

REIMAGINING EUROPE

IFSA-Butler Reimagining Europe Semester Program in Prague

Suggested US semester credit hours: 4 credits

Contact Hours: 60

Course Level: 300

Course length: Semester

Delivery method: Face to face

Language of Instruction: English

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Reimagining Europe is a core program course for the IFSA-Butler Reimagining Europe Semester Program in Prague. The content is interdisciplinary, touching on history and philosophy, economics and political science, business, and the social sciences. Its main focus is the exploration of how current issues and the changing dynamics of European integration are challenging the notion of solidarity within the European Union (EU), leading students to consider the question: What are the possible options available for reimagining Europe? Through exploration of contemporary issues, the historical, socio-cultural and political context of Prague as a European city will be highlighted, enabling students to engage their creative thinking and problem-solving skills from a position of knowledge and awareness.

Through case studies, in-class discussions, interaction with expert speakers and personal study, students will actively explore the notion of a Europe in transition as the region responds to pressure and events such as Brexit, economic crises, immigration and refugee surges, and the malleable framework of the EU and the monetary union. Students will interact with organizations to consider how practical dilemmas associated with a Europe in transition are having real impact. In the second half of the course, students will identify a European issue of personal interest. The issue will be related to their learning community within the IFSA-Butler Reimagining Europe Semester Program. The identified issue will serve as the focus for an Issue Paper (written report), wherein a contemporary European problem will be described and a possible solution will be offered. The Issue Paper requires the student to “reimagine” Europe and to “reimagine” the issue and the ways it can be addressed, turning the theoretical into something practical.

The Reimagining Europe course serves as a common learning experience for IFSA-Butler students in Prague. It establishes a vibrant, collaborative learning environment that frames the study abroad experience. As part of the course, students prepare eportfolios, a process that causes them to intentionally reflect on and curate artifacts of their integrative learning, and to ultimately demonstrate their increasingly nuanced awareness of Europe and themselves.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

COURSE DELIVERY

The course is intensively taught during the first month of the program, with subsequent class sessions meeting at intervals throughout the remainder of the semester, for a total of 60 contact hours.

Each unit of the course is themed. Students are expected to read or view assigned resources in advance and be prepared to actively discuss them in class. In each meeting, the instructor will overview the topic and then facilitate a group discussion, drawing out relevant themes, following up on specific lines of inquiry, and prompting students' thoughtful engagement with the topic. Students are encouraged to bring their prior learning experiences into class discussions (based on experiential learning theory) and to make cognitive connections between this course and others in the IFSA-Butler Reimagining Europe Semester Program in Prague whenever possible (based on the philosophy of integrative learning).

This course utilizes an interactive approach to teaching that focuses on the individual student's needs. Teaching methods include case studies augmented by input from local organizations and experts, as well as individual reporting and group presentations. As described above, students will complete an eportfolio as a capstone experience for the course and the program, capturing evidence of learning and the acquisition of skills. This approach to teaching and learning aims to foster a challenging but caring environment that allows students to explore, create, and test themselves and their ideas.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- Become aware of the key contemporary issues challenging a Europe in transition, utilizing the city of Prague as a laboratory for that learning
- Understand and evaluate the role of European solidarity, from the vantage point of Prague and Czech citizenry
- Consider potential impact areas of evolving European issues
- Increase intercultural skills through guided consideration of varied perspectives
- Synthesize learning about Europe in transition to form the backdrop for course outputs
- Strengthen critical thinking skills
- Strengthen creative problem-solving skills
- Strengthen academic writing skills
- Strengthen oral presentation skills
- Strengthen collaborative learning and teamwork skills
- Evaluate learning experiences and acquired knowledge for the purpose of curating and narrating the personal study abroad experience in Prague
- Become familiar with resources available for further research on historical, socio-cultural, and political themes within the notion of Europe in transition
- Make cognitive connections between learning in this course and other learning experiences in the IFSA-Butler Reimagining Europe Semester Program in Prague

COURSE DESCRIPTION

COURSE OUTLINE

Unit 1: Introduction

Unit 2: The Ethical Challenges of Migration in EU

The current refugee crisis in Europe has often been presented from a point of view of a “fight” between countries such as Germany, which agreed to take a large number of asylum seekers, and those nations that only reluctantly decided to accept more refugees. However one views this situation, one point is clear—that is, the influx of refugees and reactions to it will have consequences to the economic climate and future outlook of those nations.

What the impact will be on the European economies can be viewed from several perspectives. Much of the literature over the last two decades, responding to concerns about the impact of immigration on labor markets, has focused on immigration’s possible impact on native workers’ wages and their employment. This may bring unique ethical challenges that require solutions. This topic will explore the different ethical challenges facing Europe and discuss what their impact may be for the future of the EU.

Unit 3: The Future of European Demographics

The last refugee crisis faced by Europe is not only creating divisions among the different EU member states, but is also changing national demographics across the whole continent. In all European countries, populations are already aging. Many state members will soon face serious economic and financial issues bringing up the level of fiscal pressure from governments in order to cope with increasing public debt and the overall fiscal stances across the European borders.

Though immigration can help foster economic growth and EU solidarity, it can also open the door for political and social conflict and possibly EU disintegration. As Europe deals with its third major wave of migration in 15 years and the consequences of Brexit, those very challenges are prompting European nations to consider reforming their immigration policies and to react in ways that are contrary to the very concept of social and national solidarity.

These demographic challenges and the developing policies will be crucial to the future of the EU. In this unit, the impact of demographic challenges at various levels will be explored with respect to EU policy decision-making and the overall impact upon EU solidarity.

Unit 4: The Changing Notion of Social Solidarity in EU

This topic will be divided essentially into two parts that are interconnected and which build upon one another. In the first part, the genesis of the concept of solidarity will be examined by taking a philosophical point of view on its historical and political legacy. This approach provides a set of useful tools that can be contextualized to the current discussion on economics and social issues as presented in the previous two units. Starting with a short investigation across history of philosophical thought from Auguste Comte in his *System of Positive Polity* (1875) and the social contract theorists of the 17th and 18th century, through the fundamental work of Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), and the Christian culture, we will terminate our

COURSE DESCRIPTION

journey in the modern theories of communitarianism, rational choice theories, contractual solidarity, and reflective solidarity as proposed in the works of contemporary philosophers and sociologists such as Alasdair McIntyre, Amitai Etzioni, Michael Hetcher, and Jodi Dean, respectively.

In the second part, a possible framework will be considered, within which the recent developments previously illustrated will be contextualized in a normative fashion. Here the principle of justice as fairness as introduced by John Rawls in his *A Theory of Justice* (1971) will be applied to practical issues in combination with the classic development of sustainability, as elaborated in the *Brundtland Commission Report* (1987) and its later development, in order to provide a rational justification for solidarity and its classic definition. In this context, if the rational foundation of solidarity as presented above is reasonable, then the ethical framework emerging from the previous analysis in which solidarity seems to be an important element can be utilized in the policy-making and decision-making by the EU members.

A normative framework will be proposed in this unit that emphasizes the rationality of solidarity and enhances an on-going constructive ethical dialogue steered by the principles of objectivity, inter-subjectivity and intra-subjectivity. The proposed framework can also facilitate the political mandate of political actions and support the respect of different cultures that are inextricably related within the EU framework and which often appear to result in a divergent fate, as in the latest case of Brexit.

Unit 5: The Consequences of Brexit for the EU

For the majority of businesses in Britain the fact that the UK has left the European Union – “Brexit” – is a major source of concern. Both the break with the EU and the uncertainty associated with it will have consequences for business and will impact the UK economy.

A great deal has now been written on the economic consequences for the UK of Brexit. Some of this is impartial; much of it could be opinionated. Very little has been written on the consequences for the rest of the EU. This topic seeks to address this gap in thinking by systematically assessing the evidence on the impact of Brexit on both the UK and the rest of Europe. The focus of this unit will be to present an analysis exploring potential impacts. The specific ways in which different member states are exposed through these different impacts will also be assessed. The relevance of varied EU policies to attend to these impacts will be challenged.

Unit 6: Conclusions and Final Discussions

EVALUATION METHODS

The course instructor will provide specific requirements and grading rubrics for individual assignments for the course. Your final grade in the course will be comprised of the following course requirements:

Participation – 20%

(includes attendance, preparation, engagement in discussion, civility, and respect)

Issue Paper – 20%

COURSE DESCRIPTION

(written report, 8 pages, double spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font)

Collaborative Case Study Presentation – 20%

Eportfolio – 40%

Timely Submissions

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be accepted at the discretion of the course instructor and generally only in the event of a documented illness or emergency.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Any academic endeavor must be based upon a foundation of honesty and integrity. Students are expected to abide by principles of academic integrity and must be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work while studying abroad. Any academic work (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill an academic requirement must represent a student's original work. Any act of academic misconduct, such as cheating, fabrication, forgery, plagiarism, or facilitating academic dishonesty, will subject a student to disciplinary action.

IFSA-Butler takes academic integrity very seriously. Students must not accept outside assistance without permission from the instructor. Additionally, students must document all sources according to the instructions of the professor. Should your instructor suspect you of plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty, you may receive a failing grade for the course and disciplinary action may result. The incident will be reported to the IFSA-Butler resident director as well as your home institution.