Government 284: Comparative Politics of Western Europe

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Office hours: Thursday 11:00-12:00; 2:30-3:45

Class meetings: TTh 1:10-2:30; PAC 125

Course overview

The leading nations of Western Europe – Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy – have developed vibrant economies and stable democracies that differ in important ways from the United States and from each other. This course explores the ability of European economies to withstand pressures of globalization and the capacity of European democracies to integrate political newcomers such as women and immigrants. We address questions such as: Where is Britain headed in the post-Blair era? With the limited ability of the French people to influence politics, should we still consider that country a democracy? Has Germany definitively overcome its Nazi past or does the strength of German democracy rely on a strong Germany economy? How can we make sense of the Italian “second republic”? Our readings and discussions over the course of the semester will shed light on these questions.

Course Requirements

25% First paper (due October 16th)
25% Second paper (due November 24th)
35% Final
10% Participation
5% Images of Europe project

Course Readings

The readings for this course average around 150-200 pages per week. They contain conflicting interpretations of both theory and history. It is important that you read actively and critically. There is no single accepted “truth” in most of the topics we explore. Your job is to learn to identify, and then to compare and evaluate competing arguments. The readings for this course complement classroom discussion; neither can substitute for the other. You should do the reading on each topic before coming to class.
The following book is available for purchase:

The other readings will be on reserve at Olin. Most readings will be available as both online reserve and hard-copy reserve.

**Participation**

This course will have a mixed lecture/discussion format. It is therefore critical that you come to class having done the readings and prepared to talk about the material. Because discussion is critical to the course, attendance is required. Students are allowed two absences. Absences exceeding two will result in a deduction of your participation grade. Attendance alone, however, does not guarantee a good participation grade. You must also actively contribute to class discussion and I will keep track of who has spoken. Smaller assignments, such as short answers to study questions or pop quizzes, will also count towards your participation grade. Frequent absences from class will result in your participation grade counting for significantly more than 10%.

**Course Policies**

Students are required to complete all readings and attend each class period prepared to talk about the readings. Extensions and incompletes will not be granted under any circumstances other than significant and verifiable personal emergencies (e.g., serious illness, death in family). **Late work will be penalized one full grade per day.**

All work that you submit must be your own. You must cite all sources used in completing the assignments using the standard form of citation that we will go over in class. If you are unsure how to use proper citation form, please ask me. Failure to use proper citation is plagiarism. You must adhere to all aspects of the honor code. Please write on each assignment: “No aid. No violation.” Please sign your name next to that statement.

**Images of Europe**

Twice during the semester you will be required to contribute to our Images of Europe blog. We will assign days on the second day of class. Your blog entry should contain at least two images related to the subject matter of that day’s course material, as well as citation to where you found it. Students will present their images at the beginning of each class. This work will be done in pairs.
Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

INTRODUCTION

Sept 8
Introduction

Sept 10
Did the United States Save Europe?

Reading:


Sept 15
Why the United States and Europe are Different: Cross National Differences


THE POSTWAR SETTLEMENTS

Sept 17
Great Britain: Political System

Readings: Kesselman and Krieger, Chaps. 1, 3, 4.


Sept 22
Great Britain: Political Economy

Readings: Kesselman and Krieger, Chap. 2.

Sept 24  NO CLASS: INSTRUCTOR IS IN GERMANY FOR THE ELECTION

Sept 29  Germany: Election News

October 1  Germany: Political System
Readings: Kesselman and Krieger, Chaps. 11, 13, 14.


October 6  Germany: Political Economy


October 8  France: Political System
Readings: Kesselman and Krieger, Chaps. 6. 8, 9.


October 13  France: Political Economy
Readings: Kesselman and Krieger, Chap. 7.

October 15  Italy: Political System
Readings:  Kesselman and Krieger, Chaps. 16, 18, 19.


October 20  Italy: Political Economy
Readings:  Kesselman and Krieger, Chap. 17.


**CONTEMPORARY POLITICS**

October 22  Britain: Thatcher, Blair and Beyond


October 27  NO CLASS! FALL BREAK

October 29  France: The French State in Trouble?


November 3  Germany: Unification and Its Aftermath

**November 5**  
**Italy: The Second Republic**

**Readings:**  


**EUROPEAN UNION**

**November 10**  
**European Union: History**

**Readings:**  
Kesselman and Krieger, Chapters 31, 32.

**November 12**  
**The Institutions of the European Union**

**Readings:**  

**November 17**  
**Turkish Accession**

**Reading:**  

**ISSUES IN EUROPEAN POLITICS**

**November 19**  
**Immigration in Theory**

**Readings:**  


November 24 **Immigration in Practice**


**THANKSGIVING BREAK!**

December 1 **Gender Quotas in Theory**


December 3 **Gender Quotas in Practice**


December 8  Catch-Up Day

December 10  Conclusion