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PSC 321H.01: Politics of Western Europe

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Politics of Western Europe (PSC 321H)

MWF 9:10-10:00, Liberal Arts 106

Europe has lived on its contradictions, flourished on its differences, and, constantly transcending itself thereby, has created a civilization on which the whole world depends even when rejecting it.

— ALBERT CAMUS (1913–1960), FRENCH-ALGERIAN PHILOSOPHER

Course Description

This course introduces students to the postwar history, culture, and politics of Western Europe. It is a story of the gradual breakdown of an uneasy political consensus forged in a time of necessity that has now seemingly outlived its usefulness. Students will gain insight into the challenges European nation-states face at the dawn of the 21st Century.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students will be able to in the context of Europe:

- Use comparative analysis and causal reasoning to explain political phenomena.
- Evaluate the comparative effectiveness of democratic institutions.
- Understand the motivations of and constraints imposed on political actors.
- Evaluate political development within different historical & cultural frameworks.

Course Philosophy

Learning is more than memorizing facts and answering questions on a test. It is using information to gain an understanding of how things work and how to make them better.

In this course, learning will be defined as the process of enhancing your ability to:

- ask the right questions and frame good problems,
- acquire information and evaluate sources of information,
- critically investigate and solve problems,
- make choices among different alternatives,
- explain concepts to others both verbally and in writing and,
- generalize to new situations.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

There are two required texts and a coursepack available at the UC Bookstore:

Bale, Tim. 2008. *European Politics: A Comparative Introduction*, 2nd edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 0230573797.

Hitchcock, William. 2004. *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent 1945 to the Present*. New York: Anchor Books. ISBN: 0385497997.

Student Responsibilities

Students have the responsibility to:

1. Attend class regularly and complete all assigned readings before coming to class.
2. Complete all assignments by the deadline given by the instructor.
3. Complete course requirements by the end of the semester.
4. Inform the instructor beforehand of any reason they cannot fulfill these responsibilities.

Academic Misconduct Policy

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, which is available for review online at: <http://ordway.umd.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/name/StudentConductCode>.

Statement On Disabilities:

I strongly encourage students with documented disabilities to discuss with me appropriate accommodations. Because I am not qualified to make an assessment of your need for an accommodation or what accommodations are needed, if you have a disability and feel you need accommodations in this course please present me with a letter from Disability Services for Students (DSS), Lommasson Center 154 (243-2243), indicating the existence of a disability and the suggested accommodations.

Course Requirements

The following paragraphs outline the basic requirements for this course. More detailed information on assignments will be provided in handouts and/or on the course website.

Participation. Randomly selected students will respond to the "discussion questions" found at the end of the chapter (Bale) or online (Hitchcock and other readings). Responses will be graded on a "good faith" basis with a penalty of 25 points imposed for unpreparedness.

Election Simulation. Students will participate in a simulated election to gain experience with a PR electoral system and the process of government formation in a multi-party system. Assessment will include a series of homework assignments and a take-home midterm.

Collaborative Research Paper. Students will be randomly assigned in to groups of 3-4 students, which will write a strategy for overcoming the social, economic, and political challenges to the "social model" of a European nation-state and present it to the class.

Final Grade

Grades will be based on points distributed between participation (200 points), preparation for and assessment of the German Election Simulation (300), and the collaborative research paper and presentation (300 points), and the final exam (200).

The plus/minus grading system will be used with grades based on the total points: A = 1000-930, A- = 929-900, B+ = 870-899, B = 830-869, B- = 800-829, C+ = 770-799, C = 730-769, C- = 700-729, D+ = 670-699, D = 630-669, D- = 600-639, F = <600.

Course Schedule

Prologue

Aug. 25: Introduction of Course and Distribution of Syllabus

Aug. 27-29: What is Europe? (*Read Bale, Introduction & Chapter 1*)

Introduction

Sept. 1: Labor Day (No Class)

Sept. 3-5: The Postwar Settlement (*Read Hitchcock, Chapters 2 & 3*)

Sept. 8: The End of the Nation State? (*Read Bale, Chapter 2*)

Part I: Government to Governance in Western Europe

Sept. 10-12: Levels of Governance (*Read Bale, Chapter 3*)

Sept 15: The Miraculous Fifties and the Post-War Boom (*Read Hitchcock, Chapter 5*)

Sept. 17-19: Governments and Parliaments (*Read Bale, Chapter 4*)

Sept 22: The End of Empire (*Read Hitchcock, Chapter 6*)

Sept 24-26: Political Parties and Party Families (*Read Bale, Chapter 5*)

Sept 29-Oct. 1: Elections and Electoral Systems (*Read Bale, Chapter 6*)

Oct 3: The Gaullist Temptation (*Read Hitchcock, Chapter 8*)

Oct. 6-Oct. 8: Politics Outside Parliament (*Read Bale, Chapter 8*)

Oct. 10: Prosperity and its Discontents (*Read Hitchcock, Chapter 9*)

Oct. 13: *German Election Simulation* (Campaign Speeches & Election Day)

Oct. 15: *German Election Simulation* (Election Results and Start of Negotiations)

Oct. 17: *German Election Simulation* (Investiture of Government)

Oct. 20: The Thatcher Revolution (*Read Hitchcock, Chapter 12*)

The Midterm for this Section of the Course is Due in Class Friday, October 24.

Part II: Challenges in the Politics of Western Europe

Oct. 22-24: The End of the Post-War Settlement (*Read Bale, Chapter 9*)

Oct. 27-29: The European Union: Origins and Institutions (*Read Hitchcock, Chapter 16*)

Nov. 3: Globalization and the European Social Model

Sapir, André. 2005. Globalisation and the Reform of European Social Models. Bruegel.
<http://www.bruegel.org/1425>.

Nov. 5-7: Who is European? (*Read Hitchcock, Chapter 15 and Bale, Chapter 11*)

Nov. 10-12: Europe, Turkey, and Islam

Gordon, Phillip, and Omar Taspinar. Turkey on the Brink. The Washington Quarterly 29, no. 3: 57-70. http://www.twq.com/06summer/docs/06summer_gordon.pdf.

Savage, Timothy M. 2004. Europe and Islam: Crescent Waxing, Cultures Clashing. The Washington Quarterly 27, no. 3: 25-50. http://www.twq.com/04summer/docs/04summer_savage.pdf.

Nov. 12-14: The Fall of the Iron Curtain (*Read Hitchcock, Chapter 13*)

Nov. 17-21: Europe's Foreign Policy (*Read Hitchcock, Chapter 14 & Bale, Chapter 12*)

Nov. 24: Is there a European Pop Culture?

Conclusion

Dec. 1-5: Student Presentations; Teaching and Peer Evaluations.

The Final Exam is Scheduled for 8:00 a.m., Wednesday, December 10, 2008.

Appendix A: German Election Simulation

This simulation will give you first-hand experience with a PR electoral system and the process of forming a government coalition in a multi-party system. It will reinforce many of the concepts needed to understand European politics in a comparative perspective.

Simulation Scenario

It is September 2009 and Germany faces another general election. German voters were so closely divided in the last election in 2005 that Germany's two largest parties — the CDU/CSU and the SPD — both initially claimed victory. After careful negotiations, the SPD and the CDU/CSU agreed to form a "grand coalition" with Angela Merkel of the CDU as Chancellor, replacing an SPD-Green government. This grand coalition has been unpopular with the German public and both coalition partners are looking to shake things up this election. Now Germany's five major political parties — the CDU/CSU, SPD, Greens, FDP, and the Left Party/PDS — must decide what their election strategy will be as they struggle to win enough votes in a still closely divided Germany to enter government.

Simulations Mechanics

Role-playing Personas

At the beginning of the third week of the semester, students will be randomly assigned a persona as either a voter or a politician. Voters' personas will reflect typical German citizens belonging to specific social cleavages in Germany. Politicians will be assigned to a specific party and their persona will be defined by their party's platform and the role they take in their party. Students will role-play their personas throughout the simulation.

Tasks

The specific tasks that politicians and voters must complete before the simulation will be provided in a series of homework assignments before the simulation itself.

Assessment

Students will write a reaction paper after the simulation that will double as a take-home examination over the first section of the class. This assessment will ask students to reflect on the simulation experience and relate it to a number of concepts discussed in class. Both voters and politicians will discuss the election campaign and government formation, while voters will be asked additional questions concerning the voting process itself. The simulation reaction paper is worth 200 points.

Appendix B: Group Research Project and Presentation

Learning groups are tasked with the following collaborative research project:

The future of Europe's social model is in doubt due to the challenges of globalization. Your group will select a European nation-state, identify the problems facing its social model, and through a comparative analysis of problems and alternative solutions in other states propose specific, politically realistic policies the government of your state can enact to fix its social model. You will present your research in a group paper and group presentation.

PAPER GUIDELINES

Each group will submit their final, finished paper at the beginning of the final scheduled class period (Dec 5, 2008). To be accepted for credit, it must:

1. Conform to the parenthetical citations–reference list source citation and paper formatting guidelines of the 7th edition of the Turabian writers manual.¹
2. Be a minimum of 5 pages for each group member. Front matter, references, etc. do not count towards the page total.

PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

Each group will make an 8-minute presentation explaining the problems facing their state's social model and their proposed solutions.

PROJECT EVALUATION

A final group grade for the collaborative research project will be calculated using a scoring rubric posted on Blackboard no later than October 10. Individual grades for this project may be raised or lowered based on peer evaluations based on the "Knickrehm Method."² Full instructions for peer evaluations are available online.

¹ Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007). Available at the Library.

² Robert Maranto and April Gresham, "Using 'World Series shares' to fight free riding in group projects," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 34, no. 4 (December 1998).