

INTA 2220: Government and Politics of Western Europe

Sam Nunn School of International Affairs

SPRING 2011

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 1:05-1:55PM, Instructional Center 115

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This course is designed to familiarize you with the politics of Western Europe, concentrating on the period since 1990. The fundamental goal of this course is to question how institutions, parties, and governments influence political developments in Europe. The course is divided thematically into two broad sections: 1) domestic political institutions and political systems and 2) country studies of several western European states.

We begin by considering the character of democratic organization and party competition in Europe, and explore the institutional and fundamentals that underlie outcomes. We will then complement our analyses of these issues with more in-depth investigation of the political situation and background of the case countries. For each country, we will spend time analyzing how social and political forces have shaped policies aimed at securing growth and prosperity for all. Planned case studies are the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden and Belgium.

In the last section of the course, we shall consider the organization of the European Union. We will focus mainly on the interactions between the states and the EU.

There are no formal prerequisites for this class, but an introductory course in political science or comparative politics is helpful.

Required Reading

Two textbooks are required for this course. Copies are available at the student bookstores and elsewhere.

- Bale, T. (2008). *European Politics: A Comparative Introduction* (2nd Edition ed.). New York, NY, US: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 978-0-230-57379-7 (abbreviated as EP)
- Hancock, M. D. (2007). *Politics in Europe*. Washington, DC, US: CQ Press. ISBN 978-1-93311645-7 (abbreviated as PiE)

In addition to the required books, there will be several required readings from other sources. Links to these readings will be available on the T-square site for the course. Specific readings for each week are noted in the course schedule.

The T-square site will also contain other important material for the course, including assignments, study guides for exams, and so on. Regular access to T-Square is mandatory for this course. Most of you already have the necessary skills to use this tool, but if you don't OIT runs periodic workshops.

Recommended Reading

Being informed about what is going on in the world is always a good idea. We will spend some time in this course discussing contemporary European politics, and though it is not required I highly recommend spending a little time each day checking the international news. Keeping up with European events will enhance the quality of our discussions as we incorporate what we are learning with what we see and read in the news. Listed below are some of the best news sources you can use to stay abreast of events in Europe. If you speak a non-English European language, I can recommend country-specific news outlets as well.

- [*The Financial Times*](#) (British daily newspaper with quality information on Europe)
- [*The Economist*](#) (weekly British newsmagazine)
- [*BBC News*](#)
- [*The New York Times*](#) (best American coverage of European events)

You should also consider reading the US Department of State's Background of each country, as we are about to discuss them in class to get you up to speed on the current political situation within each country.

Background notes can be found at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/index.htm>.

Class Format

This class will meet three times a week for 50 minutes. A list of general discussion questions appears with the reading assignment for each session. I expect all students to come to class having done the reading and ready to comment and/or ask questions. Remember, no question is too small or too obvious. Chances are your classmates will be wondering the same thing.

Course Requirements

- Quizzes (5/6): 20%
- Midterm Exam: 20%
- Final Exam: 25%
- Issue Papers (3) 20%
- Participation: 15%

Quizzes (20%)

There will be six quizzes over the semester, given on Fridays. The quizzes will not last more than 15 minutes, but will be mainly to make sure you are keeping up with the reading and lectures. You will be able to drop your lowest quiz grade so only your best five grades will count towards your final grade. Make-up quizzes will not be offered.

Exams (45%)

There will be two exams during the semester – The midterm (worth 20%) will cover material from the first part of class and the final (worth 25%) will be cumulative (but weighted toward the second half of the course). Each of these exams will consist of a series of short answer, matching and identification questions. I will provide a study guide prior to each exam. **The midterm exam will be held February 23rd in class and the final exam is scheduled for May 4th (Wednesday) from 2:50-5:40p.**

Issue Papers (20%)

I will assign three papers to be written during the semester. Each should be between five (5) and seven (7) pages, in 12-point Times New Roman font and double-spaced with one-inch margins. The topics and formats for each paper will be given with plenty of notice (at least two weeks prior to the deadline). All papers are due by the beginning of class. The first paper will be due February 14th, the second is due March 14th, and the last paper is due April 18th. Papers must be submitted on paper and stapled. Electronic submission will be not accepted. Late papers will not be accepted without a valid (documented) excuse.

I will allow you to “mulligan” one paper. Once I hand papers back, if you want to take my comments into account and redo your papers, you will have 48 hours to do so for the chance to increase your grade by one letter. Papers with an A cannot be redone for additional credit.

Attendance and Participation (15%)

Attendance in class is mandatory. However, being in class is not enough – you should participate and ask questions, especially during the discussion period after each lecture. Demonstration of having done the reading will result in a better grade. Please advise me ahead of time if you will miss class or afterward if you are ill. I will grant you two absences (for whatever reason) during the semester, after which, your final grade will be deducted 1.5 points for each additional absence (10 points off your participation grade). Obviously there are extenuating circumstances that I will consider, but you need to consider your

presence in class as vital to your final grade. Only family emergencies, illnesses, or Institute-approved absences will count as excused absences.

Honor Code

Full compliance with the Georgia Institute of Technology's Honor Code is required on all assignments, exams, and papers.

Go to www.honor.gatech.edu for more information.

Special Needs

I am happy to meet any special needs you may have for the class in terms of assistance. You must present me with your ADAPTS office information so that I can make sure our learning environment is best suited to help you succeed.

Final Caveat

This syllabus is to be considered a living document and therefore subject to change. Any major changes (such as moving a due date) will be discussed with the class and posted to T-Square. If you have any questions about what you see on the syllabus, please see me to discuss.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One: January 10th – 14th : Introductions and Background

Welcome to Western Europe

- EP, chapters 1 and 2

What constitutes Western Europe?

What are the essential elements of European democracy?

What is a nation-state? Is it an anachronism?

Describe the effects of a proportional representation (PR) electoral system versus a plurality system.

What would happen if the US switched from a plurality to a proportional system?

Why are there only two major parties in the US but more than two in many European countries?

What are cleavages and are there any in the US? What are typical cleavages in Europe?

Week Two: January 17th – 21st : Government Systems

- NO CLASS 1/17 – MLK Holiday

Government Systems

- EP, chapter 4

What are the different forms of government seen in Western Europe?

What is a Parliamentary System?

What are the differences between the Upper Houses in Europe?

What is the Westminster System?

How are coalitions formed? Minority governments?

Week Three: January 24th - 28th : Political Parties, Elections

- **QUIZ ONE – 1/28**

MW: Political Parties

- EP, chapter 5

Why have political parties?

How are political parties organized?

What are the party families on the political spectrum?

What is dealignment?

F: Elections

- EP, chapter 6

Why have elections?

What is the difference between a plurality and proportional representative system?

Week Four: January 31st – February 4th : Elections, Civil Society

MW: Elections (continued)

- EP, chapter 6

What are the different types of electoral systems?

How do electoral systems impact political parties?

What is the impact of turnout on elections?

F: Civil Society

- EP, chapter 8

What is civil society?

What are pressure groups?

What is corporatism?

What is the impact of NGOs?

Week Five: February 7th – 11th : United Kingdom I

- **QUIZ TWO – 2/11**

M: Review/Make-up

WF: United Kingdom

- PiE: Chapter 1.1-1.3

What is the historical background for UK politics?

What is the format of the British system?

What are the different branches of the UK government?

What are the different political parties in the UK?

What do elections in the UK look like?

Week Six: February 14th – 18th : United Kingdom II

- **Progress Reports on Friday 10/18**
- **PAPER ONE – 2/14**

United Kingdom

- PiE: Chapter 1.4-1.5

What is the process of lawmaking in the United Kingdom?

What were the results and impact of the 2010 election?

What does the future of British politics look like?

Week Seven: February 21st – 25th : Midterm, France I

- **MIDTERM 2/23**

M: Midterm Review

W: Midterm

F: France – Introduction

- PiE: chapter 2.1

What is the historical background for French politics?

Week Eight: February 28th – March 4th : France II

- **Drop Day is 3/4**
- **QUIZ THREE – 3/4**

France

- PiE: chapters 2.2-2.5

What is the format of the French system?

What are the different branches of the French government?

What are the different political parties in France?

What is dirigisme?

What do elections in France look like?

What is the process of lawmaking in France?

What does the future of French politics look like?

Week Nine: March 7th – 11th : Germany

- EiP: chapter 3.1-3.5

What is the historical background for German politics?

What is the format of the German system?

What are the different branches of the German government?

What are the different political parties in Germany?

What is the impact of reunification?

What do elections in Germany look like?

What is the process of lawmaking in Germany?

What does the future of German politics look like?

Week Ten: March 14th – 18th : Sweden

- **PAPER TWO – 3/14**
- **QUIZ FOUR – 3/18**

Sweden

- PiE, chapter 5.1-5.5

What is the historical background for Swedish politics?

What is the format of the Swedish system?

What are the different branches of the Swedish government?

What are the different political parties in Sweden?

What is the Nordic Model?

What do elections in Sweden look like?

What is the process of lawmaking in Sweden?

What were the results and impact of the 2010 election?

Week Eleven: March 21st – 25th : No Class

- Spring Break! Be safe and enjoy.

Week Twelve: March 28th – April 1st : Belgium

- Readings off of T-Square (TBA)

What is the historical background for Belgian politics?

What is the format of the Belgian system?

What are the different branches of the Belgian government?

What are the different political parties in Belgium?

What do elections in Belgium look like?

What were the results of the 2010 election? What does the government formation process look like?

Week Thirteen: April 4th – April 8th : Catch Up (If Necessary), EU I

- QUIZ FIVE – 4/8

MW: Catch-up: If caught up, Italy

F: European Union

- Readings off of T-Square (TBA)
- PiE, chapter 8.1

What is the historical context of the European Union?

What were the most powerful reasons for the creation of a supranational body in Western Europe?

What is the European Union?

What were the hopes of the founders of the EEC? What were the different visions for Europe at that time?

Week Fourteen: April 11th – 15th : European Union II

- Readings off of T-Square (TBA)
- PiE, chapter 8.2-8.4

How is the EU structured?

How are the different bodies chosen?

What are the most important bodies within the EU?

Which bodies seem more intergovernmental in nature and which seem more supranational?

Does the EU seem like a super-state in the making?

Week Fifteen: April 18th – 22nd : European Union III

- PAPER THREE - 4/18
- QUIZ SIX – 4/22

European Union

- Readings off of T-Square (TBA)
- PiE, chapter 8.5

Is the EU a good or bad thing?

What direction is the EU heading?

What does enlargement look like in the near future?

Week Sixteen: April 25th – 29th : Culture and Politics, Final Review

MW: Eurovision Song Contest

F: Final Exam Review

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, May 4th, 2:50-5:40p