Introduction

This course provides an introduction to the politics of Western Europe with particular emphasis upon changes in the contours of party politics. It is both a survey of major political institutions (parliaments, electoral systems, and so on) and political developments, and an examination of the theme of change in European party systems. In most West European countries, the stability of party systems began to break down in the 1960s, and in some cases (most notably Italy) party systems have been transformed since the end of the 1970s. This shift has involved several elements: a decline in democratic participation; a decline in the traditional parties of the Left and Right; and the rise of new kinds of parties on both the Left and the Right. These parties are organized around new social groups and new sets of issues, like immigration and environmental politics. The transformation of party politics has also involved the emergence, or rediscovery, of new forms and practices of politics, including extra-parliamentary protest and the formation of new social movements.

The dual purpose of this course – both survey and exploration of the transformation of party systems – means that the syllabus proceeds country by country, first examining the main political institutions in Britain, France, Italy and Germany, and then using those countries to illustrate significant developments in their respective party systems: the British case focuses upon neoliberalism and “Third Way” politics; the French case focuses upon Mediterranean socialism and the rise of the far-right; the Italian case focuses upon regional separatist parties and the construction of an entirely new party system after 1990; and the German case focuses upon new social movements in the form of the Green Party. There is also a brief discussion of social democracy in Sweden.

The last part of the course shifts gears to look at the process of European integration which has gathered pace in the last two decades, leading to a single European market, free movement of goods and people within the European Union, a single currency and a European constitution. We will examine why European integration has taken the form that it has, and what its implications are for European politics and party systems.
Requirements

This course does not assume or require any prior knowledge of European history or politics, though clearly any background in the history of the region would be helpful. This is primarily a lecture course, though there will be an opportunity for some discussion in class. The main requirements are that students come to class and do the assigned reading (about 150 pages a week). I use the reading both to cover material that I deal with in class and to provide detail, texture, and argument that I do not have time for in class. There will be an in-class mid-term exam, worth one quarter of the grade, on Thursday, October 20th. There will also be a take-home essay/exam designed to take two hours, also worth one quarter of the final grade. The essay questions will be given out by the last class on December 13th, and will be due a week later.

The remaining 50% of the grade is an assignment that requires you to regularly follow developments in the politics of one West European country of your choice (subject to a reasonable distribution of students to countries), post commentary and annotated links to news articles on that country, and then write a short paper on contemporary political developments in the country that you have followed through the semester. Students will be expected to post more or less weekly (for a total of 10 posts), with the posts being worth 25% of the total course grade. The short paper may be written individually or collectively with other students following the same country as you. It is due in class on Thursday December 8, and is worth 25% of the total course grade. A more detailed description of this assignment is available on Blackboard, and we will discuss it in class. These are all requirements and late work will be penalized in the interest of equity.

Finally, there will inevitably be some changes to the course as the semester progresses – changes in the readings, additional details of assignments, and so on – which are not included on this syllabus. I will provide weekly updates at the ‘Announcements’ tab of the Blackboard web site for this course along with a syllabus and other materials. Check the Blackboard site at least once a week. In the unlikely event that you miss a class, you should always check the web site in case I have announced something of importance.

Course readings

All the readings will be available electronically, and can be found at the “Course Readings” tab on Blackboard. You can then read (and if you wish, print) this material. The readings are listed alphabetically by the last name of the first author on the syllabus. Check page numbers carefully, so that you read the correct section of each reading at the correct time: in many cases I have had some sections of a book scanned in that you do not need to read, or that you read at different points in the semester.
CLASS SCHEDULE:

September 6 & 8  Rise of the Modern State


September 13  A Primer on Political Economy

Colin Crouch, “Change in European Societies Since the 1970s,” (pages 14-39), in *West European Politics* [2008].


September 15, 20 & 22  Political Parties and Capitalist Democracy


Ronald Inglehart, “Changing Values Among Western Publics from 1970 to 2006” (pages 130-146), in *West European Politics* [2008].

Peter Mair, “The Challenge to Party Government” (pages 211-234), in *West European Politics* [2008].

Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, chapter 1 (pages 7-46).

September 27 & 29  Sweden: “Classic” Social Democracy

Gosta Esping-Andersen, *Politics Against Markets*, chapter 1 (pages 3-38)


October 4, 11, 13 & 18  Britain: The New Right and The Third Way


Tony Blair, *The Third Way*, all (pages 1-20).


*The Economist*, “All Change: Britain is on the verge of constitutional upheaval” (pages 1-6), April 28, 2011.

October 20  In-Class Mid-Term Exam

November 1, 3, 8 & 10  France: Communism, Socialism and the Far Right


George Ross and Jane Jenson, *The View from Inside*, chapters 2, 3, 5, 8 & 10 (pages 27-54, 63-70, 84-89 & 100-111).


Arthur Goldhammer and George Ross, “Reluctantly Center-Left?” (pages 141-161) in Cronin, Ross and Shoch, eds., *What’s Left of the Left* [2011].


November 15, 17 & 22 Germany: New Social Movements and Unification


Stephen Padgett, “Germany: Modernising the Left by Stealth” (pages 38-57) in Parliamentary Affairs [2003].

Andrei Markovits and Philip Gorski, The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond, chapters 5-7 (pages 115-236).


Jeffrey Anderson and Eric Langenbacher, eds., From the Bonn to the Berlin Republic, chapters 12, 16 and 20 (pages 251-269, 321-330 & 377-396).

November 29 & December 1 Italy: A New Party System

Ilvo Diamanti, “The Italian Centre-Right and Centre-Left” (pages 733-762), in West European Politics [2007].


Perry Anderson, “An Entire Order Converted into What it was Intended to End” (all) in London Review of Books [February 26, 2009].


John Prideaux, “Special Survey of Italy: Oh For a New Risorgimento” (all), in *The Economist* [June 11, 2011].

**December 6, 8, & 13 European Integration and the Future of Party Politics**


Steven Hill, *Europe’s Promise*, chapters 6 and 16 (pages 107-122 & 301-318).

Henry Farrell and John Quiggin, How to save the Euro – and the EU” (pages 97-103) in *Foreign Affairs* [2011].