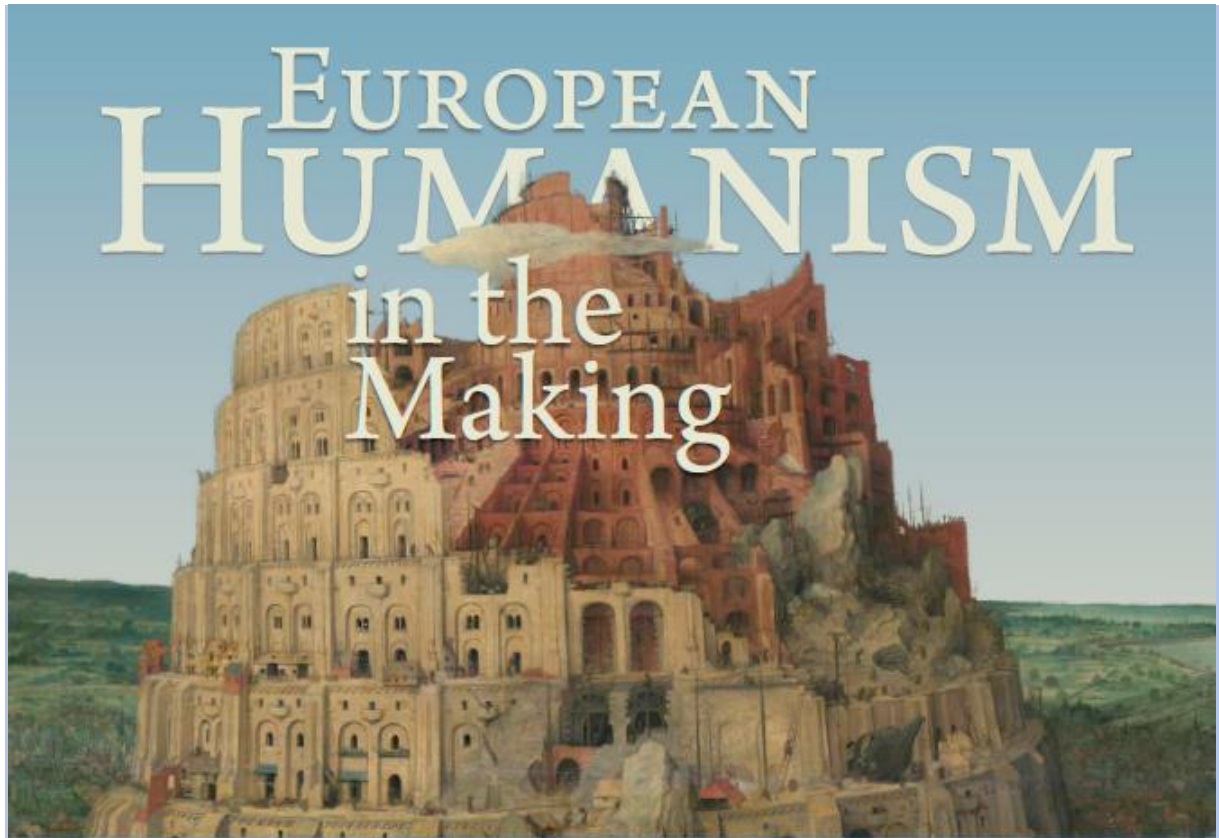


EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES

7TH SUMMER SCHOOL



EUROPEAN HUMANISM IN THE MAKING OF PEACE

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY LILLE, FRANCE
29 JUNE-3 JULY 2026

(PRE-ONLINE WEBINAR, 27 MAY 2026)



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Catholique
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BACKGROUND

Inspired by the appeal made by Pope Francis, on accepting the Charlemagne Prize in May 2016, for the recovery of a lost – or maybe never fully recognized – ‘soul’ of Europe, based on the agenda for a new humanism resulting from historical knowledge and the ethical recollection that it can foster collectively, the European Federation of Catholic Universities took the initiative to develop an interdisciplinary study programme entitled ‘European Humanism in the Making’. In doing so it addresses the Pope’s question “What happened to humanist Europe, the defender of human rights, democracy and freedom?” and takes it further to tap into historical roots as bearers of future prospects for the European project.

One of the most important intellectual tasks of the present is the development of a new kind of humanism. Current global conflicts in politics, economics, culture and religion call out for defining and strengthening a global culture of values and humanity. Conflict, hunger, poverty and misery in many parts of the world provide evidence for this necessity. Globalisation demands new cultural and educational orientations. There is a need to define the underlying values and norms. This requires a reflection on what it means to be a human being in all its diverseness and changeability.

The liberal-democratic understanding of the nation appeared to guarantee civic and political citizenship, but the debate around the social question indicates the search for a yet unattained social citizenship. There was a widespread belief that the social question had been solved within the framework of the welfare state, but today the social question seems to come back. The connection between humanism and autonomy, based on a set of human rights, needs to be balanced by human duties and commitments, a thematisation of social solidarity and social responsibility.

There is a renewed debate as to which ethical approach can lay a true foundation for global justice. The ongoing processes of economic and cultural globalization challenge the disciplines of ethics, social and political philosophy and philosophy of law. New analytical concepts have to be brought forward for a suitable understanding of world-society, sovereignty, political institutions and legal opportunities. In addition to the critical analysis of existing world orders and the emergence of new analytical models, new normative questions arise. They relate to a peaceful, just and sustainable co-existence of human beings: what kind of ethical approach is best suited for the formulation of a solid and shared basis for a just and sustainable world order?

Today, in Europe, we are in need a concept of historical consciousness not restricted to the hermeneutic achievements of scholars but integrating the concept of enactment of civil virtues. The dilemma of Western rationalization and its helplessness to come to terms with global justice will not be overcome by intellectual endeavour alone. What will be needed too is moral imagination.

How to reinterpret the values that underpin European humanism?

How relevant is European humanism in a globalized world and how may it apply to current society?

How may European humanism contribute to current issues of governance, citizenship, prosperity, solidarity and human development?

How do we study European humanism and how to apply it in higher education?

Starting from these questions, the FUCE five-course interdisciplinary programme (for 2nd and 3rd year BA level), was developed.



UCSIA
Universitair Centrum
Sint-Ignatius
Antwerpen

DESCRIPTION

The core focus of the course programme is on identifying the roots and routes of the European project and investigating how to valorize them in the contemporary globalized context. This involves a questioning of historical contexts, cultural canon, scientific approach, institution building and citizenship from a wider comparative and international perspective¹.

The programme consists of following five modules, structured in two parts:

PART I – Historical and Cultural Roots: Implications for Europe Today

- I. Contribution of History to European Consciousness
- II. Literature, the Arts, Translation and European Identity
- III. Exploring the Complexities of Modernity: the Intersection of European Enlightenment and Islamic Humanist Legacies

PART II – Social and Political Construction: Implications for the Future of Europe

- IV. European Social Humanism
- V. Creative Leadership & Civic Engagement in Action

PART I

Courses I, II and III form an essential basis for understanding how facts and fiction shape a mental geography with real impact in the world and how this legacy needs to be reclaimed and critically reinterpreted in light of the future.

PART II

Courses IV and V are inseparable from one another in their focus on the social and political dimensions of Europe, inviting a constructive reflection about the European model we want to build. It helps students to acquire a 'mentality of social responsibility' within European humanism, a new kind of citizenship that can help to overcome these challenges and contribute in an active way to an advanced European humanism.

METHODOLOGY

The different courses use different methodologies, from interpreting the facts (lectures), over experiencing narratives (reading and writing), questioning the (rational and scientific) assumptions (debating theses presented by students), evaluating the ethical principles underlying the organization of society (discerning the underlying values), identifying modes of civic and political participation and learning to become an active agent of change (formation).

All courses use shared basic concepts and terminology, such as e.g. humanism, identity, consciousness, heritage, diversity, difference, community, which are in need of 'translation' in light of current challenges.

The programme topic will be introduced in a pre-online webinar, inviting students to discuss some core questions in smaller groups, and instructions will be given on the tasks to be done during the week, comprising personal reflection questions on each course and group work, to be presented at the end of the week, as well as a story writing exercise. This input is to be uploaded to an online portfolio by the end of the week to obtain the 3 ECTS credits.

¹ The programme was developed by a team of five course coordinators under guidance of Barbara Segaert, Project Coordinator Europe & Solidarity at the University Centre Saint-Ignatius Antwerp.

SPECIAL FOCUS

EUROPEAN HUMANISM IN THE MAKING OF PEACE

The specific topic for this summer school, to be addressed in the opening public lecture on Tuesday, and throughout the five courses, relates to the way forward for European Humanism to contribute to building peace in the current times of conflict and strife.

For more than seventy years, the European project has been animated by the hope of peace. Yet recent years have shown how fragile that hope remains. The 2026 FUCE Summer School invites students and scholars to reflect on how peace can once again become a creative, moral, and cultural project for Europe: What kind of humanism is required not merely to preserve peace, but to make it? Peace is a continual act of imagination, solidarity, and hope.

Peace is not merely the absence of war. As the Schuman Declaration reminded Europe, “World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it.” European humanism has always sought such creativity. From Medieval Just War Theory to Kant’s Perpetual Peace, from post-war reconciliation to the European Union’s founding vision, peace has been understood as a work of culture and conscience.

But the moral architecture of peace is again under strain. The war in Ukraine, the resurgence of nationalism, and the persistence of inequality have exposed Europe’s vulnerability. The “culture of peace” born after 1945 – rooted in human rights, cooperation, and shared prosperity – can no longer be taken for granted. The task now is not only to defend that culture but to remake it, integrating new perspectives from history, faith, art, and civil society.

In *Pacem in Terris* (1963), Pope John XXIII wrote that true peace “is founded on truth, built up on justice, nurtured and animated by charity, and brought into effect under the auspices of freedom” (§167). Yet this insight harmonises with a broader interreligious vision. Many traditions align and inform the European humanist conviction that dignity and dialogue must prevail over domination. All converge in recognising that peace is not a condition to be maintained, but an endeavour to be commonly pursued.

STRUCTURE OF THE WEEK

The week follows five interlinked academic courses, each addressing a key dimension of European humanism's relationship with peace. Together they trace a journey from the roots of European consciousness to its civic expression in action. The programme combines lectures, workshops, cultural visits, and simulation exercises, culminating in collaborative creative work and public reflection.

Course I – The Contribution of History to European Consciousness

The opening course establishes the historical foundations of Europe's legal, moral, political identity. It considers how memory of conflict has shaped the continent's understanding of itself, from the devastation of the world wars to the emergence of the post-war peace project. Participants will explore the double legacy of European history: its capacity for both destruction and reconciliation. Special regard will be given to the Shuman Declaration, which celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2025. The day concludes with a City Walk, situating these questions within the physical and memorial landscape of the host city.

Course II – Literature, the Arts, Translation and European Identity

Art and literature have long served as Europe's conscience, bearing witness to both suffering and renewal. This course examines how poetry, fiction, and the arts express the longing for peace and the pain of loss. Translation, both linguistic and cultural, becomes a metaphor for peace itself: the movement toward understanding the other. Students will analyse how the arts cultivate empathy and how cultural memory can be reimagined as a resource for reconciliation rather than resentment. Students will be asked to reflect and engage with their own narrative construction through creative writing on the theme of the week.

Course III – European Enlightenment and the Islamic Heritage

This course explores the intellectual and interreligious roots of European thought. The Enlightenment's faith in reason, dialogue, and universal dignity emerged not in isolation but in conversation with Islamic philosophy and science. By revisiting this shared heritage, participants will consider how intercultural exchange shaped the modern idea of peace. The discussion will also address how contemporary Europe might recover this openness in dialogue with its Muslim citizens and neighbours, recognising peace as both an internal and external relationship.

Course IV – European Social Humanism

This course examines the political and social expressions of peace within the European tradition. It traces how liberal and republican ideas—of individual freedom, civic virtue, and the common good—have shaped Europe's search for a just social order. From post-war reconstruction to the development of the welfare state and the European Union, these traditions reveal peace as a political as well as a moral achievement. Drawing also on Fratelli Tutti and contemporary debates on solidarity, the course asks how social humanism can be renewed amid current divisions. The visit to Flanders Fields, Ypres, offers a moment of reflection on the cost of war and the vocation of peace in public life.

Course V – Civic Engagement in Action

The final course focuses on practice. Through workshops and simulation games, participants will apply the insights of the week to real-world contexts—local, European, and global. The emphasis is on agency: how students, as future leaders and citizens, can act as artisans of peace. The Summer School concludes with the Performing Europe session, where participants present stories and collaborative projects that translate their learning into creative public expression. They will also engage in an exercise to reflect upon the dynamics of political interaction at a European level.

Public Lectures

The FUCE Summer School offers two open lectures to the wider audience (with possibility to attend online): an opening lecture on Tuesday evening with an expert who will introduce the topic of this year's edition and a panel debate, MyEurope, on Wednesday evening, with some of the participants sharing their visions of and for Europe.

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PRE ONLINE WEBINAR – INTRODUCTORY COURSE

PART I – HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ROOTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR EUROPE TODAY

Course I - Contribution of History to European Consciousness

The Institutionalization of the European Idea of Peace
Sarah DURELLE-MARC, Catholic University of Lille

Guest lecture
Louis DE CARBONNIERES, Catholic University of Lille

From Memory to Conflict: Algorithmic Mediation of the Past (public lecture)
Jasna ČURKOVIĆ NIMAC, Catholic University of Croatia

Course II - Literature, the Arts, Translation and European Identity

Literary Heritage, European Identity and the Search for Peace
Peter HANENBERG, Catholic University of Portugal

Conflict as the Driving Force in Narrative
Fernando ARIZA, University CEU San Pablo, Madrid

My Europe (public lecture)
Peter HANENBERG, Catholic University of Portugal

Course III - Exploring the Complexities of Modernity: The Intersection of European Enlightenment and Islamic Humanist Legacies

Fraternity as a Path to Peace: Islamic Humanism and the 2019 Document on Human Fraternity
Ali MOSTFA, Catholic University of Lyon

On the Troubled Dreams of Peace of European Modernity: From the Kantian project to the Emergence of AI
Paolo MONTI, University of Milan-Bicocca and Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan

PART II – SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

Course IV - European Social Humanism

European Social Humanism
Michael SHORTALL, Pontifical University, St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth, Ireland

The Conquest of the New World and Just War
Erik DE BOM, University Centre Saint-Ignatius Antwerp UCSIA

Course V - Creative Leadership & Civic Engagement in Action

Peace Built from Conflict Narratives
Fernando ARIZA, University CEU San Pablo, Madrid

Debating Peace: European Decision Making Simulation Exercise
Aurélien RACCAH, Catholic University of Lille

- 14h30 Introduction to the course programme and team
- 14h45 Presentation of the topic of this year (see description on page 3)

A Humanism Tested and Transformed

Peace is not merely the absence of war. As the Schuman Declaration reminded Europe, "World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it." European humanism has always sought such creativity. From Medieval Just War Theory to Kant's Perpetual Peace, from post-war reconciliation to the European Union's founding vision, peace has been understood as a work of culture and conscience.

But the moral architecture of peace is again under strain. The war in Ukraine, the resurgence of nationalism, and the persistence of inequality have exposed Europe's vulnerability. The "culture of peace" born after 1945 – rooted in human rights, cooperation, and shared prosperity – can no longer be taken for granted. The task now is not only to defend that culture but to remake it, integrating new perspectives from history, faith, art, and civil society.

- 15h15 Discussions in small groups on questions pertaining to how populism is remaking humanism in Europe
- 16h00 Plenary feedback from discussion groups
- 16h30 Instructions on e-travelogue (portfolio) to be completed during the summer school

Teachers will be referring to different elements that have shaped European humanism and identity. Participants will be invited to present evidence from their own experience and background that connects with the content.

This e-travelogue, your travel diary, will help you map your personal reflections and itinerary throughout the week.

You will develop your thoughts in conversation with your fellows in group discussions to learn about other backgrounds and approaches from different perspectives.

Each group will prepare a presentation illustrating the main topics discussed to be shared with all in the final session on Friday. As such your collective journey will take shape for all to see.

Carefully follow up on the assignments the teachers have prepared for you and complete your travelogue day by day with content from the classes and the group discussions.

The travelogue consists of different parts for you to complete individually:

- a) basic questions to reflect on the content of the morning classes (write down your thoughts)*
- b) input to be prepared in advance of the afternoon group assignments (to be gathered in the scrapbook at the end of the travelogue and brought together for the group presentation at the end of the week)*

The e-travelogue will have to be submitted by the end of the week as a requirement for obtaining the certificate (3ECTS) of the hosting university.

- 16h15 Introduction to story writing exercise

Every story requires a disruption. Narrative develops from the challenge, known as narrative conflict, which prevents the character from achieving their goal. This conflict is not merely an accessory, but the central mechanism that converts a sequence of events into a meaningful plot. Without it, the narrative lacks tension and interest.

If conflict is the driver, the narrative becomes the process of navigating this struggle. The absence of conflict is not "peace," but stasis (inaction) that leads to narrative failure.

Paradoxically, a story about peace must include conflict, focusing on the arduous work of building it against opposing forces. The key difference is that fictional conflict leads to harmony and enrichment (Anagnorisis), while real-world conflict causes trauma and violence.

You are required to write a short story (approximately 700-1000 words) that includes a conflict, though it does not have to be war-themed. It must complete a structure (or itinerary) of harmony, disruption, and resolution.

FUCE SUMMER SCHOOL EUROPEAN HUMANISM IN THE MAKING

EUROPEAN HUMANISM IN THE MAKING OF PEACE

29/06-3/07/2026

	Monday June 29	Tuesday June 30	Wednesday July 1	Thursday July 2	Friday July 3
	Course I Contribution of History to European Consciousness	Course II Literature, the Arts, Translation & European Identity	Course III European Enlightenment and the Islamic Heritage	Course IV European Social Humanism	Course V Civic Engagement in Action
9h00	STUDENT FEEDBACK SESSIONS				
	INTRODUCTION SESSION course coordinators	FEED BACK SESSION coordinators Sarah Durelle-Marc & Peter Hanenberg	STORY WRITING SESSION Intro Fernando Ariza	FEED BACK SESSION coordinators Ali Mostfa & Paolo Monti	WORK SESSION FINALIZE STORY
10h30	Coffee Break				
10h45	COURSE PART I				
	Intro coordinator Sarah Durelle-Marc Presentation <i>Sarah Durelle-Marc</i> Catholic University of Lille	Intro coordinator Peter Hanenberg, Presentation <i>Peter Hanenberg</i> Catholic University of Portugal, Lisbon	Intro coordinator Ali Mostfa Presentation <i>Ali Mostfa</i> Catholic University of Lyon	Intro coordinator Michael Shortall Presentation <i>Michael Shortall</i> St.-Patrick's Pontifical University Maynooth College	SIMULATION GAME moderated by <i>Aurélien Raccah</i>
11h45	Coffee Break				
12h00	COURSE PART II				
	Presentation <i>Louis de Carbonnières</i> Catholic University of Lille	Presentation <i>Fernando Ariza</i> University CEU San Pablo, Madrid	Presentation <i>Paolo Monti</i> University of Milan-Bicocca & Catholic University of the Sacred Heart	Presentation <i>Erik De Bom</i> University Centre Saint-Ignatius Antwerp UCSIA	SIMULATION GAME
13h00	Lunch				
14h00	COURSE I GROUP REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT				
		COURSE II GROUP REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT	COURSE III GROUP REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT	VISIT FLANDERS FIELDS YPRES	FINALIZE PERSONAL TRAVELOGUE & CONCRETE OUTPUT COLLABORATIVE WORK
15h30 - 17h00	CITY WALK		COURSE IV GROUP REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT		PERFORMING EUROPE PRESENTATION OF GROUP WORK & STORIES BY STUDENTS
	PUBLIC LECTURES				
19h00 - 20h30		PUBLIC OPENING LECTURE Jasna Čurković Nimac (CUC)	PUBLIC PANEL <i>MyEUROPE</i> moderated by Peter Hanenberg (UCP)		Farewell Dinner

PUBLIC OPENING LECTURE
30 JUNE 2026 - 19h00-20h30

From Memory to Conflict: Algorithmic Mediation of the Past
BY JASNA ČURKOVIĆ NIMAC

Conflicts and post-conflict reconciliation are deeply rooted in how the past is remembered and how collective memory is reconstructed. These processes are shaped by power relations and are increasingly mediated—and potentially manipulated—by new mnemonic technology, specifically artificial intelligence (AI), raising urgent ethical questions, concerns about justice, and the risk of generating new forms of conflict.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is widely discussed for its impact on the future, yet its influence on the past—particularly on personal and collective memory—remains underexplored. Building on the “reconstructive turn” in memory studies and the more recent “digital turn,” this lecture examines how AI and digital technologies disrupt traditional processes of forming, reconstructing, and preserving memory. While AI offers opportunities to foster more inclusive and accessible forms of collective memory, it also introduces significant risks, including manipulation, distortion, and fabrication. The distortion of memory through AI technologies also opens the door to forms of cognitive warfare. By subtly altering, amplifying, or fabricating narratives about the past, AI can influence how individuals and societies perceive reality, identity, and historical truth. Such manipulation can be deployed strategically to polarize communities, reinforce ideological divisions, or undermine trust in institutions and shared knowledge systems. When collective memory becomes unstable or contested due to algorithmic intervention, it creates fertile ground for disinformation campaigns that operate not only on present facts but on the very foundations of remembered experience. In this sense, AI-driven memory distortion is not merely an ethical or technological issue, but a geopolitical one, where control over memory becomes a tool of influence and power.

These dynamics are illustrated through the example of “virtual witnessing” in the USC Shoah Foundation’s “New Dimensions in Testimony” project, which employs AI-driven holographic technologies to create interactive testimonies. Such systems simulate dialogue and presence, enabling users to engage with representations of past experiences in ways that blur the boundaries between lived memory and its digital reconstruction. More broadly, AI systems—including large language models—function as mechanisms for compressing the past by selecting, summarizing, and rearticulating historical knowledge. In doing so, they shape how memory is formed, accessed, and interpreted, while embedding editorial choices, potential biases, and the risk of privileging dominant or homogenized narratives.



Jasna Čurković Nimac is Full professor at the Department of Communication Studies at the Catholic University of Croatia. She earned her PhD in Moral Theology in 2008 from the Pontificio Istituto Superiore di Teologia Morale – Accademia Alfonsiana in Rome. From 2009 to 2011, she worked as a research associate at the Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences in Pula, and from 2011 as a senior research associate in Zagreb. Since 2016, she has been employed as a professor at the Department of Communication Studies at the Catholic University of Croatia. In 2024, she was appointed Vice-Rector for International Cooperation at the same university. In 2023, she spent a semester as a visiting professor at the Nanovic Institute for European Studies, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA. She is a member of the European Society for Research in Ethics (Societas Ethica), the Memory Studies Association, and the Global Ethics Network (Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church). Her research interests are ethics and the neuro-ethics of memory; the impact of new technologies and artificial intelligence on individual and collective memory; Christian ethics; moral philosophy; and the ethics of intercultural communication.

Course I
Contribution of History to European Consciousness

Coordinator: Sarah DURELLE-MARC, Catholic University of Lille

A contribution to the reinforcement of 'humanism in the making' must investigate, as a wake-up call to younger generations, a historical approach, history being one forbearer of any present-day conscience and an open blueprint of any future to come. The process of building a European consciousness then necessarily involves building a common European memory. This involves first of all the study, discovery and teaching of the history of Europe.

Therefore, this course first presents a preliminary introduction focusing on the role of history in the construction of a European consciousness, because history is a means to (re-)create a real sense of European conscience, of European identity, of European citizenship, a real sense of belonging to a community of people, sharing the same values, striving for the same project, that of peace in Europe and in the world.

This introduction will highlight the links between the different courses of the programme and lay the foundations for actively building a European consciousness 'in the making'.

Various civilizational problems that Europe struggles with stem primarily from a lack of memory. The 'safe haven' that the European founding fathers built to oppose and avoid the darkest period (1914-1945) ever lived by our continent has withered away and is replaced by a much more disunited Europe. Europeans must reconsider anew those structural ingredients and conquests that have been the driving pillars of European life, one such pillar being humanism. However, and throughout various historical periods, it was that same humanism and, hence, the identifying consciousness of Europe, that succumbed before inhumane existential immorality, collective nihilism, extremism, violence, war, genocide, dictatorship, political and diplomatic unilateralism, crisis, poverty and desperation.

This course investigates the translation of the old European idea into new institutions with attention for leading European figures, such as Winston Churchill, Denis de Rougemont, Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet. The founding fathers of Europe were resolutely turned towards the assertion of common values in favour of peace, in a political concerted project where European programmes were developed to translate European identity into European citizenship, as embodied by the Erasmus programme for mobility of European students. We should not forget that Europe was built through (political, financial, health) crises, which in the end contributed to the strengthening of Europe and to the reinforcement of European humanism.

The advent of the 21st century, nevertheless, with the international financial crisis, the impasses of continental federalism and the dangers of populism, terrorism, xenophobic nationalism and crowds unrepresented by regular democratic and party politics, is paving the way for a new era – fuelled by various shades of illiberal threats and strained by Euroscepticism.

The course offers elements for thought and reflection to determine whether or not Europe is in need of a new Schuman Declaration for the making of peace.



Course II Literature, the Arts, Translation and European Identity

Coordinator: Peter HANENBERG, Catholic University of Portugal

It seems to be a fact that the cultural dimension in the European project has long been neglected. An initiative instituted by the European Commission under the title 'A Soul for Europe' has hardly found due attention so that Europe has mostly been identified with political, social, economic and financial issues – nothing that could 'speak to the soul' of the people.

Whereas political, social, economic and financial issues seem to be 'at the heart' of Europe and the European Union, the cultural dimension appears to be a matter of national, regional or even local belonging. When it comes to fiction and literature such national binding is said to be even more obvious due to the language differences which characterize Europe. However, reducing culture and literature to its national dimensions means ignoring its intercultural and global projection.

Literary history is full of multinational exchange, writers have always been inspired by their forerunners, regardless of where they come from. Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Balzac or Beckett: they all belong to a common European tradition which has always been alive – and rarely been identified as such. In a certain way, literature and the arts have built their own European narratives. Translation (not only of fiction and literature) has somehow been the true language of Europe (as Umberto Eco once suggested): translation as a cultural technique to deal with the multiplicity of languages and identities in Europe as a proper method for living together in peace. Therefore, it might be worthwhile to address literature, the arts and translation as a means to a better awareness and a deeper understanding of European identity. This seems to be even more necessary in times in which war has come back to Europe and threatens the European project in a new way. When only national identities matter – why should we then bother with the soul of Europe? Can we only be proud of our own national culture or is there an added value to cultural diversity? Is there anything about literature, storytelling and translation that goes beyond the creation of an imagined homogenous community – which would be worth defending?

Translation, both linguistic and cultural, becomes a metaphor for peace itself: the movement toward understanding the other. Students will analyse how the arts cultivate empathy and how cultural memory can be reimagined as a resource for reconciliation rather than resentment. Students will be asked to reflect and engage with their own narrative construction through creative writing on the theme of the week.

The course comprises two sessions:

1. *Literary Heritage, European Identity and the Search for Peace*

Thomas Morus' *Utopia*, Luís de Camões' *Lusiads* or Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* belong to the European canon – but are mostly read within their national linguistic limits. Against all nationalistic claims, it is necessary to recognize how much they have built a common European identity referring to concepts like critical thinking, the relation with extra-European cultures or tolerance. The lesson will offer transnational readings of these texts in their function as agents of promoting European identity, tolerance and peace. Special attention will be given to translation as a powerful cultural resource for Europe, especially in times when the search for peace asks for continuous efforts.

2. *Discovering Conflict as the Driving Force in Narrative*

At the heart of every memorable story is a disruption. Narrative does not grow in a state of calm; it is driven by things breaking down. This imbalance is the narrative conflict, which is formally defined as anything that stops or complicates the main character from reaching his goal. It is the opposing force that stands between a character and his objective.

Conflict is far more than a simple tool for generating interest; it serves as the "backbone" and the "heart" of the work. It is the necessary mechanism that transforms a mere chronological list of events (a basic sequence) into a purposeful plot. Without conflict, there is no dramatic tension; and without tension, the narrative lacks focus and is uninteresting for the reader.

Course III
European Enlightenment and Islamic Humanism

Coordinator, Ali Mostfa, Lyon Catholic University – France

This course explores the connections and contrasts between European Enlightenment and Islamic humanist legacies in light of the evolving challenges Europe faces today, both intellectual and cultural. While rooted in distinct philosophical and theological traditions, European and Islamic humanisms have long intersected through shared commitments to human dignity, ethical responsibility, rational discourse, and the pursuit of the common good. These traditions are not merely historical artefacts; they continue to shape debates on citizenship, education, coexistence, and justice in contemporary societies.

The question of peace is not only political or legal, but also deeply philosophical and cultural. What do we mean when we speak of peace in a European context? Is peace merely the absence of war, or is it something more dynamic—an ongoing effort to sustain conditions of dignity, dialogue, and justice across difference? The traditions of both European and Islamic humanism have wrestled with the tension between conflict and coexistence, and with the aspiration to imagine a common life beyond violence or domination. Yet these traditions also reveal internal contradictions: Enlightenment peace often required exclusion; Islamic coexistence was never free of asymmetries. In this light, peace must be approached not as a utopian end-state but as a fragile process shaped by ethical decisions, social structures, and competing narratives.

Both European Enlightenment thinkers and Islamic philosophers grappled with these tensions. Enlightenment projects of peace, such as Kant's vision of *Perpetual Peace*, were based on ideals of rational order, law, and cosmopolitanism. Islamic traditions, from Al-Farabi to Averroes, grounded peace in justice (*'adl*), wisdom (*hikma*), and hospitality (*karam*), often within a spiritual and ethical horizon. Yet both traditions also contain limits and contradictions: peace has sometimes been invoked to justify exclusion, and universal ideals have been used to suppress difference. Our course will encourage students to think critically about how these legacies can speak to one another, and what they offer—or fail to offer—in addressing the urgent need for a more just and peaceful European future.

In this context, the first lesson will explore a key moment of contemporary interreligious engagement: *A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* (Abu Dhabi, 2019), signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Ahmad al-Tayyeb. The document offers a compelling—though contested—horizon for rethinking peace beyond the traditional frameworks of the Enlightenment. While Enlightenment models emphasized reason and law, this document proposes peace rooted in ethical fraternity, religious humility, and shared vulnerability. This raises complex questions: can Europe today draw from religious traditions to renew its peace project without reverting to exclusion? Can Islamic values such as *ta'aruf* (mutual recognition) and *ihsān* (compassionate excellence) contribute to a pluralist ethos of peace? And does invoking fraternity risk idealism—or does it offer a deeper grammar of coexistence in a fragmented world?

The second lesson acknowledges how the problem of violence and peace has accompanied Western political and moral philosophy from its origins to the present. For Plato and Aristotle, conflict is both a remote cause and a constant threat to political life. In modern thought, political philosophers from Hobbes to Kant sought to transform the experience of war into a project for rational and moral order, culminating in Kant's dream of a *Perpetual Peace* achieved through the means of reason. The 20th century shattered the optimism of the Enlightenment, and thinkers such as Hannah Arendt confronted the possibility of total annihilation and the loss of politics itself after the Holocaust and the looming risk of atomic warfare. Drawing on Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom, Arendt proposed that peace depends not on universal ideals but on the capacity for judgment, plurality, and solidarity among human beings. In our times, the memories of World War II are increasingly distant, and it is unclear how a new world order will find the resources to sustain enduring peace. In the age of artificial intelligence, the emergence of new technologies may prove to be a threat to peace—not only because of their potential applications in automated warfare, but more profoundly because of the erosion they cause in the shared experiences of human cooperation that nurture the collective pursuit of solidarity and coexistence.

Course IV
European Social Humanism

Coordinator, Michael SHORTALL, St. Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth

The expression 'European Social Humanism' refers to the field of the values which have and continue to foster European society. In this perspective, European humanism can be understood as a coherent set of values and ideals that inform social interaction, not only as a vision but also a society characterized by peculiar social and institutional forms. This set of values and social and institutional forms, which is still in the making, is also the result of a positive attitude towards the 'other' and a capacity to understand the difference as an opportunity rather than a mere threat.

Everything that treats of the human person, also treats of the human society, as far as the human being is naturally a social being. The European social order in its historical development has been shaped by a number of key normative ideas, freedom, solidarity, democracy, human rights and law. The course is designed to be an intellectual endeavour to arouse students' curiosity and interests in such values.

The course will investigate:

1. 'European Social Humanism' by outlining, in an introductory manner, the operative ideas at work. It will do so by making links to current affairs and critical questions that are still ongoing in Europe.
2. Catholic Social Teaching by providing an overview of the sources, methodology and central principles. Seminal texts will be introduced within the historical context of the primary social engagement of that time. Critically, three principles – namely, solidarity, subsidiarity and the common good – will be teased out as responses to the above-mentioned normative values by the Catholic Social tradition.

By the end of the course, students should be able to identify some prominent moral and political concepts of European Social Humanism and Catholic Social Thought, reflect upon current ethical and societal concerns and formulate engaging philosophical, moral, anthropological and political questions.

A guest lecture will be dedicated to the conquest of the New World at the end of the 15th and in the 16th century, which marked an unparalleled new episode in the history of mankind. Spanish explorers discovered totally new peoples that were previously unknown. This posed wide-ranging challenges in more than one way. One of the most pressing questions was 'by what right were the barbarians subjected to Spanish rule?', as it was phrased in the early 1500s by Francisco de Vitoria. The question boiled down to the fundamental wicked problem by what right, if any, a state might make war against another state that had not caused it any direct harm. In other words, the conquest of the New World could only be justified if it were the outcome of a just war. In this course we will have a closer look at the just war tradition by focusing on this decisive phase in history. We will do so by discussing the work of Francisco de Vitoria. He is the founder of what became known as the 'School of Salamanca', a group of scholars that were in the first-place theologians but who all worked on the intersection between theology, law and ethics. Their work was ground-breaking for, among other things, the development of international law. They contributed to timeless debates that still resonate today with reflections on the concept of sovereignty, natural slavery, universal rights and the relationship between civilized and uncivilized societies.

This course thus examines the political and social expressions of peace within the European tradition. It traces how ideas of individual freedom, civic virtue, and the common good have shaped Europe's search for a just social order. Drawing on Fratelli Tutti and contemporary debates on solidarity, the course then asks how social humanism can be renewed amid current divisions.

The visit to Flanders Fields, Ypres, offers a moment of reflection on the cost of war and the vocation of peace in public life.



Course V
Creative Leadership and Civic Engagement in Action

Coordinator FERNANDO ARIZA, CEU San Pablo

The fifth course unfolds a reflection on leadership and citizenship as valuable starting points for renewing the 'old continent.' It aims to encourage a deeper consideration of European identity, values, and future vision to build society and raise young leaders for Europe's future considering the challenges represented by populism.

The content presents students with practical ways to exercise social responsibility as citizens. The new conservative and nationalist wave, which in its extreme form leads to populism and the defense of an illiberal democracy, challenges the foundational values of the European Union. In this context, civic engagement should balance valuing and defending one's own identity with appreciating and supporting others. At the same time, a new perspective of leadership is required, based on citizens capable of crossing collective boundaries to transform pre-established borders into shared thresholds.

This fifth course completes the overall purpose of the programme: on the one hand, it recalls the European identity (its roots, spirit, history, and effects on European civilization), and on the other, it reflects on how to foster this identity among young Europeans by showing its potential for integration, solidarity, social responsibility, in respect of diversity.

This course on 'Creative Leadership and Civic Engagement in Action' relates to 'European Humanism in the Making' in two ways: in its content and approach.

The content is part of European humanism at its core. This needs preliminary clarification. By 'European humanism' we understand cosmo-visions formed by the merger of the Greek, Roman and Christian traditions, in co-habitation with Jewish and Islamic traditions in vast territories (comprehending but not limited to the current EU) over approximately 2000 years. It tries to put into practice this European humanism and translate it to the contemporary context. Special attention will be paid to the values that conform Europe and the way they are developed individually in the different cultures.

The pedagogical approach is based on the idea that humans have a narrative understanding of reality, through which the experience of shared stories, both received through reading and expressed through writing, helps us realize specific aspects from a rich and original perspective. With this idea in mind, throughout the summer school each student will compose a story following specific parameters. At the end of the week, we will share these texts with each other. This way, we will express our narrative experience and receive that of others, creating a network of stories that will allow us to understand better any common topic.

The course will connect with the students' own work in completing their personal 'travelogues'.

They will be invited to debate peace in a European Decision Making Simulation Exercise.

Contributors

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Erik De Bom is director of UCSIA (University Centre Saint-Ignatius Antwerp) and research fellow at the Seminarium Philologiae Humanisticae of KU Leuven. He studied classical languages, European and international politics and philosophy. In 2009, he obtained his doctorate with a PhD on the reception of Justus Lipsius' political ideas in the Netherlands. He has published extensively on political thought in the 16th and 17th centuries and on social justice in the European Union.

Louis de Carbonnières is law professor at the Jean Gaudemet Institute for legal history of the Panthéon-Assas University of Paris. His research focuses, amongst others, on the European Idea (see: <https://ihd.cnrs.fr/annuaire/liste/louis-de-carbonnieres/>)

Sarah Durelle-Marc is Associate Professor at the Law Faculty (FLD) of the Catholic University of Lille (UCL), where she was recently appointed Dean. She holds a PhD. in European Law with honours (2011) and an LL.M in European Law (1999) from the University of Rennes. She teaches about Constitutional Law, European Institutions and European Policies at the FLD. She is the Head of the Law and Political Science bachelor's program at the Law Faculty. She is Assessor to the Dean in charge of Academic Affairs. She is an associate judge at the National Court of Asylum in Paris. Her research focuses on the European construction and its institutional translation. In her publications, she analyses political risk, the impact of Brexit and minority rights.

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Ali Mostfa is Maître de Conférences at the Catholic University of Lyon (UCLy), specializing in linguistics and cultural studies with a focus on religious discourse, Islamic hermeneutics, and the intersection of Islam and modernity. He is the scientific coordinator and head of the scientific board for the Mohammed Arkoun program on Islamic studies, a collaborative initiative with Sciences Po Lyon and Lyon 2 and 3 Universities. From 2011 to 2022, he served as Director of International Academic Partnerships at ESTRl, School of International Studies, and held prior roles as Director of Pedagogical Development and Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. Since 2020, Ali Mostfa has been a member of the Culture(s), Language, Imaginaires research group at UR Confluence Sciences and Humanities and serves as scientific delegate for the PLURIEL research platform on Islam. His recent publications include *Islam and Otherness* (2024) and *Discourses and Strategies of Otherness* (2021). Notable articles include "Redefining Qur'anic Hermeneutics" (*Religions*, 2024) and "Religious Radicalization," published in Vatican-directed proceedings (*Religious Radicalism*, 2022). He is currently preparing the publication of a book titled *Islam in France: The Challenges of a Normative Construction*, exploring the challenges of normative frameworks in the French context. His work critically examines modernity, pluralism, and Islam's role in interaction with liberal societies.

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Aurélien Raccach is a lawyer at the Paris Bar, specialized in French, European and international law. He advises companies, public authorities, research centres, NGOs and individuals in international and European law cases before national and European courts. At the Catholic University of Lille, he is a lecturer and assessor in charge of international and European development at the Faculty of Law. He directs a master's degree in EU law & litigation (MIEL). He co-founded the International and European Law School (IELS) and directed the European Bachelor's degree for 15 years. He holds a PhD from the European University Institute in Florence and wrote a thesis on "the direct application of European Union law by decentralised entities". He studied law in France (Cergy-Pontoise, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne), Germany (Humboldt Universität), the United Kingdom (University of Cambridge) and Italy (European University Institute).

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