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Foreword

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FOREWORD

The European Union Center of California hosted the joint Claremont–University of California Undergraduate Research Conference on the European Union on April 6–7, 2023. A total of thirty–one students presented papers written on various topics related to the European Union. These students represented seventeen different schools: *Baylor University, Brigham Young University, Christopher Newport University, Claremont McKenna College, Dickinson College, Georgia Institute of Technology, Gonzaga University, Lafayette College, Mt. San Antonio College, Oakland University, Pacific University, Pitzer College, Pomona College, University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, University of Oregon, University of San Francisco, and University of Washington*. This volume is a compilation of the best papers presented at the conference.

The student conference was modeled on professional academic conferences. Each student presented her own research to a panel moderated by a faculty discussant whose primary tasks included providing constructive feedback and stimulating discussion of the issues at hand. The conference was likewise designed with specific goals in mind: to promote the visibility of European Studies and expose the participants to different intellectual and academic traditions within this field; to motivate student research and hone analytical, writing and presentation skills; and to strengthen the curriculum in European Studies at participating campuses by encouraging faculty interaction with students, not only with respect to their expertise in particular research areas but also by conveying general knowledge about contemporary Europe to students. The research presented in this volume reflects a collaborative effort to involve students in academic research and policy debates on issues involving the European Union.

The subject matter in the papers selected for publication reflects the diversity of interests among the student authors. *AnneMarie Ackerman* examines the relationship between the electoral success of far–right parties and xenophobic violence, and shows that while far–right electoral success does not impact the rates of ethnically–motivated violence, elite messaging from the far–right on immigration issues is in fact associated with an increase in xenophobic hate crimes. *Alexander A. Aghdaei* compares the bilateral commitments of various EU member states to provide aid to Ukraine in the ongoing Russo–Ukrainian War, and accounts for the significant variations in those commitments in terms of specific configurations of four conditions: presence of upcoming elections, presence of recent elections, refugee influx, and leftist partisanship. *Sara E. Anderson* interviews members of various climate change movements in the UK against the backdrop of existing theories of political engagement and proposes a list of key factors that contribute to youth mobilization – with lessons for political organizers. *Jovan Avila* and *Brennan Quinn* provide an overview of the post–WW2 history of French geopolitical activity in Africa and conclude that the era of *Françafrique* is effectively over, with France losing its position as a major political, economic and military player in West Africa to actors such as ECOWAS, China and Russia. *Diana Victoria Braghiș* offers an analysis of Moldova–EU relations since 1991, reviews the progress that has been made in democratizing Moldova and advancing its EU candidacy, and identifies the outstanding obstacles to integration. *Zoë Brockenbrough* highlights the illiberalism of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and discusses the challenges his authoritarian actions pose for EU’s normative power and integrity as an institution. *Julia E. Hall* calls attention to the centrality of gender politics in the recent rise of illiberalism in Europe and shows on the example of Italy and Poland how the concept of the “traditional

family” is used by illiberal politicians to advance their majoritarian platforms and advocate for a range of anti-feminist, anti-queer, and anti-sexual education policies. *Shiloh Harrill* analyzes the rise of Euroscepticism in the Netherlands in the 21st century and argues that the financial crises of the 2000s allowed pre-existing Eurosceptic sentiments to break through and influence Dutch politics through populist Eurosceptic parties. *Ryan Anders Lillestrand* reinterprets Elena Ferrante’s Neapolitan Quarter novels, celebrated for their portrayals of female friendship and cultural and family dynamics, as politically-engaged works exposing the depoliticization and devaluation of women and the art they create in Italian society. *Maya O-Leary-Cyr* considers the issue of press freedom in Europe in light of the recent exponential increase in legal threats against journalists, and shows through the examples of Greece, Italy and Hungary that the existing legal protections encoded through domestic constitutions and EU law are meaningless if governments and the societies that elect them do not recognize the vital role that journalists play in a democracy. Finally, *Harriet R. Sanders* challenges the common view that the world’s most popular sport is apolitical and argues that for Germany in particular soccer has served as a vehicle for reconstructing national identity and that the impact of the sport on social cohesion in the multicultural Germany of the 21st century has been largely negative.

The conference was hosted by the European Union Center of California, and the administration of the conference by the Center’s staff, headed by Agnieszka Lazarczyk, was indispensable to its success. In addition, we owe a debt of gratitude for the financial and administrative support provided by the Claremont Colleges, the European Union Center at University of California-Berkeley, and the European Union Center at the University of Washington.

We are grateful as well to our keynote speakers: *David Andrews*, Professor of International Relations and Gabrielle Marie-Louise Jungels-Winkler Chair in Contemporary European Studies at Scripps College, who presented a lecture sponsored by the European Union Center at the University of Washington and co-funded by the European Union Common Security (EUCOS) grant, titled “The Long-Term Consequences of the War in Ukraine”; and *Craig Parsons*, Professor of Political Science at the University of Oregon and Senior Researcher at the ARENA Center for European Studies at the University of Oslo, who discussed the economic authority of the EU in comparative and theoretical perspectives, and showed that (from a policy perspective) the EU is significantly more integrated economically than federations such as the United States, Canada or Australia.

Special thanks are due as well to the faculty discussants who shared their time and expertise with the students. These include *Mietek Boduszynski* (Pomona College), *Pey-Yi Chu* (Pomona College), *Erica Dobbs* (Pomona College), *Craig Parsons* (University of Oregon), *Jeffrey Pennington* (University of California-Berkeley), *Hans Rindisbacher* (Pomona College), *Koen Stapelbroek* (James Cook University), and *Adam Zientek* (University of California-Davis). The participation of these individuals established a high standard for the conference and greatly enriched the experience of the students.

Ultimately, the success of the conference was due to the outstanding contributions of the student participants. As the selections in this volume make clear, their papers demonstrated both intellectual maturity and genuine research skills. The result was a conference that was stimulating for students and faculty alike.

Corey Tazzara, Director
European Union Center of California