matter
- Regional cooperation of Central Five, Three Seas Initiative and Bucharest 9: history of formation, aims, formula
- The meaning of the cooperation for the region
- Obstacles for functioning of the cooperations
- The EU impact / impact on the EU

Literature:

Three Seas Initiative Formation: <https://3si.politic.edu.pl/the-joint-statement-on-the-three-seas-initiative-the-dubrovnik-statement-25-august-2016/>

Polish role in TSI:

<https://ine.org.pl/en/the-three-seas-initiative-poland-at-the-heart-of-a-central-europe/>

comment on Bucharest 9:

<https://www.pism.pl/publications/bucharest-nine-cooperation-strengthening-natos-eastern-flank>

comment on Central 5:

https://pism.pl/publications/The_Central_Five_Wrapping_Up_the_Forum's_First_Year

12.01.2026 — “Illiberal Turns in Central Europe – Democratic Backsliding and Its Impact on EU Cohesion”

Course block: War, Democracy and the Crisis of the Liberal International Order

Coordinator: M.A. Barbara Balicka

Conditions:

Attendance on both sessions is mandatory; absences without proper justification will result in a fail. No final exam; grades will be based on active class participation and short in-class exercises/discussions.

Class 1: Illiberal Turns in Central Europe – Democratic Backsliding and Its Impact on EU Cohesion (90 min)

- Introduction: why it matters?
- Democratic backsliding – definition and main features
- Mechanisms of democratic erosion and their impact on international relations
- EU instruments toward illiberal members (CJEU, Article 7 TEU, Rule of Law Conditionality)
- Conflict between national sovereignty and primacy of EU law
- Consequences for the political and strategic unity of the EU
- Q&A / short group reflection

LITERATURE:

- **Bermeo, N. (2016).** On Democratic Backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1), 5–19.
- **Ginsburg, T., & Huq, A. Z. (2018).** *How to Save a Constitutional Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- **Kelemen, R. D. (2020).** The European Union’s Authoritarian Equilibrium. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27(3), 481–499.
- **Sadurski, W. (2019).** *Poland’s Constitutional Breakdown*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- **Closa, C., Kochenov, D. (eds.) (2016).** *Reinforcing Rule of Law Oversight in the European Union*. Cambridge University Press.
- **Blauberger, M., & Kelemen, R. D. (2017).** Can Courts Rescue National Democracy? *Journal of European Public Policy*, 24(3), 321–336.

Optional additional readings

- **Mounk, Y. (2018).** *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It*. Harvard University Press.
- **Pech, L., & Scheppele, K. L. (2017).** Illiberalism Within: Rule of Law Backsliding in the EU. *Cambridge Yearbook of European Legal Studies*, 19, 3–47.
- **Ziólkowski, M. (ed.) (2021).** *Sovereignty in Crisis?* (if you want a Polish-language perspective).

19.01.2026 — “Redefining Sovereignty in Times of Crisis – Between National Interests and European Solidarity”

Course block: War, Democracy and the Crisis of the Liberal International Order

Coordinator: M.A. Barbara Balicka

Class 2: Redefining Sovereignty in Times of Crisis – Between National Interests and European Solidarity (90 min)

- Recap and introduction
- Sovereignty in the era of globalization and integration – theoretical approach
- Crisis as a driver of change: pandemic, war, migration
- Is sovereignty an obstacle or a prerequisite for European integration?
- Poland as a case of contesting community rules (rule of law, migration policy, Green Deal)
- Toward a new formula of sovereignty compatible with integration?
- Debate / simulation exercise: drafting a “European Sovereignty Charter”

LITERATURE:

- **Bickerton, C. J. (2012).** *European Integration: From Nation-States to Member States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- **Schimmelfennig, F. (2021).** EU Crises and Integration Theory: From the Euro Crisis to the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28(10), 1555–1576.

- **Keohane, R. O. (2002).** Ironies of Sovereignty: The European Union and the United States. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(4), 743–765.
- **Kuźniar, R. (2008).** *Prawa człowieka. Prawo, instytucje, stosunki międzynarodowe*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar (fragmenty dot. suwerenności i ochrony praw).
- **Bickerton, Hodson & Puetter (eds.) (2015).** *The New Intergovernmentalism: States and Supranational Actors in the Post-Maastricht Era*. Oxford University Press.
- **Nicolaïdis, K. (2013).** European Democracy and Its Crises. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 51(2), 351–369.

Optional additional readings

- **Mounk, Y. (2018).** *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It*. Harvard University Press.
- **Pech, L., & Scheppele, K. L. (2017).** Illiberalism Within: Rule of Law Backsliding in the EU. *Cambridge Yearbook of European Legal Studies*, 19, 3–47.
- **Ziółkowski, M. (ed.) (2021).** *Sovereignty in Crisis?* (if you want a Polish-language perspective).

26.01.2026 — Consultations for those who have not passed course modules.

02.02.2026 — Completion of the course, summary of classes, awarding of grades.

syllabus prepared by: Aleksander Krejckant, Barbara Balicka, Angelo Kramer, Gabriela Rzepka, Maciej Maślanka, Aleksander Ogrodnik