

Western European Politics

PL 250

Summary of Course Content:

The course examines the political systems in Western Europe and major political developments affecting Western Europe since 1945 through a comparative lens. Looking at historical legacies, political cultures, types of government, and party systems shaping the major Western European powers, students will gain an understanding of the constitutive features, and transnational developments, challenges and changes in Western European states. The class format includes lectures, discussion, teamwork, presentations, and audio-visual materials. The students will be asked to produce a research project, making extensive personal use of information and communication technology. Guest speakers and field trips are planned.

Course aims:

This course attempts to provide the student with a general understanding of Western European political cultures and systems. Priority is given to conceptualization of different phenomena, their historical development and their interconnection within the global context. Critical thinking and comparative analysis will be applied to achieve a clear understanding of politics in globalized society.

Learning outcomes:

Students will learn how to critically analyse processes and concepts related to national politics and community perceptions. They will be able to relate politics, events, and players within the political arena. Students will learn to contextualize and explain the process of policymaking and relate it to current European events. Students will be capable of critical analysis applied to the changing realities of politics in a global context. Students will develop an ability to conduct basic research, and organize and present their findings in a logical and independent way.

Textbook:

- Bale T., *European Politics: A Comparative Introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. ISBN 9780230362949
- Thompson W., (A) *Western Europe*. Lanham MD, 2016. ISBN 9781475829044
- Thompson W., (B) *North Central & Southeastern Europe*. Lanham MD, 2015. ISBN 9781475818826
- The Economist, The International New York Times: "*On Western Europe*", 2016-2017.
- Supplementary Reading Materials to be assigned (*assigned readings*)

Required reserved reading:

- Kuhn T., *Experiencing European Integration: Transnational Lives and European Identity*. Oxford, 2015. ISBN 9780199688913
- Murphy A. B. (et al.), *The European Culture Area*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014. ISBN 1442223462
- Jones E., *Developments in European Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. ISBN 9780230221888

Recommended reserved readings:

- Checkel J. T., Katzenstein P. J. (eds.), *European Identity*. Cambridge, 2009. ISBN 978-0521883016
- Risse T., *A Community of Europeans?* CUPS, 2010. ISBN 978-0801476488
- Vogt R., (et al.), *European National Identities: Elements, Transitions, Conflicts*. Transaction, 2014. ISBN 9781412852685
- Drace-Francis A. (ed.), *European Identity: A Historical Reader*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. ISBN 978-0230243293

Program:

- Unit 1 Introduction. Methodology. Terminology. Definitions. The Western European Politics.
(Jan. 16, 18) *(Bale, pp. 1-6; assigned readings)*
- Unit 2 Europe: a Continent in the Making. Nations and States. Western Europe Defined. Central and Eastern Europe.
(Jan. 23, 25) *(Bale, pp. 7-43; assigned readings)*
- Unit 3 The End of Nation State? Stateless Nations. Asymmetrical Federalism. The EU and the End of Sovereignty?
(Jan. 30, Feb. 1) *(Bale, pp. 44-76; assigned readings)*
- Unit 4 From Government to Governance. Decentralization. Policy Making. The Judicialization of Politics. Germany.
(Feb. 6, 8, 10) *(Bale, pp. 77-111; Thompson (B), pp. 173-283; assigned readings)*
- Unit 5 Governments and Parliaments. Prime Ministers and Cabinets. Minority Governments. France.
(Feb. 13, 15) *(Bale, pp. 112-148; Thompson (A), pp. 98-166; assigned readings)*
- Unit 6 Parties. The Base of Party Systems. Organization. Are Parties in decline? United Kingdom.
(Feb. 20, 22) *(Bale, pp. 149-189; Thompson (A), pp. 14-75; assigned readings)*
- Unit 7 Elections. Voting and Referendums. Systems, Turnout, Preferences and Unpredictability. Spain.
(Feb. 27, Mar. 1*) *(Bale, pp. 190-226; Thompson (A), pp. 379-417; assigned readings)*
- * MIDTERM EXAM
- Unit 8 Case study: Italy. Political Culture and System. The Political Arena and Political Agendas. Italy
(Mar. 6, 8) *(Thompson (A), pp. 314-356; assigned readings)*
- Unit 9 The Media. Structure and Regulation. Pressure Groups and Populists. Bias and its Effects. Poland.
(Mar. 13, 15*) *(Bale, pp. 227-265; Thompson (B), pp. 307-342; assigned readings)*
- * PROJECT PROPOSAL
- Unit 10 Participation and Pressure Politics. Civil Society. Organized Interests, Social Movements. The Netherlands.
(Mar. 20, 22) *(Bale, pp. 266-300; Thompson (A), pp. 174-201; assigned readings)*
- Unit 11 Politics over Markets. Politics Left and Right. Privatization. The Welfare State. Sweden.
(Mar. 27, 29) *(Bale, pp. 301-338; Thompson (B), pp. 23-45; assigned readings)*
- Unit 12 Not Wanted but Needed: Migrants and Minorities. Illegal Immigration. Asylum Seekers. The Czech Republic.
(Apr. 10, 12) *(Bale, pp. 339-377; Thompson (B), pp. 343-363; assigned readings)*
- Unit 13 Protecting and promoting. Europe's International Politics. Old and New Europe. Security and defence.
(Apr. 19) *(Bale, pp. 378-412; assigned readings)*
- Unit 14 Europeization and Globalization. Identity Politics and Cosmopolitanism. Conclusion.
(Apr. 24, 26*) *(assigned readings)*
- * FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT * PORTFOLIO
(Apr. 30 May 5, tba*)
- * FINAL EXAM

NOTE:

The syllabus schedule may undergo reasonable changes in relation to guest speakers, field trips, make-ups, discussions, events, and other contingencies.

Course requirements:

Two in-class Exams (midterm exam and final exam).
A Final Research Project (with a Portfolio).
A Presentation and Reports in class.
Regular attendance and participation in class.

Exams:

The midterm and final exam have the same format. The exams consist of two parts of equal value. The first part is an essay, the student will choose from one of three proposed themes, and will write a well-organized essay. The second part of the exam consists of ten terms to be concisely defined.

Final Project:

The final paper (3,000 words) will be on any topic of the student's choice related to the class program. The topic should be precisely defined and worthy of investigation. An electronic version of the project must be given to the instructor in class, in person, during any of the last four classes. Files sent by email are not accepted. The deadline is the last class. No materials will be accepted past the deadline. To produce the final project, students will receive written instructions in class. During the semester, students will show the instructor their final project work in progress and receive checks. **Portfolio:** In order to produce their final papers, students will keep a portfolio of research materials during the semester. The portfolio will be shared with, and evaluated by the instructor. The production of the final paper is a work in progress during the semester. The portfolio and the paper project are progressive steps toward completion of the final paper. A portfolio containing samples of reference materials must be attached to the final project.

In-class Presentation:

Students are required to give a short individual or team presentation on a specific topic of their choice, approved by the instructor and related to the class program. The presentation will be well-organized, concise, and include (when opportune) audio-visual and electronic materials. A draft presentation must be submitted to the instructor before presenting in class. An electronic version of the presentation must be given to the instructor in class, in person, during any of the last three classes. Files sent by email are not accepted. The deadline is the last class. No materials will be accepted past the deadline.

Assessment Methods:

Class participation: 10%
Midterm exam: 20%.
Presentation and other assignments: 15%.
Final exam: 25%.
Final project (with project proposal and portfolio): 30%.
Improvement over the semester will be rewarded.

Letter grades correspond to the numerical scale:

A to A- = 100% to 90%. B+ to B- = 89% to 80%. C+ to C- = 79% to 70%. D+ to D- = 69% to 60%. F = <60%.

Assessment Criteria:

A. Work of this quality directly addresses the question or problem raised and provides a coherent argument displaying an extensive knowledge of relevant information or content. This type of work demonstrates the ability to critically evaluate concepts and theory and has an element of novelty and originality. There is clear evidence of a significant amount of reading beyond that required for the course.

B. This is highly competent level of performance and directly addresses the question or problem raised. There is a demonstration of some ability to critically evaluate theory and concepts and relate them to practice. Discussions reflect the student's own arguments and are not simply a repetition of standard lecture and reference material. The work does not suffer from any major errors or omissions and provides evidence of reading beyond the required assignments.

C. This is an acceptable level of performance and provides answers that are clear but limited, reflecting the information offered in the lectures and reference readings.

D. This level of performances demonstrates that the student lacks a coherent grasp of the material. Important information is omitted and irrelevant points included. In effect, the student has barely done enough to persuade the instructor that s/he should not fail.

F. This work fails to show any knowledge or understanding of the issues raised in the question. Most of the material in the answer is irrelevant.

Attendance requirements:

A maximum of four absences are allowed throughout the semester. Any additional absence will result in a penalization of one grade level (e.g.: from B+ to B for five absences, B+ to B- for six absences, B- to C+ for seven absences, etc.). Two latenesses count for one absence. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class by calling students' names. Students not answering will be marked absent. Students arrived late will ask the instructor to be marked late at the end of the class, after which attendance records will not be modified.

Use of Computers in class:

The use of personal computers and technological devices in class is **not** permitted except for taking notes, or contributing to class activity during designated times. Students not respecting the rule will be penalized by getting no points in the Class Participation requirement (worth 10% of the final grade). Recording and filming in class is not allowed.

Library sessions:

The class will meet sometimes in the library to receive instruction on electronic tools and sources. Individual assistance will be provided to the students for their research. To be announced.

Guest speakers:

Guest speakers expert in the fields related to the program may be invited during the semester. To be announced.

Field trips:

Field trips may be scheduled during the semester in connection with on-going cultural events of interest in Rome. To be announced.

Academic honesty

As stated in the university catalog, any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty, irrespective of the weight of the assignment, may result in the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A student who is reported twice for academic dishonesty is subject to summary dismissal from the University. In such a case, the Academic Council will then make a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decision.

Students with learning or other disabilities

John Cabot University does not discriminate on the basis of disability or handicap. Students with approved accommodations must inform their professors at the beginning of the term. Please see the website for the complete policy.

This syllabus is on line: www.gabrielesimoncini.it
