

***Political Science 234
Contemporary Western Europe***

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 1-2; other times by appointment

Description:

Analysis of European political institutions and processes, including the dynamic interaction between the European Union and its western and eastern member states in the post-1990 era to the present.

The focus of this course is on the political institutions of Western Europe and the manner in which they are responding to contemporary challenges. After a brief historical introduction, we will focus on European political institutions and processes, including political parties, elections, and governments. The second half of the course will focus on some of the challenges facing Western European countries, many of which are shared by the contemporary United States. These include global economic competition; immigration and multiculturalism; the tension between protecting national sovereignty and engaging in international cooperation; and economic inequality and insecurity. How are they responding to these challenges? What lessons do the countries of Western Europe provide for the United States? What lessons does the United States provide for Western Europe? How does an understanding of Western Europe help us promote democracy and security?

The course is organized around general themes rather than national case studies. However, we will illustrate the general themes with contemporary examples. I take seriously the word “contemporary” in the course’s title, so we will be often referring to recent events and newspaper articles.

Course and Discipline Specific Learning Objectives

LO1. Students should be able to describe the main features of the political systems of the major European democracies.

LO2. Students should be able to explain the key issues facing European democracies, including their evolution and political dynamics.

CUNY Common Core: This course meets the requirements for Flexible Core: World Cultures and Global Issues, fulfilling objectives WCG 1, WCG 2, WCGI 3, WCGI 4, and WCGI 5.

All Flexible CORE Courses must meet the following three learning outcomes:

FC 1: Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
FC 2: Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
FC 3: Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.

In Addition, all WCGI courses must satisfy at least three of the following learning outcomes:

WCGI 1: Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring world cultures or global issues, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, economics, ethnic studies, foreign languages (building upon previous language acquisition), geography, history, political science, sociology, and world literature.
WCGI 2: Analyze culture, globalization, or global cultural diversity, and describe an event or process from more than one point of view.
WCGI 3: Analyze the historical development of one or more non-U.S. societies.
WCGI 4: Analyze the significance of one or more major movements that have shaped the world's societies.
WCGI 5: Analyze and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation play in world cultures or societies.
WCGI 6: Speak, read, and write a language other than English, and use that language to respond to cultures other than one's own.

Required Reading:

- Marcus Crepaz, *European Democracies [Ninth Edition]*. Available through the QC bookstore
- Coursepack containing all other readings. Available for purchase before class during the first week of the semester.
- *The New York Times*. We will frequently be referring to current events in Europe as reported in the *Times*. As a CUNY student, you are entitled to a free on-line subscription. For instructions on accessing your subscription, go to this website: <http://gclibrary.commons.gc.cuny.edu/2014/04/09/free-nytimes/>
- It is your responsibility to check the Blackboard page for the course regularly for announcements and links to interesting newspaper articles.

Assignments

- Quizzes. Take-home quizzes will be distributed approximately on a bi-weekly basis. Students will be required to write short essays (150 words) in which they demonstrate a critical understanding of the concepts recently introduced. For instance, students may be asked to evaluate an argument or to critically compare policies and institutions. Grades will be based on the quality of the argument and evidence introduced.
 - Learning outcomes: WCGI 1 (Sessions 3,6, 8, 10, 16); WCGI 2 (Sessions 16, 22, 27); WCGI 5 (Sessions 6, 8), FC 1 (Sessions 6, 8, 16); FC 2

(Sessions 6, 10, 16, 27); LO 1 (Sessions 6, 8, 10); LO 2 (Sessions 6, 8); LO 4 (Session 6).

- Mid-term and Final Exams. These exams will be in-class exams consisting of an identification section and an essay questions. The essays will be similar to the quizzes described above. Students will be ask to make critical evaluations of policies and institutions and to support their arguments with evidence drawn from the course materials.
 - Learning outcomes: FC 2, FC 3, WCGI 1
- Reading response. Students will write a 2-3 critical analysis of an assigned reading in which they analyze the argument, describe how it is elaborated, and evaluate it.
 - Learning outcomes: FC 2, FC 3, WCG I 1
- Country case studies. Students will write a short paper (5 pages) in which they choose a contemporary issue from a European country and analyze the issue using the concepts developed in the course. Students will be required to use 5 different sources and will have to combine news articles with academic sources.
 - Learning outcomes: FC 1, FC 2, FC 3

Grades:

- In-class midterm exam [30%]
- In-class final exam [30%]
- Bi-weekly quizzes [10%]
- Reading response [10%]
- Country analysis paper [20%]

Other Useful Information

Attendance. Experience has shown that regular attendance in class is essential to success in the course. Students are responsible for the information and ideas shared in class as well as those contained in the readings. In addition, when making grading decisions in borderline cases, I use attendance and class participation as an indicator of a student's effort and commitment to the course.

Reading Assignments. You should come to class prepared to answer questions on and discuss the reading assigned for that day on the syllabus. Not all readings are the same length or difficulty level. Please plan ahead.

Written Assignments. Hard copies of all written assignments should be brought to class on the due date. In addition, digital copies of the reading response assignments must be uploaded to the SafeAssign function of Blackboard.

Make-up Exams. If you have to miss an exam, you must inform me by phone or email on the day of the exam. It is the responsibility of the student to schedule a make-up exam as soon as possible.

Incompletes are a privilege, not a right. If you are having trouble completing the course's requirements, you must inform me well before the end of the semester if you expect to ask for a grade of Incomplete.

Academic Honesty. I will not tolerate cheating or plagiarism. Students who engage in academic dishonesty will receive a grade of F for the course. In accordance with CUNY policy, I will report all instances of cheating and plagiarism to the College's Vice President of Student Affairs for possible further disciplinary action.

Email communication. I welcome emails from students. I will try to answer promptly, which, for me, means by the next business day. As in all business correspondence, please avoid excessive informality. This means that you should include a salutation and sign your name. Also, I urge you to use your qc account or another account that does not have a playful user name. Finally, don't forget to include a subject heading so that I will recognize you as a student.

Electronic devices. Use of cell phones, laptop computers, and other devices is not permitted in class.

Due dates are listed on the syllabus. Late papers will be penalized. If you are unable to attend class, you can avoid a late penalty by sending me an electronic version of the paper on the day that it is due. Bring a hard copy to the next class.

Safety and Accessibility. I am committed to maintaining a safe and accessible learning environment. Please let me know immediately if you have difficulty accessing the learning materials or if you feel that there are conditions in the class that threaten your comfort or security.

Office visits. You should make it a point to visit each of your professors at least once--me included! No agenda is necessary. Here is further encouragement--your initial visit will earn you three bonus points on your next assignment. If you can't make it during my office hours, please see me. I am usually able to accommodate your schedule.

Register to Vote! If you have a Social Security Number and a NY driver's license, you can register to vote online: <https://dmv.ny.gov/more-info/electronic-voter-registration-application>. If you can't register on line, you can get a paper form from this site: <http://www.elections.ny.gov/VotingRegister.html>

Schedule and Assignments

Introduction

Session 1. January 31. Introduction to course; review of syllabus

Session 2. February 2. Historical context: Europe through WW 2

- *How did WW2 change the political, economic, and social landscape of Western Europe?]*
- Tony Judt, *Postwar*, pp. 13-40, “The Legacy of War.”

Session 3. February 7. Historical context: the aftermath of war

- Mark Mazzower, *The Dark Continent*, “Blueprints for the Golden Age,” pp. 185-200.
- Learning objectives WCGI 1
- Assessment: Take-home quiz. *How and why did WW2 change the dominant conception of democracy in West Europe?*

Session 4. February 9. Europe and the US: How similar? How different?

- *These readings present contrasting answers to the question of how different the US and Europe are. Which view is more persuasive? Why?*
- Crepaz, pp. 5-17.
- Peter Baldwin, *The Narcissism of Minor Differences*, pp. 216-226, “Separated at Birth?”
- Learning objective: FC 1

Political parties

Session 5. February 14. Traditional cleavages and mainstream parties

- *How has the rise of the labor movement and labor/capital conflict influenced the evolution of Europe’s political parties?*
- Crepaz, pp. 19-31.
- Patrick O’Neil, Karl Fields, and Don Share, *Cases in Comparative Politics*, pp 61-68 (on British parties) and 241-248 (on German parties).
- Learning objective: WCGI 1, WCGI 5, FC 1, LO 1

Session 6. February 16. The evolution of party systems.

- Crepaz, pp. 31-51.
- “Greens Are the New Hope for Europe’s Center,” *New York Times*, 2019.
- Learning objectives: WCGI 1, WCGI 5, FC 1, FC 2, LO 1, LO 2, LO 4
- Assessment: Take-home quiz: Some observers argue that economic class is less relevant. What is your view: Is the labor/capital [left/right] cleavage still useful in mapping the partisan landscape of Western Europe?

Session 7. February 23. The challenge of populism

- *Is populism an ideology—or something else?* []
- John Judis, *The Populist Explosion*, pp. 12-13; 89-108; 131-153.
- Learning objectives: WCGI 1, WCGI 5, FC 1, LO 1, LO 2

Session 8. February 28. Populism continued.

- Judis, pp. 109-130.
- Darren Loucaides, “Building the Brexit Party,” *The Guardian*, 2019.
- Learning objectives: WCGI 1, WCGI 5, FC 1, LO 1, LO 2
- Assessment: Take-home quiz: Is populism an ideology—or something else?

Electoral systems and elections

Session 9. March 2. “First past the post” and List-PR

- Crepaz, pp. 54-62, plus pp. 70-72 on France.
- Learning objectives :
- Learning objectives : WCGI 1, LO 1

Session 10. March 7. Refinements on PR and referenda

- Crepaz, pp. 62-79; 126-132
- Learning objectives: WCGI 1, LO 1, FC 2
- Assessment: Take-home quiz: What are the main strengths and weakness of proportional representation?

Parliamentary government

Session 11. March 9. Coalitions and government formation

- *What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Parliamentary system of democratic government? (How do its pros and cons contrast with the American Presidential system?)*
- Crepaz, pp. 81-96.
- Learning objectives: WCGI 1, LO 1, FC 2

Session 12. March 14. Parliamentary government in action

- Crepaz, pp. 97-110.
- O’Neill, Fields, and Share, *Cases in Comparative Politics*, pp. 46-55 on Britain, pp. 164-172 on France.
- Learning objectives: WCGI 1, LO 1

Session 13. March 16. Midterm Review

Session 14. March 21. In-class midterm exam

The European Union

Session 15. March 23. Evolution of the EU

- *What have been the political and economic dynamics driving the evolution of the EU? Does regional integration effectively address those causes?*
- John McCormick, *Understanding the EU*, Chapter 3, “The Evolution of the EU.
- Learning objectives: WCGI 2, LO 1

Session 16. March 28. EU institutions and policy making

- Crepaz, pp. 181-196
- Learning objectives: LO 1, WCGI 1, WCGI 2, FC 1, FC 2
- Assessment: Take-home quiz: What is meant by the EU’s “democratic deficit”? What is your own assessment of the degree of democracy represented by the EU’s institutions?

Session 17. March 30. Challenges facing the EU

- *Brexit, Immigration, Illiberalism in Poland and Hungary: What are the possible paths forward for the EU in the face of these challenges?*
- Crepaz, pp. 197-208
- Learning objectives: LO 2.

Session 18. April 4. The Euro

- *Is the Euro a success or failure? How do you evaluate the tradeoff between economic integration and reduced national autonomy?*
- Crepaz, pp. 196-7; 226-229
- Paul Krugman, *End This Depression Now*, Chapter 10, “Eurodammering.”
- Learning objectives: WCGI 2, LO 2, FC 2

The European political economy

Session 19. April 6. The welfare state in Europe

- *Does a relatively generous welfare state promote individualism or impede it?*
- John Bowman, *Capitalisms Compared*, pp. 1-20.
- Anu Partanen, *The Nordic Theory of Happiness*, pp. 11-63
- **Reading Response on Partanen due**
- Learning objectives: FC 2, FC 3, WCGI 1

Session 20. April 11. Health policy

- Bowman, pp. 36-57; 82-90.

- Learning objectives: LO 1

Session 21. April 13. Varieties of capitalism in Europe

- *What are the distinguishing features of the three “varieties of capitalism”*
- Bowman, *Capitalisms Compared* pp. 20-27 [see November 6 reading].
- Crepaz, pp. 211-225
- Learning objectives LO 1, WCGI 1

Session 22. April 25. A future for egalitarian capitalism?

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- Robert Kuttner, “The Copenhagen Consensus: Reading Adam Smith in Copenhagen,” *Foreign Affairs*, 2008.
- Learning objectives WCGI 2
- Assessment: take-home quiz. To what extent does economic globalization undermine national policy autonomy?

Center and region: the breaking up of nation states?

Session 23. April 27. Federalism and the resurgence of nationalism

- *What are the causes of the resurgence of nationalism in Europe? Views from Catalonia and Scotland*
- Crepaz, pp. 126-138, and 256-7 and 263-269.
- “The Catalan Question Continues to Divide,” *The Economist*, 2018. <https://www.economist.com/special-report/2018/07/26/the-catalan-question-continues-to-divide>.
- “Scottish Nationalism: How Did It Come to This?” *The Economist*, 2014. <https://www.economist.com/britain/2014/07/10/how-did-it-come-to-this>.
- Learning objectives: LO 2,

Session 24. May 2. Power sharing in divided societies

- *Is it possible to devise institutional mechanisms that promote democratic coexistence in societies that are sharply divided by national or religious cleavages?*
- Crepaz, pp. 271-279.
- Learning objectives LO 1, LO 2,
- **Country case studies due**

Immigration and diversity

Session 25. May 4. The nature of European immigration

- *What are the global economic and political forces that are driving immigration to Europe?*

- Tim Bale, *European Politics*, Chapter 10, “Not Wanted but Needed,” pp. 327-338.
- Learning objectives: LO 1, WCGI 2

Session 26. May 9. Immigrant policies: multiculturalism vs. assimilation

- Bale, Chapter 10 [see previous assignment], pp. 350-61.
- Learning objectives: LO 1, LO 2, FC 1, FC 2, WCGI 2

Session 27. May 11. The case of Islam and bans on veils

- Martha Nussbaum, “Veiled Threats,” *New York Times*, 2010.
- Learning objectives: WCGI 2, FC 2
- Assessment. Take-home quiz: Bans on burqas and niqabs: Do they promote individual liberty or interfere with it?

Session 28. May 16. Final review.

Class Sessions and Objectives at a Glance

Class	Day and Date	Topic	Readings/Assessments *Coursepack	Objectives met
1	M; 1/31	Intro to course	None	N/A
2	W; 2/2	Impact of WW2	*Judt, pp. 13-40	WCGI 3
3	M; 2/7	Aftermath of WW2	*Mazzower, pp. 185-200. Quiz	WCGI 1,
4	W; 2/9	Comparing the US and Europe	Crepaz, pp. 5-17 *Baldwin, 216-26	FC 1
5	M; 2/14	Traditional cleavages and parties	Crepaz, pp. 19-31	LO 1, FC 1, WCGI 5
6	W; 2/16	The evolution of party systems	Crepaz, pp. 31-5 Quiz	LO 1, LO 2, LO 4, WCGI 5, FC 1,
7	W; 2/23	The concept of populism	*Judis, pp. 12-13; 89-108; 131-153.	LO 1, LO 2, FC 1, WCGI 1, WCGI 5
8	M; 2/28	Populism in Europe	*Judis, pp. 109-130 Quiz	LO 1, LO 2, FC 1, WCGI 3, WCGI 5,
9	W; 3/2	Electoral Systems: SMP vs. PR	Crepaz, pp. 54-62; 70-72	LO 1, WCGI 1

10	M; 3/7	Refinements of PR	Crepaz, pp. 62-79; 126-132 Quiz	LO 1, LO 5, FC 2, FC 3, WCGI 1
11	W; 3/9	Parliamentary government formation	Crepaz, pp. 81-96.	LO 2, WCGI 1,
12	M; 3/14	Parliamentary government in action	Crepaz, pp. 97-110 *O'Neill et al, pp. 46-55, 164-72	LO1, WCGI1
13	W; 3/16	Midterm Review	Write exam questions	FC 1
14	M; 3/21	Midterm Exam		
15	W; 3/23	Evolution of EU	*McCormick, Chapter 3	LO 1, WCGI 1,
16	M; 3/28	EU institutions and policies	Crepaz, pp. 181- 196. Quiz	LO 1, FC 2, FC 1, WCGI 1
17	W; 3/30	Challenges facing the EU	Crepaz, pp. 197- 208	LO2,
18	M; 4/4	The Euro	Crepaz, pp. 196-7; 226-229. *Krugman, Chapter 10	WCGI 2, LO 2, FC 2
19	W; 4/6	Welfare states	*Bowman, pp. 1-20 *Partanen Reading Response	FC 2, FC 3
20	M; 4/11	Health policy	*Bowman, 36-57; 82-90.	LO 1
21	W; 4/13	Varieties of Capitalism	Crepaz, pp. 211- 225 *Bowman, pp. 20-7	LO 1 WCGI 1,
22	M; 4/25	An egalitarian capitalism?	*Kuttner Quiz	LO 5, FC 3
23	W; 4/27	Federalism and Nationalism	Crepaz, pp. 126- 138, and 256-7 and 263-269. *Newspaper articles on Spain and Scotland	LO 2, WCGI 4, FC 1
24	M; 5/2	Divided societies	Crepaz, pp. 271- 279. Country Cases due	WLO1, LO 2CGI 5

25	W; 5/4	Immigration in Europe	*Bale, Chapter 10	WCGI 2, LO 2
26	M; 5/9	Immigration policies	*Bale	LO 1, LO 5, FC 1, FC 2
27	W; 5/11	Islam and clothing bans	*Nusbaum Quiz	LO 5, FC 3, FC 1, WCGI 5
28	M; 5/16	Final Review	Write exam questions	FC 1