EURR 4102 and PSCI 4507
The Balkans since 1989
Research-intensive online course with synchronous class meetings
Thursdays, 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. EST, Zoom® class link

Instructor:	Dr. Martin Geiger, Associate Professor, PSCI and EURUS
Office Hours:	Tuesdays, 4 p.m. – 6 p.m. EST, or alternative day/time (please get in touch with me by email to receive a personal Zoom® invitation)
Email:	martin.geiger@carleton.ca
First class:	January 15
No classes:	January 8, February 19 (see course schedule for details)
Last class:	April 2, 2026

1) Course Description

This course focuses on the regional construct known as 'the Balkans"; we seek to explore the various ongoing and recent issues and challenges that are affecting Albania, neighbouring Bulgaria and Romania, as well as the successors of former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia) following the end of the Cold War (1989/90) and the Dayton Peace Accords (1995). We will pay special attention to the process of European integration, the historical engagement of the European Union and its member states with the region, the attention and support the "Balkan" states continue to receive from the international community, the United Nations, Canada, the United States, and others. Given recent developments, we are particularly interested in exploring the engagement and influence of three key external players in the region – Türkiye, Russia, and China.

2) Course Format

Course format: research-intensive online class; synchronous, weekly class meetings using Zoom®. This course promotes virtual classroom learning and aims to facilitate original and independent student research. It is not an e-module-based online course; Brightspace® is not used, except for distributing reading materials and other logistical purposes. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) and applications like ChatGPT is prohibited in this course.

3) Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will have acquired a strong familiarity with the region known as the "Balkans"; its ongoing local and intra-regional disputes and conflicts; and the various challenges the region and its countries are facing today. The assignments and discussions in our course will enable students to evaluate the current situation, the individual interests and pathways of states, and the local involvement of international organizations and other relevant actors (e.g., the European Union, Türkiye, Russia, and China). This course will enable students to participate in academic and policy-oriented debates about the future of European integration, the region and countries in question, the involvement of other states, and the impact of other ongoing conflicts (e.g., the war in Ukraine) on the region. Students will have acquired advanced, comprehensive research skills necessary to conduct academic research effectively and successfully, including for their future honours' research essays, master's or doctoral thesis projects.

4) Required Literature

All sources used in this course (primarily journal articles, book chapters, and other materials) can be accessed through Carleton's library system and the 'ARES' system, free of charge. All required and supplementary sources are listed below (see course schedule). In this course, students conduct independent literature research and are required to find relevant literature and information for their case study using, e.g., Carleton's library system.

5) Evaluation at a Glance

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor and subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by an instructor may be subject to revision. **No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.**

#	Assignment	Type	Date	Weight
#1	Research outline	Individual assignment/grade	Jan 31	10%
#2	Individual research input	Individual assignment/grade	Feb 5/12/28	15%
#3	Group presentation	Group assignment/grade	March/April (tbc)	25%
#4	Take-home paper	Individual assignment/grade	April 23	35%
#5	Participation	Individual grade	throughout the term	15%

6) Class Assignments

At the beginning of the term, students will be assigned a specific case study (e.g., Albania's EU accession) and, together with other students, assigned to a country working group (e.g., Albania). They will be asked to research their specific case study, contribute to their country working group, and complete a total of four subsequent course assignments.

Assignment #1, individual research outline, 10%

On January 31 (due no later than 11:59 p.m. EST), students must submit their first written assignment on their case study. They will receive feedback on their research outline from the instructor within 3-5 business days. Students will receive instructions and a template/rubric for this assignment during the first class meetings. The individual research outline should be concise, well-organized, and provide an initial outline and overview of the student's research project. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) and applications like ChatGPT is prohibited in this assignment.

Assignment #2, Individual research input, 15%

On February 5, 12, or 28, each student will be invited to provide a brief and informative oral research input (no PowerPoint allowed, written handouts encouraged) to a country-specific roundtable discussion organized by the instructor. Each student is expected to contribute to this discussion and share and discuss preliminary research findings on their individual research project/ case study. The roundtable discussions are designed to provide students with a first opportunity to discuss and receive feedback on their research from both the instructor and other classmates.

Assignment #3, Group presentation, 25%

Each student will be assigned to a country working group and is expected to develop, in close collaboration with the other group members, a class presentation to be delivered at a specific class meeting in March or April (presentation slots will be assigned at the beginning of the term). Depending on the final number of students, each group will be provided with a set presentation time; they are invited to consider alternative presentation formats, i.e., alternatives to the usual PowerPoint. The group presentations are expected to draw on each group member's individual research, summarize it, and connect the different research projects.

Each group is expected to provide the instructor with a reading (also other formats, including podcasts, are possible/allowed) that can inform other students about relevant discussions concerning the assigned country. This reading will be designated as a relevant 'appetizer' and background source for the day of the group presentation.

Assignment #4, Take-home paper, 35%
On April 23 (due no later than 11:59 p.m. EST), students must submit a written assignment on their case study. This take-home assignment must be saved as a PDF file and emailed to the instructor. Students are expected to consider feedback from the instructor and other students when finalizing their case study. The final paper should be approximately 3,500 words in length (excluding bibliography). The paper must be researched and written by students as an individual, completely independent assignment. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) and applications like ChatGPT is prohibited in this assignment. Students are not allowed to submit any assignment previously submitted in another course.
The final paper will be evaluated according to the following criteria: Argumentation, organization, and logic of the argumentation; Research and use of evidence (Is the final paper based on a comprehensive literature review and does it make effective use of available research sources? Does the paper draw on class discussions? Does the paper include at least 10 sources? Does the paper include proper footnotes/endnotes/in-text citations and a bibliography?); Communication (is the case study structured and written as clearly and concisely as possible?). The paper should also be free of spelling and grammatical errors. Case studies that do not address the case study assigned to the student at the beginning of the semester will receive a "fail" grade.
Late submissions will be subject to a 5% penalty per 24 hours (excluding weekends), unless for valid reasons, including health-related reasons. Submissions received after May 1 (11:59 p.m. EST) will no longer be accepted and will receive a failing grade, except for valid reasons, including health-related reasons. Contravening circumstances, including health-related reasons, must be reported to the course instructor before or immediately following the submission deadline.

Class participation, 15%
Students will be evaluated based on their regular attendance and on consistent, informed, and thoughtful/relevant oral contributions to class discussions, including during small-group meetings. Students are expected to read all class readings and other assigned material and to attend each class meeting well prepared. Students are asked to keep their cameras switched on during class meetings, but may be exempt from this expectation for health-related or other reasons.

7) General Policies
- The University takes instructional offences (including plagiarism) very seriously. Please make sure that you are familiar with the regulations regarding instructional offences.
- All course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, outlines, and other materials, are protected by copyright and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s). Students registered in the course may take notes and make copies of course materials for their educational use only. Students are not permitted to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes without express written consent from the copyright holder(s).
- To promote an inclusive and respectful class atmosphere and effective class discussions, students attending and participating in this class will need stable internet access. They are asked to keep their cameras switched on during class meetings, except when they are prevented from doing so due to, e.g., health-related, technical, or other reasons; they may communicate such reasons to the course instructor.

8) Course Schedule

JANUARY 8
No class meeting
- **Students are asked to prepare themselves for our first class meetings on January 15 and 22**
- Please review readings and notes from other courses you have taken, such as undergraduate courses in European studies, European history, international relations (with a focus on the region or specific topics), European/global security, or other areas. You are also invited to consult the following texts listed as background readings. Also consider what you have heard in the media and public discourse about the region in focus of this class; you may even have had personal experience with the region:
    (1) How have the Balkan states developed since the end of the Cold War?
    (2) What is currently happening in the region?
    (3) Is there a joint regional identity, shared past and common destiny for the region?
    (4) Why is it relevant to study this often-neglected region?
    (5) What explains the ambitions of other countries/the EU to engage with the region?

Background readings:
European Centre for International Political Economy (CIPE) (2025), *Global Economy Podcast Episode 114, Fence-Sitters and Frustrations: The EU's Slow Path to Western Balkan Integration*. Full transcript: https://ecipe.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/25-06-30_GEP-Episode_114_Final-Transcript.pdf – Youtube/podcast: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyDVQMW22Ow
Mazower, Mark (2002), *The Balkans: a short history*, Penguin Random House: London.
McBride, James (2023), *Russia's influence in the Balkans*, Backgrounder, Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), November 21, 2023: https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/russias-influence-balkans
Sarajevo Times (2025), *What Is Trump's Plan For The Western Balkans?*, Sarajevo Times, December 14, 2025: https://sarajevotimes.com/what-is-trumps-plan-for-the-western-balkans/
Serwer, Daniel (2019), *From War to Peace in the Balkans, the Middle East and Ukraine*, Palgrave Macmillan: London et al.
Shopov, Vladimir (2025), *Eyes wide shut: How to read China's playbook in the Western Balkans*, Policy Brief, European Council von Foreign Relations (ECFR), November 4, 2025: https://ecfr.eu/publication/eyes-wide-shut-how-to-read-chinas-playbook-in-the-western-balkans/
Todorova, Maria (2009), *Imagining the Balkans*, updated edition, Oxford University Press: Oxford.
Velev, Stoycho (2025), *EU Enlargement at a Crossroads in the Western Balkans*, Opinion Paper, Geopolitical Monitor, September 30, 2025: https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/eu-enlargement-at-a-crossroads-in-the-western-balkans/

JANUARY 15
Course overview
Assignment of individual case studies and country working groups
Instructions for class assignments (including required advanced and extensive literature and internet research)

JANUARY 22
"The Balkans": The "invention" of the Balkans; developments since 1989
- How have the Balkan states developed since the end of the Cold War?
- What is currently happening in the region?
- Is there a joint regional identity, shared past and common destiny for the region?

- Why is it relevant to study this often-neglected region?
- What explains the ambitions of other countries/the EU to engage with the region?

Enhancing research skills (skills workshop)
Students will receive training on advanced, extensive literature research: How to conduct a comprehensive and "deep" literature search? How to prepare class assignments? Preparation of class assignment #1 (research note).

Background readings:
See select readings listed for January 8

JANUARY 29
Stabilization of Population Movements as a Stepping Stone for EU Integration
The course instructor will share his previous and ongoing research on (forced) migration and the involvement of the EU and specialized international organizations in the Balkan states.
Small break-out group meetings to foster student research (I)
(Students will meet the instructor in small groups/assigned country working groups)

JANUARY 31
Submission of individual research notes (11:59 p.m. EST; e-mail submission)

FEBRUARY 5
Roundtable with individual research inputs from students (I)
Students working on studies related to Bulgaria and Romania; Croatia and Slovenia; Albania

FEBRUARY 12
Roundtable with individual research inputs from students (II)
Students working on studies related to Bosnia Hercegovina; Kosovo; Montenegro and North Macedonia

FEBRUARY 19
No class meeting (reading week)

FEBRUARY 26
Roundtable with individual research inputs from students (III)
Students working on studies related to Serbia; the EU, Canada and USA; Türkiye, Russia and China

MARCH 5
Small break-out group meetings to foster student research (II)
(Students will meet the instructor in small groups/assigned country working groups)

MARCH 12
Group presentations and discussion of group inputs
Bulgaria and Romania
Croatia and Slovenia
Required readings:
supplied by country working groups presenting today

MARCH 19
Group presentations and discussion of group inputs

- Bosnia Hercegovina
- Albania

Required readings:
supplied by country working groups presenting today

MARCH 26
Group presentations and discussion of group inputs
- Kosovo
- Montenegro and North Macedonia
- Serbia

Required readings:
supplied by country working groups presenting today

APRIL 2
Group presentations and discussion of group inputs
- EU, Canada and USA: Relationship, Involvement and Future Strategies
- Türkiye, Russia and China: Relationship, Involvement and Future Strategies

Required readings:
supplied by country working groups presenting today
Final class meeting
- Roundtable discussion. We will follow up on the small group meetings, the progress achieved by each student, and share and discuss students' research findings in preparation of assignment #4 (take-home paper)

APRIL 23
Take-home paper
- Final version of the case study (assignment #4) is due, e-mail submission by 11:59 p.m. EST

APPENDIX

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

As our understanding of the uses of AI and its relationship to student work and academic integrity continue to evolve, students are required to discuss their use of AI in any circumstance not described here with the course instructor to ensure it supports the learning goals for the course.

Note: Students can also access resources related to citing Generative AI on the MacOdrum Library website.

Statement on Academic Integrity

Carleton's Academic Integrity Policy states that "instructors at both the graduate and undergraduate level have the responsibility to provide clear guidelines concerning their specific expectations of academic integrity (e.g. rules of collaboration or citation) on all course outlines, assignment and examination material."

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as '*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*' This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:
- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT)
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own
- failing to acknowledge sources with proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks."

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor.

The Associate Dean of the Faculty follows a rigorous process for academic integrity allegations, including reviewing documents and interviewing the student, when an instructor suspects a violation has been committed. Penalties for violations may include a final grade of "F" for the course.

Statement on Student Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult https://wellness.carleton.ca/

Emergency Resources ([on and off campus](#))

- Crisis/Urgent Counselling Support: 613-520-6674 (Mon-Fri, 8:30-4:30)
- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- For immediate danger or urgent medical support: call 9-1-1

Carleton Resources

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: https://carleton.ca/wellness/
- Health & Counselling Services: https://carleton.ca/health/
- Paul Menton Centre: https://carleton.ca/pmc/
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): https://carleton.ca/csas/
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: https://carleton.ca/equity/

Off Campus Resources

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: call 613-238-3311, text 343-306-5550, or connect online at https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/
- Mental Health Crisis Service: call 613-722-6914 or toll-free 1-866-996-0991, or connect online at http://www.crisisline.ca/
- Good2Talk: call 1-866-925-5454 or connect online at https://good2talk.ca/
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: for online or on-site service https://walkincounselling.com

Requests for Academic Accommodations

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the *Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances*, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).

- If you require supporting documentation for short-term considerations, you may only request the [Academic Consideration for Coursework form](#). You may **not** request medical notes or documentation.
- Consult the [Academic Consideration Policy for instructors](#) information page for more details.