

West European Comparative Politics

Spring 2011



Lecturer: Prof. PhDr. Lenka Rovná, CSc.,
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Mondays & Wednesdays 10:30 – 11:50

Course description:

The course West European Comparative Politics will concentrate on the analysis of the pursuits of democracy in Western Europe. Firstly, the conception of Europe will be explored in its historical perspective and different perceptions: territorial, political, spiritual, cultural etc. Secondly, the characterizing social cleavages of Europe will be introduced: territorial, economic, religious, national, ethnic etc. Furthermore, we will discuss how these cleavages get expressed in the formation of different social interests and lead to the organization of interests groups, political parties and NGOs. Thirdly, turning towards the institutional structures of West European parliamentary democracies, we will address the existence of political party systems, as well as the executive and legislative powers represented by government and parliament. Fourthly, we will explore the rules and outcomes of different electoral systems, which ensure regular rotation of political elites at power – however, under different principles. Finally, we will assess the enrichment of the classical models of government in Western Europe, which have in the last 20 years been supplemented by additional players participating in the decision making processes on different levels (local, regional, national and European) – leading to new political conceptualization of ‘governance’. Also, while European states remain core units of European integration, they are also influenced by the EU, leading to their Europeanization. The political systems of Great Britain, France and Germany as case studies will be examined. Special attention will be devoted to the emergence of the political system of the Czech Republic as a representative of new member states of the EU. The new challenges facing Western Europe, such as globalization, financial crisis, continuing European integration, regionalization, restructuring of social welfare systems and the issues of identity, will be discussed.

Every student will be responsible for:

1) *Class Participation*

Each student will prepare for class by doing the designated readings and actively participating in class discussions. Two unexcused absences can be tolerated.

2) *Midterm exam* (March 7)

The midterm exam will cover material up to the exam and will consist of a mixture of short identification questions and essays.

3) *Paper* (May 1)

Each student will write an 8page (double-spaced) comparative research paper. Each student will select two political parties belonging to the same party family (social-democratic, conservative, liberal, green etc.), however, from a different Western European country (you may for example compare British Labour and Swedish SAP). The paper will then compare the parties' political views. How are the visions and policy prescriptions of these two parties similar or different? Why? How do their views fit the general values of their party family? You may narrow your comparison to a specific policy area.

Quotations and the complete list of sources are compulsory.

4) *Final exam* (May 9)

The final exam will be cumulative and will consist of short answer identification questions and essay questions.

Requirements for the class:

Midterm exam	20 %
Paper (8 pages)	30%
Final exam	20%
Participation in the class	30%

January 24 Introduction

January 26, 31 Europe: a continent in the making, in: Tim Bale, *European Politics, A Comparative Introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2005, pp. 1 - 31

February 2 Cleavages in Western Europe, religious, ethnic, economic, social..., in: Jan Eric Lane and Svante Ersson, *Politics and Society in Western Europe*, Sage Publication, London, 1999, pp. 37 – 75

February 7 Political Parties, in: Jan Eric Lane and Svante Ersson, *Politics and Society in Western Europe*, Sage Publication, London, 1999, pp. 76 - 108

February 9 Inside Western European Political parties, in: Michael Gallagher, Michael Laver, Peter Mair, *Representative Government in Modern Europe, Institutions, parties and Governments*, Boston, McGraw Hill, 4th edition, 2005, pp. 307-339

February 14 Elections and Electoral systems, in: Michael Gallagher, Michael Laver, Peter Mair, *Representative Government in Modern Europe, Institutions, parties and Governments*, Boston, McGraw Hill, 4th edition, 2005, pp. 340-380
in: Edited by Paul Heywood, Erik Jones and Martin Rhodes, *Developments in West European Politics 2*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2002, pp. 94 – 114

February 16 Building and Maintaining the Government, in: Michael Gallagher, Michael Laver, Peter Mair, *Representative Government in Modern Europe, Institutions, parties and Governments*, Boston, McGraw Hill, 4th edition, 2005, pp. 381-421
in: Gabriel A.Almond, Russel J.Dalton, G.Bingham Powell, Jr., Kaare Strom, *European Politics Today*, Pearson Longman, New York, 3rd edition, 2006, pp.62 – 83

February 21 Politics outside Parliament, in: Michael Gallagher, Michael Laver, Peter Mair, Representative Government in Modern Europe, Institutions, parties and Governments, Boston, McGraw Hill, 4th edition, 2005, pp. 441-461

February 23 From Government to Governance, in: Edited by Paul Heywood, Erik Jones and Martin Rhodes, Developments in West European Politics 2, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2002, pp. 151 - 183

February 28 Territorial Politics and the New Regionalism, in: Edited by Paul Heywood, Erik Jones and Martin Rhodes, Developments in West European Politics 2, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2002, pp. 201 – 220

March 2 Revision of the subject matter of the course

March 7 **Midterm Exam**

March 9 European Integration and the nation state, in: Simon Bulmer and Christian Lequesne, The Member States of the European Union, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 25-69

March 14, 16 Politics in the European Union from the member state point of view, Constitutionalization, in: Gabriel A.Almond, Russel J.Dalton, G.Bingham Powell, Jr., Kaare Strom, European Politics Today, Pearson Longman, New York, 3rd edition, 2006, pp.457 - 509

March 21,23 **Fall Break**

March 28, 30 Political System of Great Britain, Britain and Europe, in: Gabriel A.Almond, Russel J.Dalton, G.Bingham Powell, Jr., Kaare Strom, European Politics Today, Pearson Longman, New York, 3rd edition, 2006, pp.84 – 133

April 4, 6 Political System of France, in: Gabriel A.Almond, Russel J.Dalton, G.Bingham Powell, Jr., Kaare Strom, European Politics Today, Pearson Longman, New York, 3rd edition, 2006, pp. 134 – 189

April 11, 13 Political System of Germany, in: Gabriel A.Almond, Russel J.Dalton, G.Bingham Powell, Jr., Kaare Strom, European Politics Today, Pearson Longman, New York, 3rd edition, 2006, pp.190 – 245

April 18, 20, 27 Political System of the Czech Republic in comparative perspective, East or West? Home is best., in: Readings will be given by the instructor

May 2 New Challenges for Europe, Towards a post-national polity? in: Dennis Smith and Sue Wright, Whose Europe? The turn towards democracy, Blackwell publisher, Oxford, 1999, pp. 173 – 206 + additional readings given by the instructor

May 4 Revision of the subject matter of the course

May 9 **Final Exam**