



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN STUDIES

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To: The University of Bergen, Faculty of Social Sciences
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Programme evaluation report, Bachelor programme in European Studies (BASV-EUR) 2020

This evaluation report is the second report out of four, and it is as previously based on the instructions described in the *Programsensormappe for der samfunnsvitenskapelige fakultet*. As agreed upon with the Department of Comparative Politics, all of my four reports will be in English. As some of the courses and course instructors are non-Norwegian speakers, this will facilitate the communication of the evaluation report results to those concerned. In contrast to the previous report, which had the assignment to evaluate the overall programme structure, this year's assignment has two main parts: 1) to evaluate the integration of the comparative politics and history elements in the European studies courses (with a particular focus on EUR103 and EUR105 since they have changed since last year); and 2) to provide feedback and ideas regarding academic content for a potential new joint EUR course at the third semester of the programme (to substitute the SAMPOL115 course).

This report is based on course documentation provided by the Department of Comparative Politics, and a skype interview the 27 November 2019, with Director of Studies Leiv Marsteintredet, student councillor Joakim Dahl Haaland, and course instructor for EUR101, Senior lecturer Kjetil Evjen. In addition, I have also had email communications with the course instructor for the EUR103 course, Ines Prodöhl (Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion), and the EUR105 course, Raimondas Ibenskas (Department of Comparative Politics). Both of them have generously provided me with more detailed course material, including reading materials, lecture structures, examples of examination, and assignment instructions. They have also been very helpful in providing self-reflections and ideas regarding the integration of the two academic disciplines, as well as their thoughts behind the changes they have implemented (or will implement during 2020 and 2021) in their courses. Moreover, they have also shared their thoughts on a potential new European studies course.

The disposition of the report follows the two-part assignment. I will start to discuss the integration of the comparative politics and history elements in the European studies courses EUR101, EUR103 and EUR105. Thereafter I will discuss the suggestion of a new academic content for a potential new joint EUR course at the third semester of the programme.

Overall integration of comparative politics and history in the overall programme

The Bachelor programme in European Studies is administrated by the Department of Comparative Politics at the University of Bergen since 2012. Before that, it was organised by the Department of Archaeology, History, Culture and Religion. The program is based on cooperation between the academic disciplines history and comparative politics. During the first year, three courses are European studies courses (EUR), taken by all students enrolled in the European studies bachelor programme. I will firstly consider how and to what extent these courses integrate the two disciplines. Each of these three European studies courses will be discussed from this perspective below.

Secondly, the focus is on integration between the academic disciplines in the programme as a whole. At the moment, European studies courses are only available during the first year. During the second and third year the students thus only take courses within their disciplinary specialisation. This is in itself another aspect of (lack of) integration between the two academic disciplines in the programme as a whole. The idea of introducing a new European studies course at the second year is thus a step in the direction of increasing the integration of comparative politics and history in the overall programme. Suggestions and reflections regarding form and content of such a new course will be discussed later in this report.

Integration of Comparative Politics and History in the European studies courses

The specific challenges of assessing interdisciplinary programmes have been noticed in academic research. The overall recommendations are to make qualitative assessments of the specific content of the curriculum and teaching, rather than simply counting *pro forma* interdisciplinary indicators, such as disciplinary backgrounds of teachers and/or course literature authors. The assessment should consider the unique goals and mission of the particular programme and preferably use several assessment techniques and aspects.¹ It is thus important to consider whether different perspectives and approaches are offered. In this report I will therefore not only consider who are teaching the courses and the disciplinary background of the literature authors, but also consider the form and content of the courses.

In dictionaries, the words interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary tend to be presented as synonyms. For example: cross-disciplinary: ‘relating to, or involving two or more disciplines’, and interdisciplinary: ‘involving two or more academic, scientific, or artistic disciplines’ (Merriam-Webster dictionary). However, within academia, it is common to find more fine-grained definitions, making distinctions between, firstly, research and teaching that presents different academic perspectives side-by-side, or one after the other, and secondly, research and teaching that more actively integrate different academic perspectives in e.g. one article or one course. The idea is that the former leaves more of the responsibility to integrate the perspectives to the readers/students, whereas the latter aims to more actively present the integration of the perspectives to the readers or students. For the purpose of this evaluation report, the actual definitions are less important, but the discussion points to an aspect I will bring in to the discussion of the integration of the two academic disciplines.

¹ Field, M., & Lee, R. (1992). Assessment of Interdisciplinary Programmes. *European Journal of Education*, 27(3), 277. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/10.2307/1503454>

EUR 101 Innføring i europeisk historie og politikk (Introduction to European History and Politics)

Starting with the most obvious indicators of integration between history and comparative politics, this course has two main *course instructors*, each representing one of the two disciplines: Christhard Hoffman, professor in history and Kjetil Evjen, senior lecturer in comparative politics. This is a formal indication of integration of the two disciplines. The course consists of two main parts: 1) ideas about Europe from the Ancient time to the Second World War, and 2) European political history and the European integration project after 1945. This is a logical separation and a good compromise of introducing students who will later specialise in either comparative politics or history. The course literature also contains a variation of suitable books and articles from both disciplines.

The integration of the different perspectives offered by history and comparative politics could however potentially be somewhat improved, if allowing for a less strict division into two course modules. Even though there is a joint final exam, the set-up of the exam allows the students to choose to write about one of two questions, each covering one of the two parts of the course. This was something I discussed with the students I met last year, and they commented that this form of exam meant that they tended to focus mostly on the literature belonging to one of the two parts, and only skimming the literature of the other. The risk is also higher that students with specialisation in history, will chose to focus more on the literature belonging to part 1, and chose the exam question relating to this part – and vice versa. This might be seen as logical from the instrumental student perspective, whereas from a teacher/programme perspective it might be more valuable if the students focused also on those perspectives they will get less opportunity to study later in the programme.

As I suggested last year, if there is a wish to strengthen the integration of the two academic disciplines in the future, one quite easy solution could be to change the way the examination is set up. This could be done in several different ways, e.g. offering shorter questions and making it mandatory to answer at least one relating to each time period (e.g. 2 of 3, or 3 of 4). A more ambitious change could be to change the style of questions. They could for example be asked in a more thematic manner, asking students to compare a phenomenon, e.g. migration, European integration or nation-state formation, over a longer period of time (or between two time periods), thereby forcing the students to study both parts of the course literature more equally. This would however most likely also need to affect the way at least some of the lectures and/or seminars are set up, to help the first semester students to understand how such comparisons can be made. Either way, a changed exam will probably also to some extent address the issue mentioned by Kjetil, that one of the students in the course evaluation thought the literature list was a bit ‘light’. In reality it is not, but if students tend to not read half of it, then it may of course be seen as a bit too little.

In sum, this course is on the one hand perfectly balanced between the two disciplines as there are two main course instructors, representing each discipline, and a balanced literature list. However, as discussed above, there is a difference between on the one hand a more formal, but in practice divided, form of integration with different parts following each other; and on the other hand an integration of perspectives within each course. This course have an integration in the course, but is then divided into two rather distinct parts. As suggested above, the integration could relatively easy be increased by making some creative changes to the set-up of the exam. If a higher ambition is seen as desirable, a more thematic approach to the lectures and the exam could also potentially also be considered.

EUR 103 Europe after 1945: Resources, Demography, Economy

This course has a new main course instructor since last year, Ines Prodöhl, associate professor in history. She has initiated a process to change the course. In spring 2019, when she taught the course for the first time, she updated the curriculum and made some minor changes to the study guide. Being new to a course it makes sense to follow the previous structure the first time, in order to assess how it works, before implementing any major changes. Moreover, in Norway (as in Sweden) the process to make substantial changes to a course takes a lot of time, as there are specific procedures to follow with various steps of approval at department and faculty level to get the suggested changes approved. Ines has kindly shared information not only about the changes already made, but also her ideas about coming changes. These will however not be implemented until spring 2021, due to the lengthy process.

In its current form, this course combines historical aspects of Europe with geographical, focusing especially on three main themes: resources, people and economy. The course is in English and it is open to Erasmus students, although the exam can always be written in Norwegian if the students want to. There are also many history students taking this course as an elective. As can be seen from the title, there is an interdisciplinary aim of the course, albeit not so much with comparative politics, rather with economy and geography. The main emphasis is on history, as well as most of the teachers.

The changes made to the course already, as well as planned for spring 2020, seem to be very good. I notice for example that there are some more lectures included in the plan for 2020, something that the student asked for when I met them last year. Moreover, the demography part has been replaced by a wider welfare state perspective in the 2020 description, which was suggested in the previous evaluation report. The geography part that the students found to be too loosely connected to the rest of the course is also removed, allowing more time to focus on e.g. the differences in developments in the eastern and western parts of Europe after World War 2. The reading list is also updated with newer publications. In general, all changes seem to be improvements following the suggestions and addressing some of the criticized aspects.

For the 2021 spring semester Ines has suggested further changes to the course, reflected in the proposal to change the course title to: *Europe after 1945: Transformations in European Economies and Societies*. The transformation would provide the students with a comprehensive overview of the time period, something which they seem to need at this level. The overview would use a wide economic history perspective as a way to provide structure and a path to follow throughout this lecture series and complex part of European history. It is suggested that this perspective has the possibility to include political, social and cultural aspects as well, i.e. potentially a stronger integration of the programme disciplines. The plan is to also reduce the history of European integration aspects, as these are well covered in the other European studies courses. Finally there is a proposal to change the form of exam to one take-home exam and one shorter school exam.

My overall assessment is that the steps already taken are good, and definitely in the right direction. The change from a focus on demography to a wider welfare state perspective also has the potential to strengthen the integration of history and comparative politics, as the various historical developments help us to understand the way different welfare state regimes functions (and are challenged) today. In addition, the removal of the geography section and the increased emphasis on different developments in the Eastern and Western parts of Europe throughout this part of history is extremely important, also for students who will specialise in comparative politics.

The suggestions for further improvement of the course in the future are very ambitious, and seem to not only make the course better in itself, but to also provide a better fit of the course within the wider programme structure. The reduced focus on European integration history, and instead an increase the focus on different economic, political and social developments across all of Europe, is very good. It complements the rest of the programme better, but also adds a stronger historical understanding necessary to understand differences in political systems today. Hence, it has the potential to also increase the integration of the two disciplines in terms of content. As a take-home exam allows for more analytical questions, this seems as a very good option that would also increase the progression in the programme. It also partly addresses the students' request of more feedback options. In addition, such an exam also more easily allows for questions that encompass elements of relevance to both history and comparative politics.

In sum, although being a course that is mainly taught by historians, using mainly historically oriented literature, the actual content of the course has several connections to comparative politics. It is more integrated than it would appear from a quick look at only formal indicators. This has even further potential of being the case following the suggested changes by the new course instructor.

EUR105 European Union Institutions and Politics

There is a new main course instructor also for the EUR105 course: Raimondas Ibenskas, associate professor at the department of Comparative Politics. This course focuses on institutions, political processes, and policy areas of the European Union, and has previously also had a substantial part on European integration theories. Raimondas has made some changes to the course compared to last year. Especially the part on theories of European integration has been reduced to a one lecture overview, and instead broader aspects of politics in the EU have been added, specifically lectures on interest groups, political parties and public opinion. Raimondas also replaced the textbook by Hix and Høyland with the one by Lelieveldt and Princen. The latter is more recent, and also somewhat more basic than a rather advanced text by Hix and Høyland. Otherwise, most aspects of this very highly appreciated course, remains the same, including the Jean Monnet module, allowing the introduction of a practitioners' perspective by inviting EU Commission officials and other practitioners, and the digital deliverable group assignment.

The changes seem very reasonable, and address one aspect highlighted last year, if this was really a first year (100-level) course in terms of scope and ambition. The current changes make the course more in line with expectations of a first year course. Especially the part on the theories on European integration was one of the few things the students I talked to last year were considering to potentially change, due to being perceived as very difficult. Raimondas also argues that the introduction of more lectures on interest groups, political parties and public opinion provide them with important conceptual and analytical tools to understand the EU politics and policy-making. This seems very reasonable to me. The change in course literature is also in line with the recommendations I made last year.

The course instructor and most of the literature used in the course is firmly based in political science, and the focus is very much on how the EU works today. There is no obvious expectation to find much integration with the history discipline in such a course. However,

when asked to consider historical aspects and perspectives in the course, Raimondas did provide some interesting reflections, for example:

“The first lecture of the course and the readings assigned to it largely focus on the historical development of European integration. One of the required readings is a 2011 article by Gary Marks on empires in Europe, which extends the historical perspective back to the times of the Roman Empire and hopefully will help students to place European integration in the last six decades in the long-term perspective.”

Moreover, Raimondas added that some historical changes are covered in the literature assigned for the lectures on policies and institutions of the EU, as well as partly in the readings to the lecture on European integration.

Another aspect that needs to be considered here is how the complementarity between EUR103 and EUR105 might be affected by the changes of the two courses. As mentioned above, the idea is to reduce the aspect of historical European integration in EUR103, in order to have more room to cover broader European developments after WW2. It is important to coordinate between the courses to make sure not too much disappears.

My assessment is, that as the EU has changed (and continues to change) very much over the decades, any student of the EU and the European integration process, must also learn about, and understand, the historic developments that shaped those changes. In that sense, there is in practice more integration of perspectives from the two disciplines than one might first assess if only looking at instructors and authors disciplinary background. In fact, much like history in itself being very interdisciplinary, I would argue that EU focused political science is to some extent too. Different perspectives (history, but also law and economy) are essential in order to understand the complex political development. It is thus not very surprising that some of the texts by (European Studies oriented) political scientists, take a more interdisciplinary approach in their writing, e.g. the article by Gary Marks.

Regarding the complementarity between EUR103 and EUR105, I would argue that there is an interesting opportunity to consider increasing the integration between history and comparative politics here. It does make sense to have specific lecture(s) on European integration history in EUR105 rather than EUR103 (especially as some students take EUR105 it as a stand-alone course). It allows EUR103 to keep the broader focus on Europe as a continent. Why not bring in a teacher from history to give (a) lecture(s) on European integration history in EUR105? Not only would it be a good use of resources and expertise, but it would also provide a more obvious indicator of interdisciplinary studies to the students of the European studies bachelor programme.

In sum, although being a course that is taught by political scientists, using mainly political science literature, the actual content of the course has some historical connections. This integration between the two academic disciplines (and departments) could potentially be further increased. When the changes to the EUR103 comes into effect in the spring semester of 2021, it would make sense to have at least one lecture by a historian on European integration history, to provide a fuller overall history lecture on the historical context in which the specific European integration developments took place.

A potential new course in European studies at the second year

At the moment, European studies students specialize in either history or comparative politics after year one and have no more courses together (see table 1). In the third year they have a EUR-course, but as it is the exchange semester in the autumn, the students do not study together.

Table 1 Structure of the European Studies Bachelor programme (BASV-EUR), 3 years

	Autumn		Spring	
Yr 1	EXPHIL-SVEKS Examen philosophicum- skuleeksamen, 10 p <i>eller</i> EXPHIL-SVSEM Examen philosophicum – seminarmodell, 10 p SAMPOL103 Faglege tilnæringsmåtar og ideologiar i studiet av politikk, 10 p EUR101 Examen facultatum - Innføring i europeisk historie og politikk, 10 p		EUR103 Europa etter 1945: Ressursar, demografi, økonomi, 15 p EUR105 European Union Institutions, Politics, and Policies (Jean Monnet Academic Module), 15 p	
Yr 2	<u>Samanlikn pol</u> MET102 Samfunnsvitenskapleg metode, 15 p SAMPOL115 Democracy and Democratization, 15 p	<u>Historia</u> HIS101 Oversyn over eldre historie til 1750, 15 p HIS113/114 Fordjuping i eldre historie, 15 p	<u>Samanlikn pol</u> SAMPOL105 Stats- og nasjonsbygging, 10 p SAMPOL106 Politiske institusjonar i etablerte demokrati, 10 p SAMPOL107 Politisk mobilisering, 10 p	<u>Historia</u> HIS102 Oversyn over nyare historie frå 1750, 15 p HIS115/116 Fordjuping i nyare historie, 15 p
Yr 3	Utveksling (exchange semester)		<u>Samanlikn pol</u> SAMPOL260 Bacheloroppgåve i samanliknande politikk, 10 p 2 valfrie emne på 200-nivå (å 10 p)	<u>Historia</u> HIS250 Bacheloroppgåve i historie, 15 p HIS203 Teoriar, metodar og historiske kjelder, 15 p

Comment: The light grey areas indicate the semesters focusing on European studies, i.e. the first year and the exchange semester in the autumn of the third year. In the second year the students chose specialisation, dark grey indicating SAMPOL courses and white indicating History. This specialisation also remains for the spring courses of the third year when the students also write their bachelor essays.

Neither staff nor students find this situation optimal. The students have asked for another European studies course, either at the second or third year. This is not only in order to study more together, but to also get more in-depth knowledge from higher level European studies courses. In addition, in the current structure, the students who specialize in comparative politics study the SAMPOL courses in reversed order (see table 1), which makes it difficult, and constitutes a large qualitative step, to study both methods and SAMPOL115 without having studied the earlier SAMPOL courses first. For the students choosing history, the structure of the history courses seems to be much less problematic, with a more logical order.

The idea to create a new European studies course at the second year would thus meet the request of an additional European studies course at the advanced level. The suggestion to substitute this new course with SAMPOL115 for the students who specialize in comparative politics, would furthermore address the current issue of taking the SAMPOL courses in reversed order. For the students specialising in history, it would not solve any structural issue. A new EUR course would replace HIS113/114 Fordjuping i eldre historie. To what extent that would create problems for the students (other than the obvious issue of lesser knowledge of older history) is unclear, but should be considered during the continued process. It may be a

reasonable trade-off for those students who chose the European studies programme rather than the bachelor programme in history, similarly to the loss of in-depth knowledge in comparative politics for European studies students specializing in comparative politics.

A final comment on the overall programme structure, and the integration of the two academic disciplines: As the students write their bachelor theses in the specialisation discipline and not in European studies, some of the students indicated last year that it would be nice to have “their own” sub group of theses examinations focusing on European issues, and if possible, together with the students with History specialisation. If this is at all practically possible to arrange (at least for those who submit on time, and within each discipline) that would be a relatively easy way to provide some additional integration in the programme, and a final sense of ending the programme together as European studies students.

Potential content of a new second year European studies course

A new second year European studies course would be valuable to the programme, especially if it is developed in cooperation between teachers from both departments. One way of increasing the chance that a course would work for both sides is to have some degree of choice regarding content for students e.g. in assignments and/or the exam. There is a tradition of doing so from previous European studies courses, although, as discussed above, it may decrease the actual integration of the subjects.

Initially I thought that Nordic politics (and history), or history of ideologies and actors (parties) could be potential topics of such a course. But as there have been changes at the 200 level within SAMPOL where such topics are covered from the comparative politics side, this would make less sense now for a new European studies course. Raimondas has suggested another option: a course on the history and theories of European integration, since he reduced the focus on the theories of integration in EUR105. Some of that content could be transferred to the new course, and complemented with more historical perspective on European integration. I think it is an interesting idea to combine knowledge of the historical times when those theories were developed, and it could provide an opportunity to add in-depth knowledge of the European integration theories to the programme again, when reduced in EUR105.

Another approach follows the suggestion by Michael Tatham (Comparative politics) to rather emphasize learning academic skills. That would allow a more thematic approach in terms of content, and potentially a closer connection to current research being done by members of staff at both departments. I think this is an interesting idea in which the students may actively engage in current research (history and political science) regarding some themes of relevance for both disciplines, e.g. nationalism or migration – and perhaps combined with European integration theories? It might even be possible to organise seminars to compare differences in methods, style of writing, theoretical approaches, focus on contents etc. between research publications by scholars from different disciplines, but on similar topics.

Concluding discussion

Starting with the integration of the comparative politics and history elements in the European studies courses, this is on the one hand most visible in *EUR101*, as it is the only course with a balance between the two disciplines regarding course instructors and course literature. The integration in practice is somewhat reduced by the structure of the course with two distinct halves, as well as the potential for students to choose to only focus on the reading material for one of the parts, makes the integration less pronounced than it could be. Even some minor

changes to the exam could potentially increase the integration, but a more thematic structure of the lectures and the exam could increase the integration of the disciplines even further.

The *EUR103* course, is a predominantly historical course (teachers and literature), but the actual content of the course has several connections to comparative politics. It is more integrated than it would first appear, in terms of content. The new main course instructor has initiated a very good process to update the course, and make sure it complements the other courses in the programme. There is potential of even further integration of perspectives from both disciplines as part of the suggested future changes.

The *EUR105* course, being taught by political scientists, using mainly political science literature, still has some historical connections in the content of the lectures and readings. The integration between the two academic disciplines could potentially be increased. One suggestion is, following the changes to the *EUR103*, to have at least one lecture by a historian on European integration history in *EUR105*. This could provide a fuller overall history lecture on the historical context in which the specific European integration developments took place.

A new *European studies* course in the second year of the programme is a very good idea, and also corresponds to requests from the students. To replace the *SAMPOL115* for those students that specialise in comparative politics would also solve the existing problem of the students taking the *SAMPOL* courses in the reversed order. Students specialising in history would lose one in-depth course on early history. But for both groups of students, this seems as a reasonable trade-off as they do not study the programme of the individual discipline, but rather the interdisciplinary European studies programme.

Regarding *content of the new course*, I like the idea of a course at the second year offering training of academic skills, and a thematic approach. The opportunity for students to actively engage in current research, and to compare differences in methods, style of writing, usage of theory, focus on contents etc., between publications written by scholars from different disciplines (but on similar themes) is really interesting. It does also offer opportunities to utilize the expertise of the active researchers based in each department. It could also bring in theories of European integration, which is now reduced in *EUR105*, and deepen the historical understanding of the context in which the theories were developed.

Göteborg, 20 January 2020

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