

1. BASIC DETAILS

Subject	Pressure Groups
Qualification	Bachelor's Degree in International Relations
School/Faculty	Economics, Business, and Communication Sciences
Year	Third
ECTS	6
Type	Mandatory
Language(s)	English
Modality	Campus-based
Semester	S5
Academic year	2025/2026
Coordinating professor	Adán Arsuaga Méndez

2. PRESENTATION

In the formal architecture of political life, power is often understood to reside in states, be conferred through elections, and be exercised by governments. This course, however, explores the complex and often decisive world of influence that operates alongside, upon, and within these formal structures. We will investigate the diverse ecosystem of actors—from grassroots social movements and humanitarian organizations to corporate lobbies and even clandestine state agencies—that compete to shape policy, sway public opinion, and define the boundaries of political possibility.

Our inquiry begins with fundamental questions: Why do some shared interests coalesce into powerful political forces while others remain diffuse and unheard? What is the underlying logic that governs collective action, and how do groups overcome the inherent challenges of organization to advance their agendas? We will examine the theoretical frameworks that view democratic politics not as the simple expression of majority will, but as a dynamic arena of negotiation and conflict among competing interests. Throughout the semester, we will move from theory to practice, analyzing the specific tools and strategies these groups employ to exert influence. These tactics range from traditional lobbying and campaign finance to sophisticated media spectacles, the mobilization of expert knowledge, the humanitarian politics of testimony, and the strategic deployment of propaganda. By engaging with a series of in-depth case studies, students will develop the analytical skills necessary to delve into these campaigns, evaluate their effectiveness, and critically assess their impact on both domestic and international affairs.

This course will equip students not only to understand who influences power, but analyze precisely how they do it.

3. COMPETENCIES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Basic competencies:

- BC2: Students know how to apply their knowledge to their work or career in a professional manner and they have skills that are typically demonstrated by developing and defending arguments and solving problems within their field of study.
- BC3: Students are able to gather and interpret relevant information (normally within their area of study) to make judgments, including reflecting on significant social, scientific or ethical issues.

- BC4: Students can convey information, ideas, problems and solutions to a specialist and non-specialist audience.

Cross-cutting competencies:

- CC1: Independent learning. Ability to choose the strategies, tools and moments they consider most effective for learning and independently putting into practice what has been learned.
- CC4: Ability to analyze and synthesize. Ability to break complex situations down into their constituent parts, as well as considering other alternatives and viewpoints to find optimal solutions. Synthesis seeks to reduce complexity in order to better understand it and/or solve problems.
- CC5: Ability to apply the knowledge to practice, using the knowledge acquired in the academic field in situations as close as possible to the reality of the profession for which they are being educated.
- CC6: Oral/written communication. Ability to convey and receive data, ideas, opinions and attitudes to attain comprehension and perform actions, oral communication being that which is achieved through words and gestures and written communication that which is achieved through writing and/or graphic support.
- CC12: Critical reasoning. Ability to analyze an idea, phenomenon or situation from different perspectives and take a personal approach to it, built on rigor and argued objectivity, and not on intuition.
- CC17: Teamwork. Ability to integrate into and actively collaborate with other people, areas and/or organizations to attain common goals.

Specific competencies:

- SC1: Knowledge and understanding of the historical evolution of international society.
- SC3: Knowledge of how to make use of research techniques to identify problems.
- SC4: Knowledge and understanding of the role of international organizations today – their functions, objectives and internal organization.
- SC5: Ability to know and understand the economic aspects of globalization related to: business internationalization, foreign trade and global economy.
- SC6: Ability to communicate effectively in two languages, generally and specifically in the professional field of international relations.
- SC7: Knowledge of how to relate and discuss the problematic origins of international instabilities: conflicts, inequalities, exclusion, environment, pressure groups and public opinion, among others.
- SC9: Ability to recognize global, universal and cosmopolitan perspectives in the study of the actors, institutions, structures and transactions that constitute international relations.

Learning outcomes:

- LO1: Students will be able to recognize global, universal and cosmopolitan perspectives in the study of the actors, institutions, structures and transactions that constitute international relations.
- LO2: Students will be able to identify and analyze the different geopolitical, geoeconomic and socio-cultural areas, as well as their particularities.
- LO3: Students will make appropriate use of the applicable international regulations and know the national and international bodies that operate in this context.
- LO4: Students will be able to define and implement development targets in international cooperation agencies and organizations.
- LO5: Students will be able to make use of investigative techniques to identify problems.

The table below shows the relationship between the competencies developed in the subject and the learning outcomes pursued:

Competencies	Learning outcomes
BC2, BC3, BC4, CC1, CC4, CC5, CC6, CC12, CC17, SC1, SC3	LO1: Students will be able to recognize global, universal and cosmopolitan perspectives in the study of the actors, institutions, structures and transactions that constitute international relations.

CC1, CC4, CC5, CC6, CC12, CC17, SC1, SC3	LO2: Students will be able to identify and analyze the different geopolitical, geoeconomic and socio-cultural areas, as well as their particularities.
CC1, SC1, SC3, SC6, SC7, SC9	LO3: Students will make appropriate use of the applicable international regulations and know the national and international bodies that operate in this context.
CC3, CC12, CC17, SC7, SC9	LO4: Students will be able to define and implement development targets in international cooperation agencies and organizations.
SC1, SC3, SC4, SC5, SC6, SC7, SC9	LO5: Students will be able to make use of investigative techniques to identify problems.

4. CONTENTS

- Humanitarianism.
- Intelligence agencies.
- Technical vocabulary.
- Social networks and communication media.
- Social movements.

5. TEACHING-LEARNING METHODOLOGIES

The types of teaching-learning methodologies to be applied are as follows:

- Case-based method
- Cooperative learning
- Problem-based learning
- Project-based learning
- Master classes

6. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Each of the educational activities to be carried out together with the number of hours students will dedicate to it is described below:

Campus-based modality:

Educational activity	Number of hours
Master classes	20
Asynchronous master classes	10
Resolution of case studies (fictitious and real)	30
Case studies and projects	12.5
Collaborative activities developed in the classroom	25
Oral presentations	25
Activities based on the development of ethical values and social responsibility. social responsibility	12.5
Integrative knowledge test	5
Academic tutorials	10
TOTAL	150

7. ASSESSMENT

The assessment systems, as well as their weight in the total grade of the subject, are listed below:

Campus-based modality:

Assessment system	Weighting
Evaluation exercises through theoretical knowledge tests (with open questions on a topic, or objective and direct questions on a specific aspect of the subject, or objective test-type questions) or practical (with problems or cases to be solved, to answer them, reflecting in a practical way, the theoretical and practical knowledge of the subject).	50%
Evaluation of individual work and activities.	20%
Evaluation of group work.	20%
Evaluation of the participation in face-to-face classes, seminars, or work presentations that are called. In this type of teaching, new technologies are also applied, and the development that allows the use of a Virtual Campus. For this reason, the student's participation in discussion forums that the professor of the subject may convene, or the viewing of videos, will be part of the evaluation.	10%

When you access the subject in the Virtual Campus, you will be able to consult in detail the assessed assignments that you must perform, as well as the submission dates and the assessment procedures for each of them.

Observations on the evaluation system:

- The continuous evaluation system will be applied per subject throughout the different Learning Units, weighting and assessing in an integral way the results obtained by the student through the indicated evaluation procedures.
- The evaluation concludes with a recognition of the level of learning achieved by the student and is expressed in numerical grades, in accordance with the provisions of current legislation.

7.1. First exam sitting

In order to pass the subject at the first exam sitting, you must achieve a grade that is greater than or equal to 5 out of 10 in the final grade (weighted average) in the subject.

In any case, you will need to obtain a grade greater than or equal to 5 in the final exam, in order for this to count toward the average calculated with the rest of the assignments.

7.2. Second exam sitting

In order to pass the subject at the second exam sitting, you must achieve a grade that is greater than or equal to 5 out of 10 in the final grade (weighted average) in the subject.

In any case, you will need to obtain a grade greater than or equal to 5 in the final exam, in order for this to count toward the average calculated with the rest of the assignments.

Any assignments not passed at the first exam sitting must be resubmitted after having received the corresponding corrections by the professor, as well as any that were not submitted.

8. SCHEDULE

This section indicates the schedule with submission dates for the subject's assessed assignments:

Assessed assignments	Date
Assignment 1	Week 4
Assignment 2	Week 6
Assignment 3	Week 8
Assignment 4	Week 11
Assignment 5	Week 14
Assignment 6	Week 16

This schedule may be modified for logistical reasons related to the assignments. Any modification will be notified to the student in a timely manner.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Compulsory bibliography:

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- Zuboff, Shoshana. 2019. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York: PublicAffairs.

Recommended bibliography:

- Asad, Talal, Wendy Brown, Judith P. Butler, and Saba Mahmood. (2013). *Is Critique Secular?: Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*. Fordham University Press.
- Graeber, D. (2011). "Value, Politics, and Democracy in the United States." *Current Sociology* 59 (2): 186–99. doi:10.1177/0011392110391151.
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- Ricoeur, P. (1986). *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*. Edited by George H. Taylor. Columbia University Press.

10. EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION UNIT

From the Educational Guidance and Diversity Unit we offer support to our students throughout their university life to help them reach their academic achievements. Other main actions are the students inclusions with specific educational needs, universal accessibility on the different campuses of the university and equal opportunities.

From this unit we offer to our students:

1. Accompaniment and follow-up by means of counselling and personalized plans for students who need to improve their academic performance.
2. In terms of attention to diversity, non-significant curricular adjustments are made in terms of methodology and assessment for those students with specific educational needs, pursuing an equal opportunities for all students.
3. We offer students different extracurricular resources to develop different competences that will encourage their personal and professional development.
4. Vocational guidance through the provision of tools and counselling to students with vocational doubts or who believe they have made a mistake in their choice of degree.

Students in need of educational support can write to us at:

orientacioneducativa@universidadeuropea.es

11. SATISFACTION SURVEYS

Your opinion matters!

The Universidad Europea encourages you to participate in our satisfaction surveys designed to identify strengths and areas for improvement regarding teaching staff, degree programs and the teaching-learning process.

Surveys will be available in the survey space on your virtual campus or via your email. Your opinion is needed to improve the quality of the degree.

Thank you very much for your participation.