

## Grading guidelines for STV2500 Spring 2019

As informed in the course guidelines (see <https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/sv/statsvitenskap/STV2500/> ), this course has portfolio examination consisting of five different assignments:

- 3 short essays (max 1500 words: 3-4 pages)
- 1 in-class oral presentation (max 5 minutes) of a journal article on the reading-list
- 1 poster-presentation

These assignments are closely connected to the **learning outcomes** of this course which are:

### Knowledge

You will:

- master central theoretical concepts in institutional rational choice
- know where to find relevant information about the EU institutions, politics in the EU and development in the various policy-areas
- be able to explain the main decision-making processes in the EU

### Skills

You will:

- be able to apply concepts from institutional rational choice in substantive analysis of EU government, politics, and policy-making
- learn to obtain and utilize primary and secondary EU information in your own analysis
- be able to analyze the consequences of decision-making procedures and the policy positions of actors for policy-outcomes
- be able to structure academic texts with research questions that the student has chosen him-/herself or that are pre-defined.
- be able to relate a research question to the academic literature in the area and assess how the choice of research question determines the choices of research design, the need for sources/data and the research method.
- be able to communicate academic knowledge in writing and orally and provide constructive criticism of other students' assignments.

### Competences

You will:

- develop the ability to conduct, present, and evaluate research on EU politics and policy-making

In the remaining parts of the grading guidelines, we will outline the overall evaluation criteria used by the examiners, provide the details of each of the five assignments and emphasize how we would like to see each assignment to be solved. Note that the students received written feedback on the three written assignments and oral feedback on the two oral assignments.

### Grading criteria

The detailed grading criteria are outlined in Figure 1 and were communicated to the students prior to essay 1. We used these for all three written assignments but it was also useful for the oral assignments. The points on each written assignment can be translated into the following general grading scale (but note that we valued progress throughout the course when deciding the final grade):

0-2 points = F

2-5 points = E

6-9 points = D  
 10-13 points = C  
 14-16 points = B  
 17-20 points = A

EU Government, Politics & Policies			
Du har allerede vurdert studenter med denne vurderingsveiledningen. Viktige endringer kan påvirke vurderingsresultatene.			
Kriterier	Vurderinger		Poeng
<b>Theoretical rigor</b> The extent to which the essay set out and apply a clear theoretical framework for the analysis. An excellent essay would distinctly describe the theory, and correctly apply it in the subsequent empirical analysis. The essay may also, having conducted the empirical analysis using this theory, point to limitations and possible mention remedies.	5,0 poeng Maksimal poengsum	0,0 poeng Ingen resultater	5,0 poeng
<b>Engagement with the readings</b> The extent to which the paper engages with the relevant assigned readings in a constructive manner. Examples of a constructive manner include: 1) using the readings to make or qualify an argument 2) frame a discussion in relation to relevant readings, or a debate 3) present or discuss the empirical evidence presented	5,0 poeng Maksimal poengsum	0,0 poeng Ingen resultater	5,0 poeng
<b>Empirics</b> The extent to which the essay present systematic empirics or relevant empirical examples to either: 1) build an empirical argument 2) populate the theory 3) Qualify or criticise a theoretical argument 4) Engage with relevant readings	5,0 poeng Maksimal poengsum	0,0 poeng Ingen resultater	5,0 poeng
<b>Writing style</b> The extent to which the essay is written in a clear and accessible manner. An excellent written essay will, while engaging in complex arguments write in a style that enlighten rather than confuse an intelligent reader. It will have a clear and concise writing style that makes the argument easy to follow. It will stick to the point, one point at the time. It will follow standard practice of academic citation. Sentences will be short and grammatical mistakes few.	5,0 poeng Maksimal poengsum	0,0 poeng Ingen resultater	5,0 poeng
			Totalt antall poeng: 20,0

Figure 1: Grading criteria for STV2500

As can be seen in Figure 1, in order to receive a high number of points, the students needed to engage with theory, readings and empirics and connect these to the essay question in a structured and accessible manner. With regard to empirics we emphasized in class and in Canvas, that we valued their ability to “learn to obtain and utilize primary and secondary EU information in your own analysis” (ref. learning outcomes) here and we provided them with examples of relevant “easy to use”-databases and some guidance on how to use these.

**The five assignments were as follows:**

Essay question 1 (module Government): *Evaluate the power of the European Commission vis-a-vis the other main EU institutions.*

This assignment was a broad question. We encouraged the students to focus on the relationship between the Commission and some of the other institutions, for example the legislative or the judicial, rather than cover the full range of relationships between the Commission and all other EU institutions. Here the main task was to use the module 1 readings (see [schedule](#) for references) to

answer the question. In class, we emphasized spatial theory which should be ideal for addressing the power relationships between EU institutions that this question calls for and to assess the difference between being for instance agenda setter and veto player. We would also like to see usage of relevant empirical examples of actual legislation or institutional arrangements/reforms in this assignment. In the feedback, we commented on all four criteria which means that, for instance, essays with poor or inconsistent citation practice was asked to improve this next time and provided guidance on how to do so.

Essay question 2 (module Politics): *To what extent is the political system of the EU dominated by the interest of big business?*

This assignment was a more narrow question and students should, in particular, use the literature from the interest group politics class to answer this task (i.e. textbook (Hix and Høyland 2011), Dür, Bernhagen and Marshall 2015, Hollman and Murdoch 2018 and Rasmussen 2015). In order to receive a high number of points here, the essay needed to contrast the business dominance in lobbying access to EU institutions with the findings in the readings where it is shown that business frequently lose out to public interest groups when measuring policy influence (lobbying success). Pluralism could be a suitable theoretical framework to apply in this assignment and empirics could be found by using for instance the database EU Integrity Watch.

Essay question 3 (module Regulation, Expenditure, and EMU): *Is a political union necessary for the legitimacy of the single market?*

This assignment was a broad question. Students needed to use the literature from the third module (see [schedule](#) for references) to answer this assignment but was also encouraged to look at previous modules when assessing legitimacy (i.e. democratic deficit debate). The question formulation granted them some discretion to decide how to solve the assignment. One outline for solving the task is as follows: regulatory policies such as environment and social regulations are, it can be argued, in place to balance against the effect of the single market. The same is true for, at least some of, the expenditure policies. Moreover, a key motivation for the Euro was to reap the benefits of the single market. So the question becomes if there is sufficient politics in place to balance the effect of the single market, or if there is a need for more European level intervention in the economy, in other words a political union. A nuanced discussion that engaged with both theory, readings and empirics was needed to receive a high number of points. It has been argued that the EU already is a political union (to some extent), hence it was fine to use this as a point of departure as well as long as the essay discussed the legitimacy of the single market in light of the defined benchmark.

In class presentation:

Here 2-3 students collaborated on presenting the findings from an assigned article to the rest of the class. A minority of the students presented alone due to other students dropping out of the course. Here, it was important to show good presenting skills (be well prepared and to be able to communicate the findings to the audience) and to stay on time (max five minutes per presentation).

Poster presentation:

Here the students had to choose their own question within *interior and/or foreign policies* and use the curriculum and relevant empirics to answer their question. It was fine to combine readings or use one as a point of departure but then we would like them to add some recent cases/examples and use their own framing. They were encouraged to focus on current or recent events (i.e.

migration crisis, difficulties with negotiating trade agreements, EU sanctions etc) as this was a good opportunity to address a chosen challenge within these policy fields. To achieve a top mark here, the students had to have a well prepared poster presentation with some graphics to illustrate the empirics and a clear story embedded in course literature. Furthermore, their topic had to be clearly defined within the borders of the assignment. We asked some check questions to follow up their argumentation and to make sure that they knew what they were talking about. The students also discussed their posters with each other in this assignment. Note that guidelines (including examples) for the posters were covered both in class and in Canvas.

**Inter-grader reliability:**

One examiner read all essays for essay 1, the other read all for essay 2 and then they divided essay 3 between them. The lecturer (one of the two examiners) graded the oral presentation and both examiners graded the poster presentation. Both examiners on basis of all five assignments then decided the final grade. The degree of inter-grader agreement was very high (both “between and within” candidates across the five assignments).