GOVERNMENT 1190: THE POLITICS OF EUROPE

Course Time: 11 am-12 pm, Tuesdays/Thursdays
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 1-2 pm (sign up ahead of time appoint.ly on my website: www.danielziblatt.com

Is liberal democracy in crisis in Europe? Until recently, democracy was largely taken for granted in the west at large and in Europe in particular. And many viewed Europe’s experiments with innovative post-national modes of governance (the EU) as the wave of the future. But over the last decade, a political earthquake has shaken the very foundations of politics in Europe. Far right parties have gained ground in many countries. Great Britain has voted to leave the EU (Brexit), and similar movements are growing across Europe, exposing fissures and challenging the democratic legitimacy of the EU and European states.

This course places these current developments in a broader perspective, tracing the evolution of European political systems from their predemocratic origins to the present crises. We begin with an overview of Europe’s distinctive political legacies of feudalism, state-building, absolutism and revolution that provide key background to contemporary Europe. We then trace the difficult rise of democracy in the 19th century and fascism in the 1930s. Next we explore the post-war “rescue” of Europe through the creation of the European Union and postwar European welfare states. We examine the postcommunist experience in eastern Europe. And, finally, we turn to study why populist, anti-immigrant, and Euroskeptic movements and parties have surged across Europe exploring what this means for European democracy today. Throughout we trace the evolution of democracy and its populist authoritarianism critics. We will study a range of countries, including Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the low countries, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe.

After taking this course, students will possess a knowledge of the political currents running through contemporary Europe, providing students with historical and analytical context for understanding contemporary European politics. The course is especially recommended for students who plan to do further work on European politics.

Requirements (and weighting in final grade)

1. Exam #1, (In-Class) Thursday February 22: 20%
2. Exam #2, (Take-Home), Due Tuesday April 3: 30%
3. Final Exam, covering the material from the entire course: 30%
4. Participation in weekly sections: 20%

Readings:

-Most readings are available on course website
Books for purchase:
Gianfranco Poggi, The Development of the Modern State (1978)
Mark Mazower, Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century (1998)

PART I: The Early History of Representative Government in Europe

Week 1: January 23/25: Introduction

1. Introduction
2. The State and the Problem of Order

Max Weber, “Politics as Vocation” from Gerth and Mills Essays in Sociology (1958), 77-83

Week 2: Jan. 30/February 1: Theoretical Foundations and Deep History of Representative Government in Europe

3. Theories and Methods In search of Reality
4. Feudalism as the Modern State’s Precursor in Europe

Daniel Ziblatt, “Why do We Read Barrington Moore?” American Political Science Association Comparative Politics Newsletter 2013


Marc Bloch, “Disorder and the Efforts to Combat It” and “Towards the Reconstruction of States” from Feudal Society, Volume 2, pp. 408-437.

Week 3: February 6/8: The Exit from Feudalism and the Rise of the State, Part I

5. Defining States, Defining Absolutism


Richard Dunn, “Calvinism and Catholicism in Western Europe” and “Political Disintegration in Central and Eastern Europe” in The Age of Religious Wars (1978), pp. 11-102
Week 4: Feb 13/15: The Exit from Feudalism and the Rise of the State, Part II

7. Economic and Military Transformations and the Rise of Absolutism
8. A Fiscal Military Model of the State


Week 5: February 20/22: The Limits of Absolutism: Revolution

9. The Destruction of Absolutism: French and English Revolutions Compared


Alexis de Tocqueville, The Old Regime and the French Revolution, Chapters 9 and 10, pp. 81-108 (1856) [1955]


MIDTERM #1 (in Class): Thursday February 22

PART II: The Rise of Mass Democracy: Settled and Unsettled Paths

Week 6: February 27/March 1: Industrialization and Democratization in Britain

10. Industrialization: The Engine of Democratization?
11. Gradual Democratization in Nineteenth Century Britain

E.J. Hobsbawm, “The Industrial Revolution” (Chapter 2) in The Age of Revolution, pp. 44-73. [Course Reader]


Recommended: Daniel Ziblatt, Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy, Chapters 3, 4 and 5.
Week 7: March 6/8: 1848 Revolutions and Unsettled Democratization: Germany, France, and Beyond

12. The Failed Revolutions of 1848: Napoleon III and the Birth of Populism
13. Bismarck and Germany’s Stalled Democratization

John Merriman, A History of Modern Europe, chapter 16 (“The Revolutions of 1848”)
Gordon Wright, France in Modern Times (5th edition), pp. 123-144 (Chapters 11 and 12)
Daniel Ziblatt, Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy, Chapters 6 and 7

Spring Break March 13/15: No Class

Week 8: March 20/22: Democratic Breakthrough and Breakdown: Weimar Germany

14. World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the Difficult Birth of German Democracy
15. The Collapse of Weimar and the Rise of Nazism

Richard Evans, The Coming of the Third Reich, Chapter 2 and Chapter 4
Recommended: Daniel Ziblatt, Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy, Chapters 8 and 9 (pp. 259-333).

Week 9: March 27/29: Broad Perspectives on Interwar Europe: What is Fascism?

16. What is Fascism?
17. Broader Patterns of Interwar Regime Outcomes: from Belgium to Spain

Nancy Bermeo, Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times, Chapter 2
PART III: Rebuilding European Democracy: An Unfinished Project

Week 10: April 3/5: Rebuilding European Democracy

18. The European Union
19: Taming the Market: The Rise of European Welfare States

Desmond Dinan, Ever Closer Union (Lynne Rienner, 2005), chapter 1.
Mark Mazower, Dark Continent, Chapter 7 and Chapter 9

Week 11: April 10/12: The End of History? 1989 as Turning Point

20: Communism’s Rise and Collapse and Democratization of Eastern Europe
21: Globalization and Dismantling European Welfare States

Mark Mazower, Dark Continent, Chapters 8, 10, and 11.


Week 12: April 17/19: The Resurgence of Authoritarian Populism

22. Populist Backlash in western and eastern Europe
23. Causes? The Eurocrisis, Collapse of Social Democracy, Immigration, Cultural Change, etc.

Cas Mudde, “Europe’s Populist Surge” Foreign Affairs (2016)

“Europe’s Leaders Struggle to Contain Populist Wave” Financial Times (2017)

Yascha Mounk, European Disunion” The New Republic July 19, 2017

Martin Eiermann, The Austrian Election Showed Populists Yet Another Path to Power” The New Statesman October 25, 2017

Sarah Wildman, “Meet the Far Right Party That’s Bringing Racism and Xenophobia Back to Germany” Vox September 26, 2017

April 24: Review/Conclusion