

Political Science 147A: West European Politics
Class Time: Mondays - Thursdays 2:10 – 3:50 PM
Room: Kerr Hall 293

Instructor: Roi Zur
Office: Kerr Hall 568
Office Hours: Mondays 12:00 to 2:00 PM or by appointment
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Course Description

The purpose of this course is to provide a basic understanding of contemporary West European politics. This course surveys West European politics since World War II, with emphasis on the following topics: Political institutions in selected West European countries, parties and elections, voting behavior, and the European Union. The course is organized thematically (rather than in a country-specific way) around a framework that emphasizes the relationship between the elite (mainly parties, party leaders, and state leaders) and mass public (mainly party activists, rank-and-file voters, and citizens).

The course begins with a short overview of the countries and the post-WWII history of Europe. Then, the course surveys the history and politics of the European Union, followed by the political institutions in Europe focusing on the “big three”; the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. In the second half, the course discusses parties, elections, and voting in specific countries and the European parliament. Students are encouraged to use online resources to gather information and update their knowledge of the material beyond the assigned readings.

Course Requirements

1. Readings – Students are expected to read ALL the assigned readings before class.
2. Class participation – Students are expected to attend all class meetings; lectures, reviews and discussions. Students are also expected to take an active part in class. Participation includes, but not limited to, answering surveys, discussing topics, preparing summaries of the readings, and presenting them in class.
3. Midterm examination – The midterm examination will take place in our regular class on Monday, August 27th. The midterm will be 35% of your final grade and will include both multiple choice questions and a longer writing essay. The essay question will be heavily based on the readings. The best way to answer the essay question is to cover everything that

answers the prompt but include only relevant information for answering the prompt. Be sure to bring a blue book.

4. Final Examination – The final is not cumulative, but the pre-midterm information is very useful for the final. The final worth 50% of the final grade. It will have a similar structure to the midterm but will include more questions. The final will take place in our regular class on the final day of class (Thursday, September 13th). Be sure to bring a blue book.

Reading Assignments

As I recognize the high costs of higher education, all the assigned readings for this class are free and available on Canvas or via the URL links below. Please make sure that you read everything before class. When designing my lectures, I assume the information in the readings is known to the students and do not summarize the reading materials in class.

Course Grading

Course grades will be calculated in the following manner:

Midterm	35%
Class participation	15%
Final Exam	50%

Numerical grades are translated into letter grades as follows (I will not round final grades):

A+	97-100%
A	93-96.99%
A-	90-92.99%
B+	87-89.99%
B	83-86.99%
B-	80-82.99%
ETC.	

Useful Websites

Official European Union website: <http://europa.eu.int/>

The European Union in the US: <http://www.eurunion.org/>

European Commission: http://europa.eu.int/comm/index_en.htm

Council of the European Union: <http://ue.eu.int>

European Parliament: <http://www.europarl.eu.int/default.htm>

Court of Justice <http://curia.eu.int/en/index.htm>

Committee of the Regions: <http://www.cor.eu.int/>

A final point

Make-up midterm/final times will be given only in cases of illness or family emergency, and you must inform the instructor a whole week before the midterm/final. Furthermore, you must provide proof of illness. Absolutely no make-up midterms will be given if the student fails to contact the instructor before the midterm. Alternative times for the midterm/final will be only before the regular class time. Under no circumstances may you email the instructor the morning of the midterm/final and expect a makeup exam. You will get a zero for the midterm/final – absolutely no exceptions.

Course Schedule

Day 1 (August 6th): Introduction – Europe after WWII

Day 2 (August 7th): Recovering from WWII and (re)building democracy

Readings:

- The Marshall Plan: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Marshall-Plan>
- Germany: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Germany/Political-consolidation-and-economic-growth-1949-69#ref297761>
- Italy: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Italy/The-economic-miracle>
- UK: <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom/Britain-since-1945#ref483664>
- France: <https://www.britannica.com/place/France/Economy>

Day 3 (August 8th): Recovering from WWII and (re)building democracy II

No readings – but review the information from yesterday.

Day 4 (August 9th): The European Union I – Overview and Build-up

Readings:

- Europe in 12 lessons (Chapters 1, 2, and 9)

Day 5 (August 13th): The European Union II – Institutions

Readings:

- Europe in 12 lessons (Chapter 4)

Day 6 (August 14th): The European Union III – Crises, Critics, and Brexit

Readings:

- Europe in 12 lessons (Chapters 6, 7, and 10)
- Copelovitch, Frieden, and Walter (2016) The Political Economy of the Euro Crisis

Day 7 (August 15th): Political Institutions I – Forms of government in Europe

Readings:

- Elgie (2009) Duverger Semi presidentialism and the Supposed French Archetype

Day 8 (August 16th): Political Institutions II - The Executive I

Readings:

- Germany: “Facts: The Bundestag at a glance” (read pages 12-15)
- UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/how-government-works>
- France <https://www.gouvernement.fr/en/how-government-works>

Day 9 (August 20th): Political Institutions III - The Executive II

No readings – but review the information from yesterday.

Day 10 (August 21st): Political Institutions IV – Parliaments I

Readings:

- Germany: Facts: “The Bundestag at a glance” (read pages 4-5, 12-15, and 32-36)
- UK: <https://about-britain.com/institutions/parliament.htm>
- France: http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/langues/welcome-to-the-english-website-of-the-french-national-assembly#node_9511

Day 11 (August 22nd): Political Institutions V – Parliaments II

No readings – but review the information from yesterday.

Day 12 (August 23rd): Midterm Review

Day 13 (August 27th): Midterm

Day 14 (August 28th): Parties and Party System I

Readings:

- Kitschelt (2009) Party systems

Day 15 (August 29th): Parties and Party System II

Readings:

- Mair and Mudde (1998) The party family and its study

Day 16 (August 30th): Parties and Party System III

No readings – but review the information from last two lectures.

Day 17 (September 3rd): No class – Labor Day

Day 18 (September 4th): The European party system

Readings:

- The European parliament parties:
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/politicalparties/index_en.xml

Day 19 (September 5th): Political Participation I – Voting in national parliaments

Readings:

- Best (2012) The declining electoral relevance of traditional cleavage groups

Day 20 (September 6th): Political Participation II – Voting in the European parliament

Readings:

- Hobolt and Wittrock (2011) The second-order election model revisited

Day 21 (September 10th): Political Participation III – Mass-Elite linkages

Readings:

No readings – but review the information from past five lectures.

Day 22 (September 11th): Political Participation IV – Other forms of participation

No readings

Day 23 (September 12th): Conclusions and Final Review

Day 24 (September 13th): Final Exam