

SCHOLARS AT RISK

NETWORK  ITALY SECTION

General Course **SAR Student Advocacy Seminar** **March - June 2026** **University of Padova**

Coordinators and instructors:

Claudia Padovani and Francesca Helm (Department of Politics, Law and International Studies - SPGI)

This General Course is open to students from the European and Global Studies degree (SPGI) and other master level degrees offered at the University of Padova and Venice International University.

Link to the official syllabus:

https://unipd.coursecatalogue.cineca.it/corsi/2025/9772/insegnamenti/2025/50856_473125_64372/2025/50859?coorte=2025

Attendance to the course is required: students should participate in at least **75% of the activities**. Upon the successful completion of the activities students will be recognised **6 CFU**.

Classes are held on Thursday afternoons from 14.30 to 17.30 in Aula Comune (via del Santo 28, 35123 Padova) starting from 5 March 2026.

The General Course *Advocacy Seminar Series on Academic Freedom* provides university students with the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills through direct engagement on behalf of threatened members of the global higher education community facing unjust restrictions, prosecution, or imprisonment.

This General Course is organized in collaboration between SPGI department and the international network [Scholars at Risk](#) (SAR) and contributes to the goals and outcome of the [SAR Student Advocacy Seminar series](#).

Moreover, this year the General Course is organized as part of a broader EU-funded Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnership titled [Students at Risk \(StAR\)](#), coordinated by the European Students' Union (ESU) in partnership with SAIH and the Global Student Forum. The project is dedicated to empowering students and student-led organizations and to raise awareness about and promote academic freedom.

Over the course of the seminar, students will gain a deep understanding of both the value of the academic freedom they enjoy, and the risks scholars and students around the world face in the pursuit of knowledge. Students organize awareness-raising advocacy

initiatives and prepare an end-of-seminar report. In addition, students will have the chance to put their advocacy skills into practice at a number of public events, including an Advocacy Day at the University of Padova in early June 2026..

Beside the class work, students are expected to work on relevant literature, watch video materials and participate in groups to develop advocacy projects. Beside course schedule a number of webinars will be organized in the context of the StAR project, connecting the class to other student groups, organizations and networks.

This experiential General Course is designed to give students a foundation in:

- Academic freedom: theory and practice
- Human rights research, standards, and mechanisms
- International relations and institutional commitment to academic freedom and higher education values
- Competence for advocacy work (frameworks, tools, resources)
- Intercultural competences
- Leadership and teamwork skills
- Organization and networking, writing and public speaking for advocacy
- Social media and online campaigning

The foreseen activities require different disciplinary backgrounds, while offering an opportunity to experiment with the exchange of diverse knowledges and competences in the conduct of a practical project. Proficiency in other languages is welcome.

Collaborative interaction will also involve students and lecturers from various universities across Europe and the globe who are also taking part in SAR Advocacy Seminars, as well as guest speakers including representatives from NGOs, IGOs and organizations that are involved in advocacy work.

A maximum number of students are accepted to participate (45). If you are interested in taking part, please [fill in this Google form](#) in detail. The deadline for applications is 14th February. Confirmation of acceptance will be communicated to you via mail by 21st February.

Requirements: In due consideration of the fact that we will work on sensitive issues, what we expect from each other is motivation and the possibility to commit ourselves to the project until its completion. Further, students should consider that, while the coordinators will be there throughout to support the activities, autonomy and spirit of initiative in deciding how, where and with whom to carry advocacy. And writing the report is highly important. Finally, a good knowledge of English (writing, speaking and listening) is essential. Credit-seekers and free-riders are discouraged to apply!!

For information and registration contact:

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