During the last years, Europe has been facing tremendous challenges and will have to struggle in order to maintain its place in the world without giving up its own values. The common institutions of the European Union do not seem prepared to face the ongoing crisis. Why is it so difficult to come to common positions? Why do many citizens not see the common ground we are standing on? How can we communicate the shared values to new citizens, refugees or asylum seekers?

The answers to these questions lie in a better knowledge and understanding of the European Culture. A purely legal approach, as it is often chosen in order to explain the European regulation system, will not be able to explain our difficulties in achieving common positions. Only history of ideas and the study of literary and linguistic traditions can help to get a proper understanding of our commonalities and the origin of what we consider the differences inside Europe.

The course will show how basic values shared by all Europeans, legally and culturally, have been elaborated by many thinkers and writers from different countries during a long period and a hard struggle. The basic ideas of democracy and citizenship, individual self-determination, freedom, responsibility, equality and tolerance seem evident to us, but they are not “naturally” given.

In this course we will compare different approaches to what is considered “Europeanness”. The readings will be of different types: official institutional texts (Kopenhegen declaration 1973, Berlin Declaration 2007, Merkel speech 2007) and texts by literary authors (Todorov, Prange 2006). During the course we will add academic texts about the key concepts like “Culture”.

The methodological approach of this course will come from different disciplines like history of ideas, literary studies, historical semantics and philosophy. The participants do not necessarily need specialized training in these fields. The examination will test the capacity of participants to elaborate an argumentation based on the analysis of short texts.

Lectures and seminars:
March 14th at 13-15 (Karin’s Corner, Key building)
March 14th at 16-18 (Higher seminar, Key building)
March 15th at 10-12 (Karin’s Corner, Key building)

May 29th at 13-15 (Karin’s Corner, Key building)
May 30th at 13-15 (Karin’s Corner, Key building)
May 31st at 10-12 (Karin’s Corner, Key building)

Examination: Individual paper 6-8 pages
**Literature:**
The course readings will be sent to the participants as electronic documents. The following documents are mandatory readings:

1. European Union: Berlin declaration 2007 (50 years of Rome treaty)

Further possible readings: