

Syllabus

The European integration process started in the aftermath of the Second World War, when the European continent was destroyed by the conflict and definitively deprived of its centrality. Together with the secular division between Germany and France, and along with the tragedies of the war, a new political divide split the European continent starting from 1947. The Cold War divided the communist front from the anti-communist one, conditioning the position of the great European political families – the conservative, the liberal, the social-democrat and the communist – vis-à-vis the integration process of the Europe, at least since the middle of the 1970s. If the URSS saw at the European integration process with suspicion, the United States' attitude was totally different and, at least at the beginning, very enthusiastic. The Marshall Plan, consistent with the European project, was the symbol of the initial American proclivity vis-à-vis the European project. Therefore, when the Europe started to be considered as a potential competitor, and not only as a partner, the American actors (i.e. government, business community, etc.) became more cautious towards the European construction. The British attitude with respect to the European integration was ambiguous, and always subordinated at the 'special relationship' with the United States. Consequently, the British government was never a strong supporter of the European Community, even if finally entered it in 1973, after a long and difficult negotiation.

The course provides a long-perspective view on the European integration process, a path that, through a series of 'stops and go', firstly created the European Community, then, during the last two decades, originated an European Union and – within it, and only for some of its members – a Monetary Union. Analysing the stages of the European construction, involves a further effort, that is to say describing the different approaches adopted to realise the European integration. In few words, we can distinguish a 'federalist' approach from the one hand, and a 'functionalist' and pragmatic one from the other. The prevalence of the latter with respect to the former, can explain some weakness of today European Union which – as we have recently seen – seems missing a popular legitimacy, and acts as a technocratic entity more than a democratic one. To talk about the European integration in this sense means, then, to provide an in-depth analysis of the European society. A large space will be devoted to this matter in order to assess whether, sixty years after the end of the Second World War, the European integration process has been able to build a common European identity.