



VRIJE  
UNIVERSITEIT  
BRUSSEL

# SO CIAL SCIE NCES

[www.vub.ac.be/social-sciences](http://www.vub.ac.be/social-sciences)

**180**  
**ECTS**

**2018-2019**





**Vrije Universiteit Brussel**

**Brussels Humanities, Sciences & Engineering Campus**

Pleinlaan 2  
1050 Brussels

**Brussels Health Campus**

Laarbeeklaan 103  
1090 Brussels

**Brussels Technology Campus**

Nijverheidskaai 170  
1070 Brussels

**Brussels Photonics Campus**

Vollezelestraat 46  
1755 Gooik

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**Realisation**

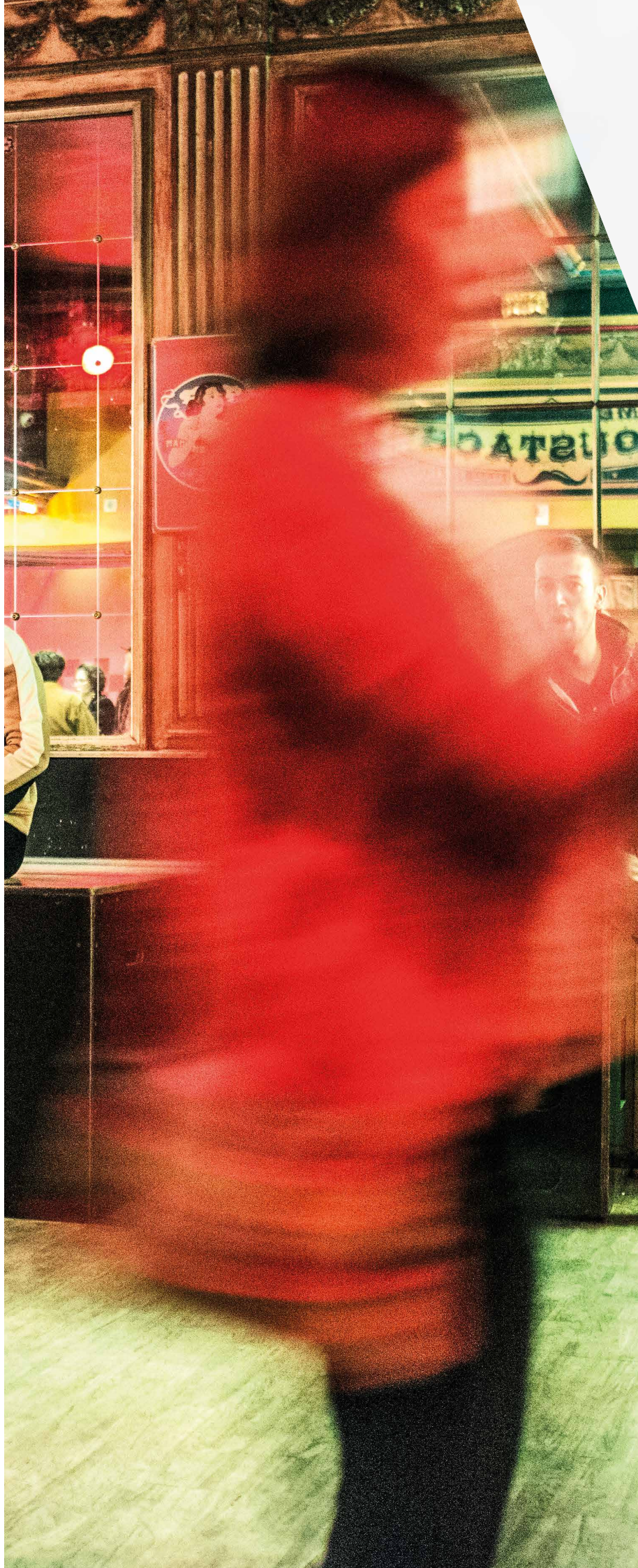
Vrije Universiteit Brussel  
Marketing, Communication and Events  
Pleinlaan 2 - 1050 Brussels  
[E. marcom@vub.ac.be](mailto:E.marcom@vub.ac.be)

**Concept**

[www.shortcut.be](http://www.shortcut.be)

**Lay-out**

Gekko







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## WHY SOCIAL SCIENCES?

# ALL GOOD THINGS COME IN THREES

Two top universities sharing their knowledge to design a selected programme based on three social sciences: political science, sociology, communication studies. One winner: you.



*"With the BSc. Social Sciences we aim to turn 'internationalization' from an academic slogan into a classroom tool. When students of more than 40 different nationalities come together to learn about 'globalization', 'international relations' and 'cultural difference', these concepts are not abstractions, but come to live and provide plenty of material for debate. In crafting this programme we not only draw on the combined experience of two universities and six academic departments, but we also want to bring our students' experiences to the table in order to create a uniquely diverse learning environment. Add to this a deliberately interdisciplinary curriculum that encourages problem-based thinking, classroom discussion and a firm grasp of research methods and the BSc. Social Sciences offers you a unique launch to an academic career."*

Prof. dr. Dieter Vandebroek (VUB)  
Programme Director BSc. Social Sciences



*"It takes knowledge to produce knowledge. Never has this been truer than in today's rapidly changing world. As governments, international organizations, businesses and citizens work to make sense of the complex and globally interconnected circumstances of contemporary life, the knowledge and skills of social scientists are more relevant—and more in demand—than ever before. The VUB and Ghent University have joined forces to create a problem-driven curriculum that emphasizes active and critical engagement with the issues that are shaping today's world. As teachers, our goal is not simply to prepare students for the next exam, but to help them to become active producers of knowledge, and meaningful participants in the changes unfolding around us all. Brussels—with its rich, multicultural and organizational life—provides the perfect setting for such an endeavor."*

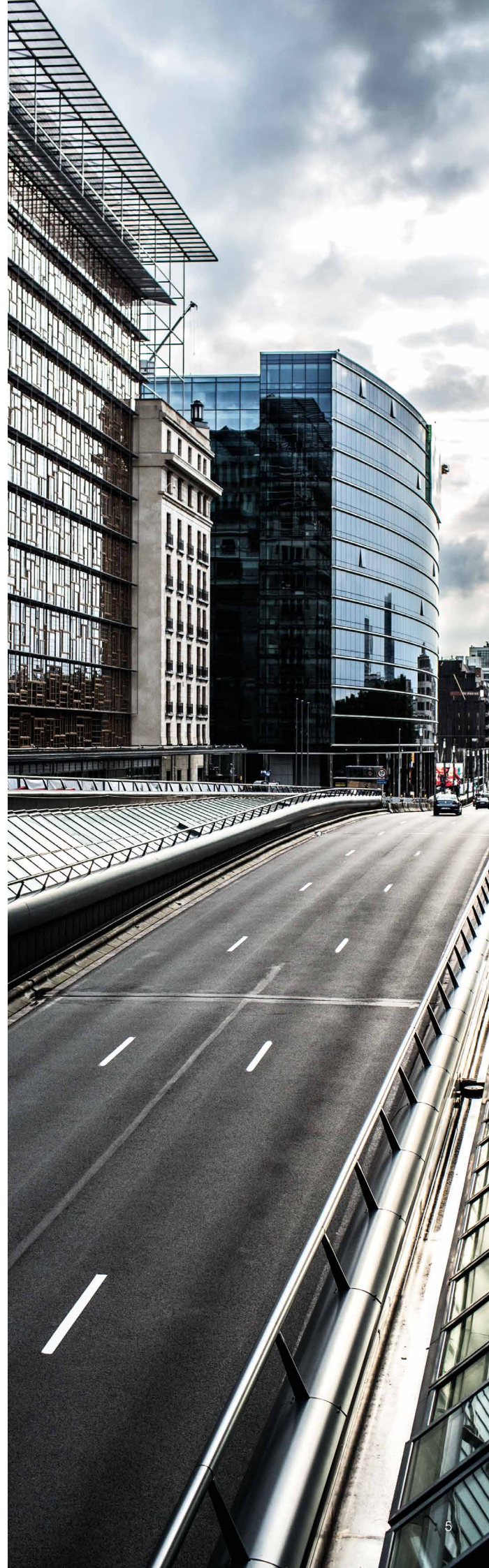
Prof. dr. Christopher Parker (Ghent University)  
Co-director BSc. Social Sciences





## A powerful troika

Political Science. Sociology. Communication Studies. Three crucial disciplines to build a deep understanding of today's societies. A smart combination of knowledge of political organisations and power, of human interaction, and of the mediated interplay by which societies are transformed every day. With a special focus on the European Union.



# MADE IN BELGIUM DEVELOPED FOR EUROPE

This ambitious joint programme by top universities Ghent University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel tears down the walls between political science, sociology and communication studies – enabling you to build solid bridges between them. The best of three worlds, one in which you're about to excel thanks to your analytical approach, methodological strength and of course, your authority on European institutions and social issues.

According to a persistent urban legend, Albert Einstein once spent an entire summer exploring the world of social sciences. He devoured as much literature as he could get his hands on, determined to come up with an idea as revolutionary as his relativity theory had been for the natural sciences. But come autumn, he hadn't made any progress. Einstein returned all of his books to the university library, declaring that the social sciences were "way too difficult".

## The power to intersect

The good news is that you don't have to be Einstein to study social sciences. But the story tells us something about the complexity inherent to the house of social sciences, partially stemming from the on-going competition between paradigms in many of its rooms. If social reality lacks an absolute truth, so does the ever-widening branch of disciplines studying it. There is almost never one explanation that fits the mould.

The Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences (BScSS) doesn't just help you to manage this interdisciplinary environment – a skill to cherish for life – it actually sees it as an essential asset of the social sciences. Combining the strengths of political science, sociology and communication studies, it gives you the perpetual advantage of looking at things from multiple angles. Especially since you adopt an analytical approach to the three disciplines, diving into theories and concepts


on selected themes with real-life relevance, rather than memorising the chronological follow-through of schools and currents.

The BScSS realises this ambitious aim for its students by mixing up core courses with interdisciplinary ones. As you get better at adopting the analytical and interdisciplinary position towards social issues, you make better and more targeted use of all the knowledge gained during the programme. That's the point where you transcend the theoretical level and apply what you know to social reality. A practical asset at your side for many years to come – and one that's in high demand from many public and private organisations.


## New skills for a career on the Old Continent

The BScSS programme designers at Ghent University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel had your career on their minds when they were constructing the curriculum. They enriched it with two very important dimensions: a methodological one, making sure you master quantitative as well as qualitative research methods; and a topical one – the European Union and its institutions.


Being capable of seeing the difference between noise and signal is more crucial than ever. The



*The programme is designed as a launchpad for the citizens who will shape tomorrow's Europe.*



*The programme provides access to English-taught masters in both of the organising universities.*



digital revolution produces a rapidly growing amount of rough data. These data sets only reveal information to those with the right methods at hand. The BScSS programme sets aside a great deal of time to make sure you are ahead of this data-driven future. It's a priceless tool to have in your methodological research kit, whichever of the professional field you choose.

Speaking of which: the programme is designed as a launchpad for the aspirational citizens who will shape tomorrow's Europe. Throughout the curriculum, several courses are imbued with a

European dimension. Located in Brussels, surrounded by European and international political, social and media organisations, this focus on the EU as the natural context in which the programme comes to life is intended to strengthen the link between your current

studies and your future options. Hence the internship offered in the third bachelor year, and the many guest lectures by EU officials and site visits.

### **A great place to become cosmopolitan**

Brussels may be the booming capital of Europe; but it remains a city tailored to the human heart. With close to 1.2 million inhabitants, it has all the infrastructure, diversity and energy of a world-class city, while maintaining the suburb character



*"This bachelor not only gets to boast about being an international programme, it also lives up to (and goes beyond) an international standard"*


Adrienne Arnot-Bardshaw, Australia



of the 19 villages that make it up. This gives the inhabitants and visitors of Brussels both a cosmopolitan and a homey feeling.

The campus of Vrije Universiteit Brussel, where the BScSS programme is taught, reflects this duality. On the one hand, it is a perfect starting point to discover the city, well connected to the subway, railway and bus network. On the other hand, it is like a village in that same city, offering plenty of opportunities to live, play sport, eat, drink, meet up and study.

Taking up the Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences, the new joint project of Ghent University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel is an enriching educational and developmental experience, and one that paves the way for many more of these experiences to come. As an internationally accredited programme, it provides access to English-taught master programmes in both of the organising universities as well as abroad.



*"It is a luxury for a "Bruxelloise" to have the entire world in my class room without leaving my city"*

Zinaïda Sluijs, Belgium





# KEY THREADS OF THE PROGRAMME

## **Political science**

In your first year you'll spend quite some time coming to terms with fundamental principles and concepts in political science. In your second year, you start applying these for a critical look at timeless issues in political science – you learn about the political deliberation of conflict and contradiction in societies. If you choose the political orientation for your third bachelor year, the focus of your courses shifts to contemporary global and European topics.

## **Sociology**

In your first year you get to meet the world of thought of godfathers of sociology like Max Weber and Jurgen Habermas. The sociologist is fascinated by all sorts of social conduct, and aims to explain its causes and consequences. This critical thinking takes a central place in your second bachelor year. If you choose the sociological orientation in your third bachelor year, you dive deep into topics like health sociology, social demography and European welfare state politics.

## **Communication studies**

How did communication studies come into existence? How did they evolve and what are the big research questions? Food for thought for your first year. Afterwards, you take a much closer look into these research questions, and learn how to develop and answer one yourself. If communication studies turn out to be your thing, choose the specialising orientation for your third bachelor year. You'll focus on European media policy, for instance, and on the political economy of communication.

## **Methodological core**

An indispensable discipline for all scientific research: statistics. You'll get acquainted with statistics applied to social sciences in your first bachelor year. Another course introduces you to domain-specific methodologies for social, political and communication studies. The year after, you dig deeper for knowledge and skills in the domain of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Courses in all three bachelor years on current issues help you translate what you've learned into practice.







# OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

Of course you're wondering which courses you'll need to take. A broad array of topics will be covered during the first two years, giving you a firm base to build upon. In your third bachelor year you'll get the chance to specialise in the social science to your liking.



BACHELOR YEAR 1	ECTS
Introduction to sociology	6
Introduction to political science	6
Introduction to communication studies	6
European history	6
Political structures and processes of the EU	6
Introduction to Belgian society and politics	6
Statistics for the social sciences	6
Introduction to Social, Political and Communication Science methodology	6
Seminar current issues 1	6
Communicating Scientific Knowledge	6

BACHELOR YEAR 2	ECTS
Critical thinking in sociology	6
Critical thinking in political science	6
Critical thinking in communication studies	6
History of international relations	6
Social Change and Inequality in Europe	6
Economy and society	6
European media, culture and diversity	6
Quantitative research methods seminar	6
Qualitative research methods seminar	6
Seminar Current Issues 2	6

Check [www.vub.ac.be/en](http://www.vub.ac.be/en) for up-to-date information on the curriculum and the courses.

You'll find more info on page 12 and 13.

ECTS: 'European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System'.  
One ECTS-credit represents 25 to 30 hours of study.

BACHELOR YEAR 3	ECTS
<b>Choose one Elective Advanced Research Methods:</b>	<b>6</b>
Multivariate Data Analysis	
Generalized Linear Techniques	
Political Ethnography	
Content and Textual Analysis	
Audience Research	
Policy Analysis	
<b>Orientation Sociology</b>	<b>42</b>
Key Perspectives in Social Theory	
Health sociology	
Social demography	
Cross-national Perspectives on Work and Employment	
Sociology of organisation	
Cultural sociology	
Generalized Linear Techniques	
<b>Orientation Political Science</b>	<b>42</b>
International relations theory	
History of globalisation	
Contemporary Politics in the global south	
European policy-making	
Ethics in international relations	
Contemporary Issues in International Politics	
Political Ethnography	
<b>Orientation Communication Studies</b>	<b>42</b>
Historical perspectives on media and communication	
Media Psychology and Sociology	
Online and Social Media Strategies	
International communication	
European Media Policy	
Cultural Studies	
Content and Textual Analysis	
<b>Bachelorpaper</b>	<b>12</b>

# FOR YOUR INFORMATION

## **Introduction to Sociology**

The main objective of this course is to shed light on the specific nature of the sociological approach in the study of society. You will use two angles as starting points: the study of social structures and the study of culture. These angles will be applied to layers of social complexity from the micro up to the macro level. In addition to these basic elements of sociological analysis, three fundamental processes supporting the construction of social reality are explained: institutionalisation, socialisation and stratification. You will apply the whole of these insights to a number of subfields in sociology, such as the study of deviance and social change. Later in the course we explain the different sociological paradigms and go into the question of how these different approaches complement each other within the whole of the scientific study of social reality.

## **Introduction to Political Science**

The introduction to political sciences is a course that aims to explain what politics as a notion enhances and what the study of politics entails. You will get an overview of the most recurring definitions of politics and the different approaches prevalent in the field of research will be sketched. You will get to know notions of power and power exercise and we will demonstrate that social conflicts stimulate political debates and require political solutions. You will also be shown how different perceptions of social conflict lead to the definition of diverging solutions for social problems by political actors. Later on, the most important actors intervening in the political process will receive attention, as will political institutions like the parliament and government. Special attention will be devoted to the European Union.

## **Introduction to Communication Studies**

In this course, the process of communication and theories related to the different aspects of the communication process are central. The course aims to provide you with a broad overview of the communication studies discipline, on the basis of which different domains in communication studies are explored in depth in subsequent courses.

In this course the origins and development of media studies as a social science will be treated. It presents and discusses the main research traditions in communication studies and looks at the relationship with social, cultural and technological processes.

## **Political Processes & Structures of the EU**

In this course you are introduced in a systematic manner to five dimensions of European integration. First and foremost you'll learn the historical development of European integration from the European Coal and Steel Community to the Treaty of Lisbon. We will talk about EU's political system and decision-making as well as the rule of law within the EU. The political economy of the EU will get attention and last but not least we'll talk about the EU in relationship to the rest of the world. These insights from history, economics and law are indispensable to gaining a good understanding of the political evolution of the European construction.

## **European History**

This course offers an introduction to the political, economic, social and cultural history of Europe covering the period ranging from the French Revolution to the end of the Second World War. Sergio Romano's Outline of European History from 1789 to 1989 will be taken as our point of departure in the treatment of facts and events. A description of key moments in European history will be coupled with an analytical component that accounts for the fundamental transformations the political, social, economic and cultural landscapes underwent over time. Urbanisation, industrialisation, technologisation, democratisation and the emergence of the nation-states are the processes that have marked European history most distinctively in the past two centuries. The variable degree to which the different nation-states on the European territory were affected by these processes will receive special attention in this course as they account to an important extent for the substantial diversity still seen today.



### **Introduction to Social, Political and Communication science methodology**

In this course you will be given a short overview of the current state of affairs in social science research. Faced with the need to solve complex social issues and confronted with the enlargement of the scope and extent of social enquiry asked for by policy-makers and stakeholders, the deficiency of traditional models and research techniques has been defined as the most pressing issue to be tackled in the near future. As a result, scholars and practitioners advanced the necessity of combined research techniques and an interdisciplinary methodological framework as

a means to overcome current research problems. The introductory overview will be followed by an extensive synthesis of the different research methods and subject treatment. Through abundant references to specific research situations and case studies, you will be acquainted with the vast array of methods and techniques that prevails in the field and gain a basic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses each of these methodological paradigms offer.

# WHAT'S YOUR NEXT MOVE?

Picture this: you aced your final exams. You receive your bachelor diploma. You're as proud as can be — and you should be. But what's next? What you mustn't do is worry. Because you'd be surprised just how many opportunities are waiting out there for you.

## **The end? Or the beginning?**

There is no doubt that your Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences (BScSS) will stand out on the labour market. However, the biggest added value of the programme lies in paving the way for ambitious follow-up trajectories, such as master programmes and internships.

Your third bachelor year is designed to help you prepare for this choice. You major in one of the three social sciences composing the programme. It allows you to build expertise in this domain, but without losing track of the other two sciences. That way all choices for master programmes remain open, but you'll have more insight about what you really want to master in.

At the same time, this last bachelor year offers you multiple contacts with professionals from organisations gravitating around the EU institutions through internships, guest lectures and site visits. It's a great way to start building your network, with an eye on future.

## **Master of the universe?**

Well, the universe is big. But still, Ghent University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel are two acclaimed universities. Both are well placed on international rankings. The joint project they offer with the BScSS is an internationally accredited bachelor programme. This means your diploma grants you immediate access to many master programmes taught abroad. That's just one of many possible next stops for you: the UNICA-network, the association of universities in European capitals.

Another smart move to consider is pursuing your academic career in one of the available English-taught master programmes at Ghent University or Vrije Universiteit Brussel. You can join, either directly or via a short preparatory programme, a Master of Science in Communication Studies or a Master of Science in Management.

Moreover, some Dutch-taught master programmes are also available to you after completion of the BScSS — given of course that you meet the language requirements.









# YOUR VILLAGE. IN THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL

The Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences programme is taught on the main campus of Vrije Universiteit Brussel. That's right, in Brussels, the capital of Europe, home of many leading international organisations. What better place to start your quest for an international career?

## **Small distances, low thresholds**

Stuck in traffic between class and gym? No chance. Faculty buildings, restaurants, sports facilities and student condos mix together on a cosy green campus. Not only does this buy you time; it also opens up the potential for spontaneous meetings with new friends and a feeling of being home, right here in your new village.

## **Top-notch education, tailored to the human heart**

Vrije Universiteit Brussel is not what you would call a very large university, but we do serve up great teaching. Part of this strength stems from the university's medium scale which allows much interaction between professors, assistants and students. There is absolutely no risk of disappearing in an anonymous mass. On the contrary: small groups mean a personal touch and top-notch education.

## **You can stay...**

... on or around campus even when your classes are out. Vrije Universiteit Brussel has excellent new sports facilities for fitness, athletics,

badminton, football and more. There's a library, you can attend open evening lectures or discussion groups, party the night away at an activity organised by one of the many student fraternities...

## **Or you can go...**

... into town of course. VUB campus is connected to other parts of Brussels by train, tram, bus and metro. The capital of Belgium is famous for its bars with Belgian beers and its delicious Belgian cuisine. But Brussels also harbours many fine museums, theatres, clubs and concert halls. Pleasing the mind and the taste buds, that's Brussels' *mariage parfait*.

## **... But you're sure to grow.**

Home base of the European Commission and Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and plenty of other European institutions: Brussels has evolved to a modern Babylon, a permanent get together of many cultures and nationalities on just a few square kilometres. It's the perfect place to be inspired by what the world has to offer. To build a network for life. To embrace unique opportunities.





# NEW IN TOWN? WELCOME!

Campus life usually means big changes. For many people — and we're sure, for you too — it turns out to be an unforgettable experience. But at first, things can feel new, unknown and even a little bit weird. So let's get you informed on some crucial things to know about campus life in Brussels.

## **One year equals two semesters**

And each of those semesters is 13 weeks long. Every semester is followed by two weeks of time for you to review your courses, study hard and get yourself prepared for exams. In Dutch we call these weeks 'de blok'. After that, you'll have three weeks of exams to endure, in January and June. Failed some of those? You get another shot at them in August and September. Think this is a tough schedule? It isn't easy, but good planning and structured studying can really help you succeed. Besides, both Ghent University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel enjoy great reputations when it comes to tutoring. And when things get busy, remember this: when everybody else is working hard at the beginning of February, you'll enjoy an extra week's holiday.

## **Tailored to your life.**

In former times, flunking one subject resulted in having to retake the entire year's programme. But the academic world has become much more flexible. You retake the courses you didn't

complete in the next year, combining them with new ones. This is an individual study programme. Sometimes, students deliberately take up partial year programmes, for instance to combine studying with a job. Composing your individual year programme is always done with your study counsellor.

## **Academic competences**

Not jumping to conclusions. Designing a research project and feeling confident about the requirements it has to meet for its results to be qualified as scientific. Being able to extract the essence out of a hypothesis, and to communicate in a clear and concise way. Having the ability to think out of the box and see new or unexpected connections between social phenomena. These are all academic competences. At Vrije Universiteit Brussel you will get the hang of all of them.





# OFF TO A FLYING START

Classes start in the fourth week of September. We welcome all new students on the first day of class. During *Kick off the Campus* (the first two weeks of the academic year) you will be introduced to the university, student life and Brussels. If you have questions about Vrije Universiteit Brussel, please contact the Student Information Hub: [info@vub.ac.be](mailto:info@vub.ac.be)

## Study guidance

If you find yourself in a special situation and want to combine your studies with professional sports or a job, or if you have specific learning difficulties and are wondering if your dyslexia could be a hurdle in obtaining your degree, help is available.

Study guidance counselors can be contacted at any time via [guidance@vub.ac.be](mailto:guidance@vub.ac.be)

## Language requirements

If you got this far in our brochure, there is little doubt that your proficiency in English is above average. However, we would still like to see some official proof of this. There are various ways to do so: by taking a recognised language test (TOEFL, IELTS or similar), by showing that you have already obtained a degree in an institution where English was the language of instruction, or by showing that you graduated from a Belgian secondary school. More information on how to meet our language requirements can be found here: [www.vub.be/admission](http://www.vub.be/admission)

## Tuition fees

All Belgian universities offer high-quality education at a very reasonable cost. The exact tuition fee depends on your nationality (EEA or non-EEA) and the number of credits you enroll for. The tuition fee for one year varies between €900 and €3000. For more information go to [www.vub.be/en/tuition-fees](http://www.vub.be/en/tuition-fees)

## Application

Convinced this is the right programme for you? You can start your application at any time, even if you haven't obtained your secondary school diploma yet. In this case we will keep you informed on when to take the next step. If you are a student from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) we advise to start your application well in time for the deadline. More information on the application procedure and deadlines can be found on: [www.vub.be/enroll](http://www.vub.be/enroll)



**11-13 JAN** 2018  
HAASRODE

**18-20 JAN** 2018  
GHENT

**1-3 FEB** 2018  
ANTWERP

**8-10 FEB** 2018  
GENK

**1-3 MAR** 2018  
KORTRIJK

## SID-ins

SID-ins are the higher education fairs organised by the Flemish government. You can meet us in the five Flemish provinces. The fairs are open to all (and free!) on Saturdays.

[www.vub.ac.be/en/sid-in](http://www.vub.ac.be/en/sid-in)

**12-16 FEB** 2018

## Try-out classes

Know what you're getting into. While high school students enjoy their well-deserved break from school, we open our doors to them. That's right: you can just walk into our auditoriums, pick out a folding chair and follow along with our courses. No preferential treatment, no custom workshop: just life as it is at the VUB.

[www.vub.ac.be/en/try-out-classes](http://www.vub.ac.be/en/try-out-classes)

**18 MAR** 2018

**22 APR** 2018

**8 SEP** 2018

## Infodays

Are you interested in studying at VUB? Come to one of our infodays where you will meet your future professors and fellow students. Ask them any question you want. All student facilities are open too.

[www.vub.ac.be/infoday](http://www.vub.ac.be/infoday)

**24 SEP** 2018

## Your first day as a student

We welcome all new students at the start of the academic year. This is the moment when you get practical information about studying, an introduction to student life and the chance to meet new people.