
PSCI 2210: Western European Politics

Vanderbilt University

Tyson Chatagnier

Office: Commons 329

Office Hours: Thursday 3:00–4:00 PM

Email: j.t.chatagnier@vanderbilt.edu

Course Info:

Spring 2016

Days and Time: TR 11:00–12:15 PM

Room Number: Kissam 216

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to politics in today's Western European democracies. We will focus on the issues and institutions that drive the political system within and across the countries in the region. The course is organized into two parts. The first part of the course will be a broad overview of the history, politics, and institutions of modern Europe. The second part will delve more deeply into five specific European countries: Germany, Sweden, France, Italy, and the UK. Students will learn about each of these countries in greater depth, and will discover how the concepts outlined in the first portion of the course apply in each of these cases. Students will also take part in a group project, in which they research another European country, culminating in a presentation to the class.

Grading Policies

Evaluations of student performance will be based on a combination of class participation and performance on two quizzes, one midterm, one final exam, and a group presentation. Final grades will be calculated as follows:

- *Attendance and participation (10%)*: Students are expected to raise questions and to participate actively in class discussion about throughout the semester. While attendance will not be taken explicitly, it is not possible to participate without attending class.
- *Quizzes (10%)*: There will be two in-class quizzes during the semester. The dates for these quizzes are listed on the syllabus, and will take place during the **first 10 minutes of class**. Makeup quizzes will not be given, and allowances will not be made for those who are late.
- *Group Presentation (25%)*: Students will be divided into seven groups, each of which will give a presentation of approximately 20–30 minutes at the end of the semester. Details of the presentation are given below, and will be discussed in class in greater detail.

- *Midterm Exam (25%)*: The midterm exam will be held in class on **Thursday, February 25**. Makeup exams will only be given for students who can provide a note from a doctor or from the dean's office.
- *Final Exam (30%)*: A cumulative final exam will be held during the scheduled final exam time: **Tuesday, May 3 at 3:00 PM**. No alternative date will be offered. Please see me if you foresee a problem with the date of the midterm or the final.

Group Presentation

During the first week of class, students will rank seven Western European countries in order of preference for a final project. Groups will be assigned based on these preference orderings. While I will try to give each student one of his/her top choices, this is not always possible. Anyone who fails to indicate their preferences will simply be assigned to a group. Throughout the course, students will research their country, and will give a class presentation of approximately 20–25 minutes at the end of the semester. The presentation will be followed by 5–10 minutes of class discussion of the country and a related reading about a current event concerning that country. Groups should prepare a presentation that includes the following:

- A brief history of the country
- General information about the country
- Political institutions within the country
- Public opinion in the country, in a broad sense
- Recent elections and their outcomes
- Other important recent political events

While group work can be difficult, the ability to work with others successfully is a valuable skill. Where possible, students are expected to work through difficulties to the best of their abilities. However, if unresolvable issues arise within the group, you should notify me sooner rather than later.

Readings

The required readings for each class are listed on the syllabus, below the topic to be covered. Students are expected to do the reading before coming to class. Reading assignments will come primarily from the two course textbooks:

Gallagher, Michael, Michael Laver, and Peter Mair. 2011. *Representative Government in Modern Europe* (Fifth Edition). Berkshire, UK: McGraw-Hill.

Hancock, M. Donald et al. 2015. *Politics in Europe* (Sixth Edition). Los Angeles: CQ Press.

Readings from the text will be designated **Gallagher** and **Hancock**, respectively, on the syllabus. Throughout the course, we will also have readings on relevant current events. These readings will be available through Blackboard.

Course Outline

Week 1. Course Introduction

- *Tuesday, Jan. 12* - Introduction and syllabus
 - **No reading.**
- *Thursday, Jan. 14* - Europe and its history
 - Gallagher, Ch. 1

Week 2. Components of Government (Part I)

- *Tuesday, Jan. 19* - The executive
 - Gallagher, Ch. 2
- *Thursday, Jan. 21* - Legislatures
 - Gallagher, Ch. 3

Week 3. Components of Government (Part II)

- *Tuesday, Jan. 26* - Law and constitutions
 - Gallagher, Ch. 4
 - **Quiz #1: Map of Europe**
- *Thursday, Jan. 28* - Levels of government
 - Gallagher, Ch. 6

Week 4. Issues and Representation

- *Tuesday, Feb. 2* - Electoral cleavages
 - Gallagher, Ch. 9
- *Thursday, Feb. 4* - European political parties
 - Gallagher, Ch. 10

Week 5. Party Politics

- *Tuesday, Feb. 9* - Party families
 - Gallagher, Ch. 8
- *Thursday, Feb. 11* - Parties across Europe
 - Gallagher, Ch. 7

Week 6. Elections and Governing

- *Tuesday, Feb. 16* - Elections in Europe
 - Gallagher, Ch. 11
- *Thursday, Feb. 18* - Parliamentary governments
 - Gallagher, Ch. 12

Week 7. The EU and Midterm

- *Tuesday, Feb. 23* - The European Union
 - Gallagher, Ch. 5
 - Midterm Review
- *Thursday, Feb. 25* - **Midterm Exam**

Week 8. Politics in Germany

- *Tuesday, Mar. 1* - History and institutions
 - Hancock, Ch. 3.1-3.2
- *Thursday, Mar. 3* - German politics today and tomorrow
 - Hancock, Ch. 3.3-3.5

Mar. 5-13: Spring Break

Week 9. Politics in Sweden

- *Tuesday, Mar. 15* - Politics in Sweden
 - Hancock, Ch. 5
- *Thursday, Mar. 17* - No class, instructor out of town

Week 10. Politics in France

- *Tuesday, Mar. 22* - History and institutions
 - Hancock, Ch. 2.1-2.2
 - **Quiz #2: European leaders and parties**
- *Thursday, Mar. 24* - French politics today and tomorrow
 - Hancock, Ch. 2.3-2.5

Week 11. Politics in Italy

- *Tuesday, Mar. 29* - History and institutions
 - Hancock, Ch. 4.1-4.2
- *Thursday, Mar. 31* - Italian politics today and tomorrow
 - Hancock, Ch. 4.3-4.5

Week 12. Politics in the UK

- *Tuesday, Apr. 5* - History and institutions
 - Hancock, Ch. 1.1-1.2
- *Thursday, Apr. 7* - British politics today and tomorrow
 - Hancock, Ch. 1.3-1.5

Week 13. Presentations

- *Tuesday, Apr. 12* - Group presentations
 - Country-specific readings TBD
- *Thursday, Apr. 14* - Group presentations

- Country-specific readings TBD

Week 14. Presentations and Conclusion

- *Tuesday, Apr. 19* - Group presentations
 - Country-specific readings TBD
- *Thursday, Apr. 21* - Group presentations and course wrap-up
 - Country-specific readings TBD

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 3 at 3:00 PM