



# European Studies + German Class

## Vienna – Prague - Munich

The EU's Quest for Competitiveness:  
Technology, Geoeconomics and International  
Power Dynamics

Tentative SCHEDULE

July 20 – August 28, 2026

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In cooperation with:



Doctoral School  
of Political Science,  
Public Policy, and  
International Relations



# Vienna

Arrival: 19 July (in Vienna)

Sessions: 20 – 30 July

Departure: 30 July

Sessions will take place at:

Central European University

Quellenstraße 51, 1100 Vienna

**Senior Lecturer: Sophia C.E. Mård**

**Doctoral School  
of Political Science, Public Policy  
and International Relations**

**Central European University**



Sophia C.E. Mård is a PhD candidate at the Doctoral School of Political Science at Central European University. With advanced degrees from VU Amsterdam and King's College London, she brings a rich interdisciplinary background - of law and of politics - and regional expertise spanning European and Russian studies. Her research explores the shifting landscape of European and international security, with a particular focus on how emerging technologies are reshaping legal and political norms. She is currently involved in multiple research and consultancy projects focused on democracy, human rights, and political development in Europe.

## **General course content – the EU in the 21st century**

The sessions in Vienna introduce students to the historical trajectory of the European integration process as well as governance and the policy-making system in the EU. Further, the course analyses Europe's role as an international political and economic actor, and its relations with various countries and regions of the world.

Time	9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Mon, 20	<p><b>Introduction to the program: Course structure, plan, assignments and introduction</b></p> <p>Mandatory reading: the course syllabus (! Come with any and all questions that you still might have about the summer school)</p> <p>This session introduces students to the goals, structure, and expectations of the summer course – as well as importantly to each other, as well as the tutor. We will begin by exploring our varied assumptions, opinions, epiphanies and key questions about the EU, and its role in the contemporary world order, – set against what has been referred to as a polycrisis, marked by a variety of challenges and (potential) solutions.</p> <p><b>Guided City Walk with Tutor in Vienna – 5:00 p.m.</b> Students will be picked up in the Hotel Lobby</p>	
Tue, 21	<p><b>What is Europe: Philosophical Foundations and Competing Ideas of Europe</b></p> <p>The European Union was built through a long process that began more than fifty years ago, starting with the European Coal and Steel Community. But it's much harder to pinpoint when the idea of "Europeanness" actually began—where it came from, and how it took shape. Still, understanding this evolving sense of shared identity, cultural affinity, and political imagination that underpin the idea of Europe is crucial, as these more abstract threads often come before, and shape, the formal institutions that we now associate with the European Union. This session investigates the cultural, historical, and philosophical roots of the idea of "Europe."</p>	<p><b>What Is Europe: Identity, Belonging and Boundaries</b></p> <p>This session explores how Europe constructs its borders— both symbolic and physical—and what those boundaries reveal about identity, belonging, and political power. We'll ask who belongs and who does not in ideas about Europe, and what kinds of criteria—legal, political, or cultural—shape those decisions. Building on our earlier discussion of Europeanness, we'll examine key political flashpoints and enlargements for the intense questions about the nature, reality and source of 'Europeanness' that they tend fuel. These examples will help us explore what it means politically to be "inside" or "outside" Europe.</p>
Wed, 22	<p><b>What is (the) European (Union): Institutional Architecture</b></p> <p>Building on our socio-cultural conception of Europe, we will begin to outline the technical and empirical dimensions of the European Union as it exists today. This includes examining the foundational treaties—ranging from the Treaty of Paris to the Treaty on Stability, Coordination, and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union—that serve as the EU's constitutional framework. We will then turn to the EU's institutional architecture, focusing on the roles, powers, and interactions of its core bodies: the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament, and the Court of Justice. Additionally, we will consider the functions of two key consultative committees: the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. This will provide us with a solid foundation from which to critically engage with European politics throughout the summer school.</p>	<p><b>A Primer on Statehood, Governance, and the European Union</b></p> <p>In this session, we introduce key concepts from International Relations (IR) to explore how the European Union operates within the global political system. We begin with foundational ideas such as sovereignty, statehood, and the growing influence of non-state actors—conceptual tools that help us make sense of power and governance beyond the nation-state. These frameworks will allow us to ask: Where does the EU fit in? Is it a state, a supranational body, or something entirely new that challenges conventional categories? Building on our earlier discussions of European identity and institutional architecture, we then widen the lens to consider the international order in which the EU is embedded. Throughout the session, we aim to connect theory with real-world questions: how does the EU navigate global power structures, and what does its presence reveal about the changing nature of governance in the 21st century?</p>

Time	9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Thu, 23	<p><b>Policy-Making and Policies in the European Union</b></p> <p>This session examines the EU's policy-making process as a dynamic interplay between formal rules and informal practices. We begin with the institutional framework set out in the treaties, then turn to the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP)—the core mechanism through which most EU legislation is made. From the Commission's role in drafting proposals to negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council, we follow the legislative journey through key stages of debate, amendment, and adoption. Alongside these formal steps, we explore how trilogues, committee work, and interest group lobbying shape decisions behind the scenes.</p>	<p><b>Common Foreign and Security Policy</b></p> <p>In this session, we turn to the European Union's role in international diplomacy and foreign affairs through the lens of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). It covers all areas of foreign policy, including security and defense. Unlike most areas of EU governance, this policy area has a distinctive institutional framework, in which national diplomats and EU officials jointly make policy on the basis of consensus. We examine the exceptional nature of the CFSP, its institutional architecture, and the complex relation between EU and national foreign policy - key not only in itself, but also in shaping policy outcomes. Central to our discussion is how 27 member states attempt to speak with one voice on matters ranging from sanctions and diplomacy to crisis response.</p>
Fri, 24	<p><b>Common Security and Defence Policy</b></p> <p>Building on our discussion of the CFSP, this session focuses on the EU's growing engagement in security and defence through the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). We investigate how the EU develops and deploys civilian and military missions in crisis management, cooperates with NATO and other partners, and supports member states through instruments like Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund. Through discussion and case analysis, we will also examine the main challenges facing the CSDP including issues of strategic autonomy, operational capacity, and political cohesion.</p>	<p><b>Action, In-Action and the Everyday Practice of EU Foreign and Security Policy</b></p> <p>This session shifts from institutional frameworks to real-world application, focusing on how the European Union's foreign and security policy is implemented in practice. Through these examples, we assess the EU's capacity to act coherently and effectively on the global stage, and the practical constraints it faces in doing so in everyday action and (in)action.</p>
Mon, 27	<p><b>Regional Challenges: Strained Partnerships (EU-US, EU-NATO)</b></p> <p>This session explores the evolving dynamics between the European Union and its key transatlantic partners—the United States and NATO. We examine sources of tension in these relationships, including shifting geopolitical priorities, burden-sharing debates, strategic autonomy, and divergent policy approaches on defense, trade, and global security. At the same time, we consider efforts to manage and strengthen these partnerships through dialogue, institutional coordination, and joint initiatives. The session evaluates both the structural challenges and potential solutions for maintaining effective cooperation in an increasingly complex international environment.</p>	<p><b>Regional Challenges: Strained Partnerships (China)</b></p> <p>This session examines the increasingly complex and often strained relationship between the European Union and China. We explore key areas of tension, including trade imbalances, human rights concerns, strategic dependencies, and competing geopolitical interests. Particular focus is given to the EU's evolving stance toward China as a "partner, competitor, and systemic rival," and how this multifaceted view shapes its foreign policy. We also consider the tools and strategies the EU employs to navigate this challenging relationship—ranging from diplomacy and trade instruments to investment screening and coordinated action with like-minded partners. The session critically assesses how the EU seeks to balance engagement with assertiveness in its approach to China.</p>

Time	9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Tue, 28	<p><b>Climate Change and Energy Security</b></p> <p>This session examines the European Union's role as a global leader in environmental governance. We trace the development of EU environmental policy, its legal foundations in the Treaties, and the integration of environmental objectives across other policy areas. Particular attention is given to the European Green Deal, the EU's climate targets, and its regulatory frameworks for emissions, biodiversity, and sustainable energy. We also consider how the EU balances environmental leadership with economic and political interests, both internally and in international negotiations - such as in relation to the meaning of development. Through case studies and discussion, we assess the challenges and limitations of the EU's approach to environmental governance.</p>	<p><b>The EU, Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law</b></p> <p>This lecture examines how the EU defines and applies the principles of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. These values, rooted in human dignity and enshrined in Article 2 TEU, are considered universal and indivisible, covering civil, political, social, and cultural rights. In its external action, the EU promotes these values as universal norms. However, critics—especially from non-Western contexts—argue that this reflects a Western-centric model used to serve strategic interests. We will explore how the EU advances its principles both internally, in cases like Hungary, and externally, while addressing the tensions and criticisms it faces in doing so.</p>
Wed, 29	<p>Morning: if possible, Q&amp;A with Emma Wiesner, EU Parliamentarian for the Swedish centre party (TBC)</p> <p>- Short presentation on working at the EU parliament, followed by a Q&amp;A</p> <p>Visit to the House of the EU + Roleplaying Game</p> <p>An interactive visit to the House of the EU will be followed by a role-play simulation (at 14:00) where students assume the positions of different EU institutions. This experiential learning activity will help consolidate our knowledge of EU decision-making and diplomacy, through practice.</p>	
Thu, 30		<p><b>Written exam, summary and outlook</b></p> <p><b>Departure to Prague (in the afternoon)</b></p>

# Prague

Arrival: 30 July

Sessions: 31 July and 1 August

Departure: 3 August

Session will take place at:

Anglo-americká vysoká škola / Anglo-American University Prague

Letenská 120/5, 118 00 Praha 1

## Lecturer

Prof. Dan Marek

Palacký University



Dan Marek is Associate Professor of European Politics at the Department of Politics and European Studies, Palacký University, Czech Republic.

He has studied at Palacký University (Czech Republic), University of Umea (Sweden), UCLA (USA) and Hull University (UK). He taught Central European and EU politics at universities in the Netherlands, the UK and USA.

His teaching and research interests include European Union politics, policies and Central European politics. He is a co-author of *Cohesion Policy in the European Union* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and *The Czech Republic and the European Union* (Routledge, 2011) and co-editor of *EU Cohesion Policy after Enlargement* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) and *The New Member States and the European Union: Foreign Policy and Europeanization* (Routledge, 2013).

His other publications include articles on European and Czech politics in the *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *Publius*, the *Journal of International Relations and Development*, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* and the *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*. He also worked as an advisor to the Czech government on the preparations for the Czech EU Presidency (2007-09).

## General course content – Europeanization of Member States

The sessions Prague are devoted to Europeanization, i.e. the question in how far the EU changes the political system, politics and policies of its Member States. In this regard and given Prague as venue, the course will especially take into account the perspective of an Eastern European Member State that joined the EU rather recently. Dan Marek of the Palacký University Prague will motivate students to reflect on Member States' different preferences on how to proceed with European integration and why Eastern European Member States currently hold divergent ideas on the EU than Western neighbors with regard to migration-related issues or domestic political reform.

Time			
Thu, 30	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Arrival in Prague</b> MISU staff will assist you with your travels</p>		
Fri, 31	<p><b>Transformation processes in Eastern Europe since 1989: a historic overview</b></p> <p>The end of communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) was fast, unexpected and unplanned process. This session will look at the unique political and economic transition of CEE countries to democracy and market economy.</p>	<p><b>Central and Eastern European states and their interests in European integration: the political, economic and societal dimension</b></p> <p>For CEECs, EU membership marked the end of an almost 15-year effort to “return to Europe” after more than four decades of communist rule and Soviet domination. This session will look at the political, economic and societal dimension of EU’s eastward enlargement.</p>	
Sat, 1	<p><b>The Czech Republic as an EU member state</b></p> <p>As a candidate state, the Czech Republic was forced to accept EU rules and policies that it had no role in making. As a member state, however, it has a formal role in EU institutions and an opportunity to influence the EU decision-making process. In this session we will discuss how the Czech Republic copes with her role as an EU member state.</p>		
Sun, 2			
Mon, 3	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Departure by train</b> MISU staff will assist you with your travels</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Arrival in Munich</b> MISU staff will pick you up at Munich’s main station</p>		

**Departure to Munich: Monday, 3 August**

# Munich – German Language Course

Arrival: 3 August

Sessions: August 4 – 28 August

Departure: 29 August (from Munich)

Sessions will take place at:

tba

For more information on the German class, please check the schedule on our website:



<https://ssk-misu.de>