

MINOR EUROPEAN STUDIES 2026-2027

For registration please fill out the separate Minor Registration Form

		Title	Code	ECTS	Assessment
Period 1: 31-08-2026 / 23-10-2026	Course Skill	The Idea of Europe Back to the Sources	MES3000 MES3500	9 3	grade EPF*
Period 2: 26-10-2026 / 18-12-2026	Course Skill	Great Expectations Negotiation skills	MES3001 MES3501	9 3	grade EPF*
Period 3: 04-01-2027 / 29-01-2027	Course	Europe: a critical reflection	MES3002	6	grade

*EPF: assessed on an Excellent-Pass-Fail basis

Introduction

What is Europe? Through its long and turbulent history different ideas of Europe have emerged. These ideas have been playing important roles for stabilizing European identity, not least by demarcating Europe from what it is not. In the recent past, one of the most important actors in terms of shaping the idea of Europe is the European Union (EU). The EU is a leading global economic actor. It is also seen by many as the most successful international integration project in recent history, and as promotor of peace, freedom, security and justice. Since its establishment, its influence has grown in areas ranging from internal market policies, human rights standards and democracy promotion. Recently, however, the EU has been facing serious challenges, ranging from a war on the European continent coupled with a changing geostrategic environment turning against the so-called liberal ruled-based international order to the rise of the far right that rejects the core values of the European integration project, to name just a few.

How successful can the EU be as a global governance actors and a social and economic integration project will be determined by how well it will respond to the challenges and will require professionals skilled with comprehensive understanding of its history, values, institutions, and decision-making processes. To understand the EU's dynamics one needs to analyze its regional, national, and transnational structures and developments, employing approaches from political science, sociology, cultural studies, history, law and economics.

Upon completion of the programme, students will have acquired a thorough understanding of how the European Union works and will be ready to apply this knowledge in a number of internships and employment opportunities. Many social sciences and humanities graduates end up working as policy makers or European policy-making and international affairs professionals, in Brussels or EU capitals. Some of them engage with Europe within non-governmental organizations, as well as think-tanks, media agencies and industry.

The Minor in European Studies is the ideal programme for you if:

- You are interested in Europe's history, culture, society, politics and law, as well as in challenges contemporary Europe faces;
- You want to supplement your main degree with theoretical and practical knowledge about the European Union.
- You would like to pursue a career at a European institution, national or local government, international (non-) governmental organisations/institutions NGOs or in international business.

Period 1: The idea of Europe

This first course of the Minor European Studies curriculum has an introductory character. It studies questions that are fundamental to a critical-conceptual understanding of Europe. More specifically, the course combines a historical approach to the idea of Europe with a focus on contemporary debates regarding European identities. How has the meaning of Europe – a term in mythology, geography, culture, and politics – evolved from ancient times till the present? What have been common historical experiences that have fostered a sense of Europe and “Europeanness”? What are key elements in the self-understanding of Europeans today? How to contextualize and reflect on those elements? Ultimately, does Europe even exist as a distinguishable historical entity and does it matter as a source of personal and group identity?

At the end of this course, you will:

- Identify the key historical transformations of European identities
- Have an overview of the historical processes that have fed into such changes
- Grasp the mechanisms of collective identity formation
- Be able to theorize and critically reflect on the concept of identity and related analytical concepts

Period 1: Back to the Sources

This research training offers a first introduction on how to deal with the problems of tracing, selecting and assessing primary sources, especially those related to the (early) history of European integration. During the course, the specific characteristics of the following types of primary sources are discussed: public political statements, archival government records and public opinion sources. Students will be introduced to the quality control criteria of authenticity, credibility and representativity. Each of the three assignments is devoted to a specific problem and a specific category of historical sources: the assignment on political statements is mainly devoted to the critical analysis of the authenticity and credibility sources. The assignment on archival sources focuses on the problems of representativity and combining a variety of sources. Finally, the assignment on public opinion sources addresses the problems of representativity and credibility again.

Course objectives

This skills training teaches students to adopt a critical and methodical attitude towards sources.

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Distinguish between primary and secondary sources;
- Appreciate the importance of primary sources for the study of historical and contemporary phenomena;

- Recognise the different characteristics and pitfalls of several types of primary sources.

Period 2: Great Expectations

The main aim of this course is to provide students with a basic understanding of the European Union: its development, its institutional framework and current problems. First, this course introduces the European integration process since the early 1950s. Using the current debate on the future of the Union as our point of departure, this course goes back to the early years of the European Communities and subsequently traces all the major developments in the EU up to the present. Secondly, we investigate the institutions of the European Union, their tasks and the main decision-making mechanisms. Finally, current political challenges of European integration are put up for debate. Throughout the whole course, students, additionally, get familiarized with the main European integration theories. Course objectives: To provide insight into the historical development, the EU institutions, decision-making processes and current issues of the EU, and to get familiar with integration theories.

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Period 2: Negotiation skills

In the EU, negotiations are the daily routine. National ministries negotiate with each other to determine their countries' positions; ministers try to defend their national positions in the Council against the European Commission's efforts to secure its own proposals; Members of the European Parliament defend their positions before the Council and the Commission; lobbyists try to influence representatives of various EU institutions, and so on and so forth. The EU's decision making processes involve complex and intensive negotiations, whereby decisions are reached only after 'long and tortuous dialogues'. When focusing on negotiation practices within the context of the EU, it is not only important to realize that they occupy a central place in the decision making processes. It is also crucial to understand that they take place in particular contexts, and consequently, these processes are complex and highly diverse.

This eight-week skills training is organized around three simulation games, which allow students to experience different forms of negotiations, improve their negotiation skills and to better understand the practicalities of decision-making processes in Brussels.

Course objectives

- Provide students with a basic introduction of the concepts of negotiation and negotiation theories. These include different negotiation positions, as well as basic game theory concepts;
- Improve students' negotiation skills by applying these concepts in their simulations, and enhancing their ability to design their negotiation strategies based on a given mandate;
- Provide students with a better understanding of EU decision-making at sub-systemic, systemic and super-systemic levels of policy-making, involving actors across different levels and policy areas.

Period 3: Europe: a critical reflection

The concluding course brings the whole minor together and offers you the chance to engage in original research. Equipped with the knowledge gained in the previous courses, you will work with a fellow student

on a comparative research paper. The course book provides you with broadly defined topic areas from the field of European Studies so that you can pick a topic of your own choosing. The tutorial meetings will take the form of workshops to accompany the research process, allowing you to discuss different crucial stages of the writing process (abstract, research design, introduction, 1st draft). You will furthermore attend an introduction-writing workshop offered by FASoS' writing coach John Harbord. At a conference, you and your partner present your drafts to your peers.

Course objectives

This course trains you in key academic processes:

- electing a topic for research
- developing a research design
- writing a co-authored research paper
- presenting in a conference setting.