



CIEE Global Institute – Berlin

Course name:	European Comparative Political Systems
Course number:	(GI) POLI 3002 BRGE
Programs offering course:	Berlin Open Campus, Berlin Global Architecture and Design
Open Campus Track:	International Relations and Political Science
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. semester credits:	3
Contact hours:	45
Term:	Spring 2020

Course Description

This overview course examines the political systems of various European nation-states. Focus is placed on the main political cleavages in each, such as class, ideology, ethnicity, and religion, and how these divisions have influenced the political playing field. Additional topics include nationalism, citizenship, party structures, corporatism, the welfare state, and electoral politics. A special focus will be recent symptomatic challenges to European democracy. As we compare the features of these different democratic systems in detail and relate them to their historical and cultural context, we will focus on three major challenges common to all of these democracies: the decreasing level of participation, especially regarding voter turnout; the decline of large political parties, which raises the question of who, in future, is going to mediate between the citizens' interests and those of the state; and the perception that the major decisions in democratic countries are increasingly made outside the purview of democratic institutions.

Learning Objectives

This course will allow students to:

- Be able to identify the significant differences between the political systems of the countries analyzed and be able to explain how these differences translate into a specific landscape of political parties and characteristic patterns of governance.
- Become conversant with the wider historical and social context that has brought forth different variants of democratic constitutions.
- Be able to identify common problems of and challenges to European democracies and discuss these at the level of democratic theory.
- Become familiar with the most important positions in the recurrent debate about the “crisis of democracy.”
- Analyze how substantive are proposals for improvement and think creatively about how to help democracies become more just and more democratic and regain their lost public appeal.



- Practice one's critical thinking skills, e.g. by developing and applying category schemes to identify the strengths and weaknesses of constitutional democracies in Europe and analyze their similarities and differences.
- Use the meetings with legislators, activists, and political scientists that are part of the course to hone one's questioning techniques and other interview skills.

Course Prerequisites

None.

Methods of Instruction

The methodology of this overview course will be characterized by lectures from both the professor and students, talks with external experts and reading as well as research assignments.

Lectures will be enhanced by PowerPoint presentations whenever these are helpful to explain the governmental structure and policy making procedures of the different countries. The class discussions will be prepared and conducted in such way that they can serve as preparation for the roundtable discussion and the meetings outside the campus.

Particular attention will be paid to the gap between democratic theory and political practice, and how this gap is both productive and a source of frustration. The learning process will be enhanced by discussion meetings with representatives of different players in the public sphere, among them NGOs, political scientists, international journalists and professional politicians.

The course includes debate meetings with representatives of the political establishment and civil society organizations, a guided tour of the German parliament, as well as a visit of the Hungarian Embassy in Berlin. A discussion with members of the empirical research project on the "crisis of democracy" at the WZB Rule of Law Center is planned as well.

Assessment and Final Grade

Students will be assessed according to the following criteria:

1. Homework Assignments:	15%
2. Midterm Exam:	20%
3. Final Paper:	20%
4. Presentations (2):	25%
5. Participation:	20%
TOTAL:	100%



Course Requirements

Homework Assignments

There will be regular homework assignments to be discussed in the following class session.

Midterm Exam

The mid-term quiz will cover the first three weeks of the course.

Final Paper

Each student is required to write a final paper of 1,500 words. Materials prepared in connection with the oral presentation or the debate meetings (see under Class Participation) may be expanded into this final paper. The instructor will offer suggestions, advice and monitoring.

Presentations

Each participant is required to give two oral presentation to the class of 10 minutes in length. Emphasis is on the student's own analysis and research.

Participation

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all unexcused absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, unexcused absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.



For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to Internship, Service Learning, or required field placement. Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent and unexcused. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Unexcused absences will lead to the following penalties:

<i>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</i>	<i>Equivalent Number of Open Campus Semester classes</i>	<i>Minimum Penalty</i>
Up to 10%	1 content classes, or up to 2 language classes	Participation graded as per class requirements
10 – 20%	2 content classes, or 3-4 language classes	Participation graded as per class requirements; written warning
More than 20%	3 content classes, or 5 language classes	Automatic course failure , and possible expulsion

Weekly Schedule

NOTE: This schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to take advantage of current experiential learning opportunities.

Week 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The course begins with a revision of the dominant political ideologies in Europe from the 19th century to our time, a crucial foundation for understanding the political systems to be investigated in detail. The initial overview provides also a general orientation with regard to the variety of constitutions, electoral systems, and political parties in Europe. While concentrating on the contemporary situation of democracies in Europe, some historical aspects will necessarily be included.

Reading:

Heywood, *Politics*, Ch. 2

“Political Ideas and Ideologies”: 27–55.

Week 2 Patterns of Democracy I: Germany

- 2.1 We will examine governmental institutions and policy making within the German polity: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the German parliamentary democracy?

Reading:

Green et al. 2012, *The Politics of the New Germany*, Ch. 5, “Parties and Voters”: 94–114

Due date for submission of first presentation

- 2.2 What is the relationship between political system and civil society? What are general and specific challenges of the future?

Reading:

Heywood, *Politics*, Ch. 15, “Constitutions, Law and Judges”: 331–344;

Hancock et al. 2014, *Politics of Europe*, Parts 3.3 and 3.4: 239–284, 285–298;

- 2.3 Debate meeting with an international journalist; tour of the Bundestag building in preparation (German parliament)

Due date for submission of first homework assignment

Week 3 Patterns of Democracy II: France

3.1 Building on our analysis of the German polity, we will study the semi-presidential political system of France, focusing on similar questions.

Reading:

Drake 2011, *Contemporary France*, Ch. 1, "Histories and Legacies," 8–36 and Ch. 4, "Government, Policy-making and the Republican State," 93–121

3.2 Comparison between Germany and France

Reading:

Hancock et al. 2014, *Politics of Europe*, Part 2.3: 139–165;

Chafer & Godin, *The End of the French Exception*: 17–36

Midterm Exam

Week 4 Patterns of Democracy III: Belgium

4.1 Building on earlier analysis, we will analyze the parliamentary monarchy in Belgium.

Reading:

Deschouwer 2012, *The Politics of Belgium*, 161–184

Deschouwer 2009, *And the peace goes on? Consociational democracy and Belgian politics in the twenty-first century*, 33-49

4.2 We will look at the challenges of political decision making in a federalist state with bipolar and centrifugal forces due to antagonistic ethnic groups.

Reading:

Swenden et. al. 2009, *The Politics of Belgium: Institutions and Policy under Bipolar and Centrifugal Federalism*, 1-13

Spinelli / Reybrouck. 2011 *Is Belgium the test-bench for democracy 2.0?*

Due date for submission of second homework assignment

Week 5 European Democracies in Crisis: The Case of Hungary

5.1 Hungary represents the dramatic case of a transition from a liberal to an illiberal democracy through a “tyranny of the majority”. Our interest will be to analyze the individual steps and phases of this deterioration in a wider context.

Reading:

Olson & Norton 1996, *The New Parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe*: 16–39.

Due date for submission of second presentation

5.2 We will examine what conclusions can be drawn from it for the theory and practice of democracy in Europe.

Reading:

Bozoki 2012

Rauschenberger 2013

5.3 Debate meeting with a representative from the Hungarian Embassy and an expert on Hungarian politics

Due date for submission of third homework assignment

Week 6 Reforming and Strengthening Democracy: Experiments in Theory and Practice

6.1 How relevant and urgent are recurrent warnings about a “crisis of democracy”, the loss of trust in democratic institutions and the inefficiency of their decision-making processes? We will look at reform proposals such as those connected with the concept of “deliberative democracy”, and concrete reform experiments such as the G1000 manifesto in Belgium.

Reading:

Elster 1998, *Deliberative Democracy*: 161–184;

Dryzek 2010, *Foundations and Frontiers of Deliberative Governance*: 1–30;
 G1000. “The manifesto”. <http://www.g1000.org/en/manifesto.php>
 Spinelli & Van Reybrouck 2011

6.2 Concluding Discussion
Due date for submission of final paper

Readings

- Batory, Agnes. *The Politics of EU Accession: Ideology, party strategy and the European question in Hungary*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2008.
- Beyers, Jan, and Peter Bursens. “The European Rescue of the Federal State: How Europeanization shapes the Belgian state”. Eds. Marleen Brans, Lieven de Winter and Wilfried Swenden. *The Politics of Belgium: Institutions and Policy Under Bipolar and Centrifugal Federalism*. West European Politics Series. London and New York: Routledge, 2009. 195–216.
- Bozoki, Andras. “The Crisis of Democracy in Hungary”. *Dossier: Focus on Hungary*. Ed. Heinrich Böll Stiftung. 21-05-2012. <http://www.boell.de/de/node/276334>.
- Chafer, Tony and Emmanuel Godin. eds. *The End of the French Exception? Decline and Revival of the ‘French Model’*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Conradt, David P. and Eric Langenbacher. *The German Polity*. 10th ed. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013.
- Derenne, Benoît et al. “G1000 Manifesto”. *Eurozine* 02-11-2011. <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2011-11-02-G1000-en.pdf>
- Deschouwer, Kris. “And the peace goes on? Consociational democracy and Belgian politics in the twenty-first century”. Eds. Marleen Brans, Lieven de Winter and Wilfried Swenden. *The Politics of Belgium: Institutions and Policy Under Bipolar and Centrifugal Federalism*. West European Politics Series. London and New York: Routledge, 2009. 33–49.
- Deschouwer, Kris. *The Politics of Belgium*. 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Drake, Helen. *Contemporary France*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Dryzek, John S. *Deliberative Democracy and beyond: Liberals, critics and contestations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

- Dryzek, John S. *Foundations and Frontiers of Deliberative Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Elster, Jon, ed. *Deliberative Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Fukuyama, Francis. *Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy*. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2014.
- Green, Simon, et al. *The Politics of the New Germany*. 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Grönlund, Kimmo, Bächtiger, André, and Maija Setälä, eds. *Deliberative Mini-Publics: Involving Citizens in the Democratic Process*. Colchester: ECPR Press, 2014.
- Hancock, Donald M. *Politics in Europe*. 6th ed. Thousand Oaks: CQ Press, 2014.
- Heinrich Böll Stiftung, ed. *Dossier: Focus on Hungary*.
<http://www.boell.de/de/node/279645>
- Heywood, Andrew. *Politics*. 4th ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Magone, José M. *Contemporary European Politics: A Comparative Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 2011. (HB8 Ts 695)
- Novoszádek, Nóra. "Some factual notes on the Fourth Amendment to Hungary's Fundamental Law". *Dossier: Focus on Hungary*. Ed. Heinrich Böll Stiftung. 02-04-2013. <http://www.boell.de/de/node/277184>
- Olson, David M. and Philip Norton, eds. *The New Parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe*. London: Frank Cass, 1996.
- Political Capital and Heinrich Böll Stiftung, ed. *Enthusiastic consumers, non-committed democrats: A study about the relationship of youth to democracy in Hungary*. 13-06-2913.
http://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/pc_boll_en_summary_final_1.pdf
- Rauschenberger, Péter. "The Landscape of the Hungarian 'Democratic Opposition'". *Dossier: Focus on Hungary*. Ed. Heinrich Böll Stiftung. 21-11-2013.
<http://www.boell.de/de/node/280577>
- Rosenberg, Shawn W., ed. *Deliberation, Participation, and Democracy: Can the people govern?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Spinelli, Francesca, and David Van Reybrouck. "Is Belgium the test-bench for democracy 2.0?" *Eurozine* 03-10-2011. <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2011-03-10-vanreybrouck-en.pdf>
- Stevens, Anne. *The Government and Politics of France*. 3rd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.



- Swenden, Wilfried, Brans, Marleen, and Lieven de Winter. "The Politics of Belgium: Institutions and Policy under Bipolar and Centrifugal Federalism". Eds. Marleen Brans, Lieven de Winter and Wilfried Swenden. *The Politics of Belgium: Institutions and Policy Under Bipolar and Centrifugal Federalism*. West European Politics Series. London and New York: Routledge, 2009. 1–13.
- Waters, Sarah. *Between Republic and Market: Globalisation and Identity in Contemporary France*. London and New York: Continuum, 2012.

Online Resources

WZB Rule of Law Center:

<http://www.wzb.eu/en/research/trans-sectoral-research/rule-of-law-center>

The Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University:

<http://cdd.stanford.edu/>

Eurozine (a netmagazine that publishes outstanding articles from more than 80 associated journals partnered in the network by the same name):

<http://www.eurozine.com/>

G1000 Platform for democratic innovation:

<http://www.g1000.org/en/>