



## CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM - FIRENZE

**Fall 2016-17**  
**SSC 310 - EUROPEAN POLITICAL SYSTEMS**  
**Monday 8,30 – 11,15**

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Office hours: Friday 8 – 10 am, by appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will focus on West European political systems and will be divided into two parts. The first part is intended to provide students with the conceptual tools and the basic factual knowledge that are necessary for the understanding of political systems in West European democracies. In particular, students will become acquainted with the major historical determinants of Europe's societal structure. These notions will constitute the frame of reference for the study of Europe's dominant governmental models (Westminster and consensus) and the genesis and development of European political parties and political systems. The second part of the course will focus on the political systems of three major countries: the United Kingdom, France and Germany. The conceptual tools provided by the Westminster and consensus models will be applied to the three systems' societal and institutional features. Comparisons with the US model of government will be made whenever possible.

### **REQUIREMENTS:**

Completing ALL the readings and regular attendance will be required of all students. Material covered in class will not always be covered in the readings and vice versa; students will be responsible for all material regardless of where presented. Active participation in class discussions is strongly urged. Questions and comments will always be welcome.

Grades will be based on a mid-term exam and on a final exam, both based on readings and lectures. Each will consist of an obligatory essay, a choice essay and 10 multiple-choice/true-false questions or identifications. The mid-term exam will be worth 40% (20 for the obligatory essay, 15 for the choice essay and .5 for each multiple choice question) and the final exam will be worth 60% (30 for the obligatory essay, 20 for the choice essay and 1 for each multiple choice question) of the final grade.

### **GRADING**

Final scores will be translated into grades on the basis of a consideration of the class' overall performance. However, a full A grade will be awarded exclusively to students whose total scores are 90 and above. Likewise, a total final score of at least 60 points will be necessary to obtain a passing grade. Outstanding class participation and reports could result in a 5 point bonus. Poor class participation/reports AND lack of punctuality could each result in a 5 point penalization.

### **ATTENDANCE AND OTHER CLASS POLICIES**

A) Attendance to all CSU courses is mandatory. One unexcused absence is allowed during the semester but more than one unexcused absence will lower your grade as follows (excused absences will be accepted for serious medical reasons or emergencies): **TWO** unexcused absences, lowers by

- 1 letter grade (i.e., B to C); **THREE** unexcused absences, lowers by 2 letter grades (i.e., A to C). More than **THREE unexcused absences will result in failure of the course**.
- B) In order not to disrupt the class, punctuality is required. Students are expected to be in class at the beginning of the class hour; any delay exceeding five minutes will be considered an absence.
- C) Dates of mid-term and final exams **cannot** be changed for individual travel plans or personal needs. Missing the midterm or the final exam will mean failure of the course.
- D) During the academic year photocopies and other material may be distributed in class by the instructors. Students who were not in class are responsible for getting the material from their classmates and making their own photocopies.
- E) Use of laptop computers in class is not permitted, unless previously approved by the professor.
- F) Eating is **NOT** allowed in class.
- G) Cellular phones must be **turned off** or placed on **silent mode** during class.

**MIDTERM EXAM DATE:** December 19<sup>th</sup>

**FINAL EXAM DATE:** Feb. 6 – 9 (to be announced)

## **COURSE FEES - POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL COSTS**

Theater admissions for one or two films (€ 8,00-10,00 each)

## **Course structure – CLASS CALENDAR**

### **I. Fundamental Features of European Political Systems.**

**Week 1. 7/11**, European identity & diversity.

Required readings: Gallagher, Laver, and Mair: chapt. 1-2

**Week 2. 14/11**, The development of mass democracy.

Required readings: Lipset and Rokkan

**Week 3. 21/11**, Parliamentarism.

Required readings: Gallagher, Laver and Mair 7-9

**Week 4. 28/11**, Multi-partism (social cleavages and political families).

Required readings: Lijphart chapt. 5-9.

**Week 5. 05/12**, Proportionalism.

Required readings: Gallagher, Laver and Mair 10-12.

**Week 6. 12/12** : The European model: Review

Required readings: All of the above.

**Week 7. 19/12, MID-TERM EXAM**

### **II. The British political system.**

**Week 8. 09/01**, Foundations of British politics :

Required readings: Hancock and others, pt 1

**Week 9. 16/01**, Political parties and electoral system.

Required readings:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Kingdom\\_general\\_election,\\_2015](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_general_election,_2015)

### III. The German political system.

**Week 10. 23/01**, Federalism. Political parties, electoral law and elections.

Required readings: Hancock and others, pt 3.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German\\_federal\\_election,\\_2013](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_federal_election,_2013)

### IV. The French political system.

**Week 11, 30/01**, Political parties Parliamentary vs. Presidentialism. Electoral system and elections (IV and V Republic).

Required readings: Hancock and others, pt. 2.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French\\_elections\\_2012](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_elections_2012)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French\\_legislative\\_election,\\_2012](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_legislative_election,_2012)

**Week 12 : 6-9 February FINAL EXAM – day and time to be announced**

## Reading List

Gallagher, M., M. Laver, and P. Mair, Representative Government in Modern Europe, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, New York, Open University Press, 2011. (Required course text book).

Hancock, M. D., and others, Politics in Europe, 5<sup>th</sup> edition SAGE, 2011. (Required course text book).

Lipset, S. M. and S. Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments" in P. Mair ed., The West European Party System, Oxford, Oxford U. P., 1990. (Additional reading).

Lijphart, A., Democracies, New Haven, Yale U.P., 1984. (Additional reading).

**Students will also be responsible for consulting the following websites and becoming acquainted with the materials therein**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Kingdom\\_general\\_election,\\_2015](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_general_election,_2015)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French\\_elections\\_2012](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_elections_2012)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French\\_legislative\\_election,\\_2012](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_legislative_election,_2012)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German\\_federal\\_election,\\_2013](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_federal_election,_2013)

**VIDEOS:** One or two relevant videos may be assigned in the course of the semester