

INSTITUT D'ETUDES EUROPEENNES



**EXECUTIVE MASTER IN EUROPEAN UNION STUDIES
(MEUS)**

**METHODOLOGY IN EUROPEAN STUDIES
COURSE OUTLINE & FINAL WORK GUIDE**

Academic Year 2017-2018

EXECUTIVE MASTER IN EUROPEAN STUDIES (MEUS)

ACADEMIC YEAR 2017-2018

METHODOLOGY IN EUROPEAN STUDIES

Lecturer: Seda Gürkan (IEE)

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- **Room:** Kant
- **Sessions:** 20/09, 18/10, 9/11, 2/12, 26/01, 20/04, 23/04, 25/04
- **Office hours:** Fridays 12:15-14:15 only by appointment, Institute of Sociology, S building, 11th floor, Room S.11.224.

CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES

The course provides an essential background for writing an academic paper. It is primarily designed for supporting Executive Master students in European Union Studies in the preparation, drafting and completion of their final work but also for providing them the necessary knowledge in undertaking a comprehensive research project in European studies.

The course provides participants an overview of the main theories of European integration as well as of methodology and research in social sciences.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

The course has three fundamental learning objectives:

- to enhance students' research skills for conducting an academic research in European studies by introducing them to main European integration theories as well as to the basic notions such as "research puzzle", "research question", "hypothesis", "induction", "conceptualization" or "case study";
- to familiarise students with the major components of a research design and enable them to construct a coherent research design by connecting theoretical framework with appropriate data analysis and data collection methods;
- to develop students' written and oral communication skills in social sciences for presenting research findings.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

The course is organized in eight sessions of three hours each.

Theoretical sessions include two parts: In the first part, a lecture around the main theme of the week is delivered in an interactive way with the participants. The second part is dedicated to either class discussion on an academic article illustrating the topic presented in the first hour or group exercise with a focus on students' research projects.

The sessions dedicated to students' research projects (sessions 7 and 8) are animated by the students. Participants are required to make an oral presentation of their preliminary research project (final paper). During these project-oriented sessions, each participant will receive comments from their peers and from the Professor.

In addition to lectures and interactive class activities, students can get intensive coaching on their final projects by the professor (by appointment during office hours).

Upon successful completion of this course, students will acquire the following knowledge and skills:

- ability to conduct a coherent and scientifically sound academic research in the field of European studies;
- good knowledge of the main theories of European integration;
- ability to formulate methodologically appropriate, theoretically and socially relevant research questions, and also ability to construct a logical argument and to support it in a consistent way by referring to the existing literature and empirical data;
- basic knowledge on how to conduct a literature review and to locate a research design within the framework of the existing social scientific literature;
- basic understanding of the main data collection and data analysis methods used in the social sciences;
- in-depth knowledge of the rules and conventions of academic writing (style, referencing, footnoting, bibliographies, etc.);
- ability to write an academic paper and present it orally.

INSTRUCTION LANGUAGE:

The course is taught in English and reading material will be in this language. The language for both oral and written assignments is English.

SUPPORT MATERIAL:

PowerPoint presentations will be shared with students after each session. Additional texts around the theme of the week or examples of “rigorous” research in European studies might be circulated to the students to frame class discussion. Reading material on the topic of the week will be provided by the teacher at the beginning of each semester.

METHODS OF EVALUATION:

- 1. SEMINAR (5 ECTS) _____/20**
 - a. Mandatory readings and class participation _____/4 points
 - b. Weekly assignments _____/3 points
 - i. Possible research topics
 - ii. Research topics and questions
 - iii. Topic, research question and hypothesis
 - c. Draft Project _____/5 points
 - d. Book review (2000 words) _____/4 points
 - e. Oral presentation _____/4 points
- 2. FINAL WORK (10 ECTS) _____/20**

Active class participation is essential. During each class, the professor will evaluate the quality of interventions of each participant (NOT the quantity). The evaluation criteria are: 1) the originality and depth of comments, 2) the links established between the readings and the participants' research projects 3) the regularity of interventions. The final evaluation will cover all interventions in the class.

Attendance is mandatory: two unjustified absences may lead to being excluded from the course. Assignments handed in late cannot be taken into account for assessment. Penalties systematically apply unless participants have to deal with exceptional circumstances, i.e. health problems for which a medical certificate is available.

Draft project: Students are required to prepare a short summary of their final work (**2000 to 3000 words (4-5 pages) summary of their preliminary research project**) outlining the topic, the research question, the hypothesis, the theoretical framework, the 'state of the art' and the methodological approach (not necessarily in that order). The deadline for this assignment is 16 February 2018. (For more details see below "template for the final work").

Book review: Students are required to critically analyze a research/scientific book in the social sciences closely related to their chosen research topic. This review (2000 words) is due for 12 January 2018. Detailed guidelines on this assignment will be distributed to the students separately.

Oral presentations (max 15 minutes) on students' research papers outlining their research topic, research question, its contribution to the discipline and originality, the hypothesis, the theoretical framework and the methodological approach. Corrective feedback will be provided both by the other participants and the professor. The evaluation criteria are: 1) the clarity of the material, 2) the structure of the presentation, 3) the ability to summarize, 4) the attention to pedagogy; 5) bibliographical references, 6) time management.

Students are required to provide a short summary of their presentation in advance of their class presentation. This one-page summary must bring out the outline of the oral presentation. It should also cover key terms and concepts necessary for understanding the presentation. Tables and graphs are welcome but not required.

Book review and draft project should be sent by mail in the following format:

Object: MEUS/METHOD/Type of assignment

Please name the document as follows: NAME_Type of assignment_Date (e.g. GURKAN_Draft Project_16Feb18)

CALENDAR OF SESSIONS
2017-2018 ACADEMIC YEAR

	Date	Theme	Main questions that will guide the session	Assignments
1	20/09/17 6-9 pm	First part: Introduction, presentation and course overview Second part: Theoretical and methodological challenges in European studies	How to study topics related to the European Union? What are the challenges posed by European studies in conducting research?	Reading the course manual
2	18/10/17 6-9 pm	European integration theories	What is the meaning of European integration? How European integration theories help us to answer some fundamental questions like “what is the EU? How does it work? What is the impact of the EU on member states and on third countries?”	Mandatory readings
3	9/11/17 6-9 pm	The attributes of a scientific research Research design, research question and literature review	What does it mean to conduct a scientific research? What are the characteristics of scientific research? What are the main components of the research design? What are the criteria for choosing a research question? How to find and formulate theoretically and socially relevant, methodologically appropriate research questions? How to conduct a literature review? What is the relationship between the literature review and research question?	Mandatory readings & Note card on possible research topics & start looking for a supervisor
4	2/12/17 10am-1 pm	Argumentation and hypothesis development	How to argue and how not to argue? How to develop a strong argument? What are the different types of arguments? What is the relationship between argument and theory? How to criticize arguments and deliver a convincing argument?	Mandatory readings & Note card on research topic and research questions
-	12/01/18	---	---	Book Review
5	26/01/18 6-9 pm	Case study and comparative method & main data collection and data analysis methods	What are the advantages and disadvantages of case study method? How to choose cases? How can you generalize from a single case? Why do we compare? What do we compare? How do we compare? What are the main data collection and data analysis methods in social sciences? What is the connection between data collection and data analysis? What are the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods? Which one is more appropriate for my research project?	Mandatory readings & Note card on research topic, research questions and hypothesis
-	16/02/18	---	---	DRAFT PROJECT
6	20/04/18 6-9 pm	Academic writing	What are the useful tools for writing academic papers?	Mandatory readings
7	23/04/18 6-9 pm	Student presentations	Class discussion on students’ projects	Oral presentation of research project
8	25/04/18 6-9 pm	Student presentations & Conclusion: Rethinking the art of research in European studies	Class discussion on students’ projects & Interactive overview of main issues addressed during the course	Oral presentation of research project

FINAL WORK – RESEARCH (10 ECTS):

Final paper on a topic assigned to the student in cooperation with the teacher and the academic supervisor dealing with issues related to EU studies or European affairs.

All papers must meet the following requirements:

- The topics will be assigned in cooperation with the teacher and the academic supervisor and will deal with issues relevant either to the Internship, or to the topic chosen by the student.
- Papers should avoid grammatical or spelling errors, as well as PLAGIARISM.
- The length of the paper is 30 pages (+/-10%).
- Citations should use standard format and footnotes are preferred.

Such requirements are detailed in full length in the “VADE MECUM FOR THE FINAL DISSERTATION (IEE)”. It is required that all papers comply with this document and the rules it prescribes.

How to find a supervisor?

The assignment due on 9 November 2017 (note card on research topic) will serve as a basis for approaching a possible supervisor. Students must consider the following limitations and requirements:

- Only Members of the MEUS academic staff can be approached.
- Possible supervisors can be approached at any time although they may reserve their judgement to after 9 November 2017 and the display of a draft project.
- The agreement of MEUS academic members to supervise the final work will be formalized with the DRAFT PROJECT that students *must* submit on 16 February 2018, before 5 PM, by e-mail to sgurkan@ulb.ac.be with the supervisor in cc.
- The DRAFT PROJECT will be realized in the framework of the seminar.

See below the template for the Draft Project.

The deadline for submitting the Final Work is 15 June 2018, 11:59 PM. Alternatively, students can submit their assignment on 15 August 2018, 11:59 PM.

Please submit it according to the prescriptions of the VADE MECUM mentioned above, by Email to sgurkan@ulb.ac.be with the supervisor in cc.

DRAFT PROJECT – FINAL WORK (Template)

- Personal details:
 - Name
 - First Name
 - Program (MEUS)
 - Address
 - Telephone
 - Email
- Language of the draft project (and the final work):
 - English
- Title: 1-2 lines describing the topic
- Name of the supervisor
- The content should include the following:
 - Justification of the choice of topic: 3-5 lines describing the scientific, societal, or personal interest of the topic
 - Research question(s)
 - State of the art: List of 15 scientific references on the topic presented according to the guidelines
 - Theoretical framework or approach: Approach, concept, theory that will frame the research (about 5 lines)
 - Your main argument or hypothesis(/ses) that will be tested in the research
 - Case selection or fieldwork: Specify the nature and number of cases selected or fieldwork, as well as the temporal and geographical scope of the research ; Justify these choices (3-5 lines)
 - Data collection method: Specify the nature of the data to be collected for the research, as well as the proposed data collection method(s); Justify these choices (3-5 lines)
 - Data analysis method: Specify the proposed data analysis method; Justify this choice (3-5 lines)
 - Foreseen difficulties in conducting the research and how you intend to overcome these difficulties (3-5 lines)

The deadline for submitting the draft project is 16 February 2018, 11:59 PM.
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