

Faculty of Economic, Social and Political Sciences



SPOL3811 Foreign policy in Belgium, and in small and medium-sized powers

[30h] 4 credits

Teacher(s): Michel Liegeois (supplée Claude Roosens), Claude Roosens
Language: French
Level: Third cycle

Aims

By the end of the course, students will:

- have expanded their critical acumen in the reflection that they are asked to develop in respect of all foreign policy;
- have a good knowledge of the content of Belgian international policy (from 1830 to the present day), and of the institutional mechanisms that affect it;
- have developed, on the basis of the case of Belgium, or of a small or medium-sized power, their ability to analyse an example of foreign policy (e.g. taking account of the various influential factors, and the relationship between domestic and foreign policy);
- demonstrate some skill in (oral and written) scientific communication.

Main themes

- Using substantive cases (Belgium itself and other small and medium-sized powers), to provide an application of the analytical methods and elements of political science and international relations taught on other courses. The course will seek to develop the theoretical approach to small and medium-sized powers through an explanation of a model that analyses their foreign policy.
- This will involve information on the content of international policy (e.g. sources, and how they develop) if students are going to be able to identify the constants of this policy.
- The course will examine the development of Belgian foreign policy in terms both of its content and of the mechanisms involved in forming it and carrying it out. This development will be developed on the basis of the international context, and in relation to the domestic political situation.

Content and teaching methods

Content

The course will first examine the various conceptions of small and medium-sized powers, and will then provide an analytical model that can be applied to the foreign policies of these powers. The notion of a "small power" will serve as the defining feature as far as Belgium and an examination of its foreign policy are concerned. The course will also examine the main features of the origins and development of Belgian international policy since 1830: they include the formation of the state, the role of the powers, the status of neutrality, neutrality and international crises, colonial expansion, relations with neighbouring states, the 1914-1918 war, voluntary neutrality, independence policy, Belgium and the Second World War, east-west equilibrium, European integration, decolonisation, security policy, and relations with central Africa.

The course will also take in the institutional mechanisms that help to draw up this international policy (e.g. the king, the government, Parliament, the communities and the regions).

In addition, the course will stress the various factors that influence the formation of Belgian international policy, and will endeavour not to reduce the examination to the action of a single state actor.

Methodology

This professorial course will also rely on the reading of texts and private study. There will be exposure to official documents, primary sources, and contemporary actors in this policy.

Other information (prerequisite, evaluation (assessment methods), course materials recommended readings, ...)

Pre-requirements: A good knowledge of Belgian political life since 1830.

Foreign students are advised to do some basic reading. Work may be directed towards other small powers.

There will be an oral examination. Students' written work will also be assessed, as will their oral presentation-cum-discussion.

Programmes in which this activity is taught

POLS3DA/RI Diplôme d'études approfondies en sciences politiques et sociales (relations internationales)

Other credits in programs

POLS3DA/RI Diplôme d'études approfondies en sciences politiques et sociales (relations internationales) (4 credits)