GOVT 334 European Politics

Fall 2019
Tuesdays, 7:20-10:00pm

Peterson Hall 2413
Fairfax Campus

Draft Syllabus

Course Description

European politics are in flux. Traditional political parties are losing support; fringe parties are increasing in number and size; and dissatisfaction with democratic practices and institutions is high. In Europe, populism takes the form of discontent not only with national political establishments, but also with the European Union (EU), to which most European countries belong. Indeed, in the case of EU members, the study of national political institutional and systems is inseparable from the study of EU institutions, politics, policies. Accordingly, this course will approach the study of European politics by looking at the interconnection between the EU and national levels of government and systems of governance. This requires learning about the EU: what it is, why it exists, and how it works.

Because so much seems to be happening in Europe right now, the course will use current affairs as a hook to discuss fundamental developments in European politics. Events drive politics: sometimes those events are expected; sometimes not. We will discuss unexpected events, such as possible general elections in the UK and in Italy, as and if they arise. We will discuss expected events, such as the hearings in the European Parliament of the European Commissioners-designate, when they happen. Topics in the course include the rise of populism and Euroskepticism; recent national and European Parliament elections; Brexit; the new European Commission; the migration crisis; and efforts to strengthen economic an monetary union.

Instructor
Professor Desmond Dinan
Ad personam Jean Monnet Chair, Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University

Visiting European Parliament Fellow
Mr. Ryan Meilak
Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University, and European Parliament, Brussels

Office Hours
Tuesdays 4:00-7:00pm, Research Hall Room 359 (the open area in the Schar School office suite), or by appointment at other times on the Arlington campus.
Readings
There is no textbook for this course. Instead, there will be specific readings—such as journal, magazine and newspaper articles; official documents, and speeches—for each class session. These will be e-mailed to students in advance. Students should read the material before class, and be prepared for a lively discussion. In addition, students should read Joseph Stiglitz, The Euro: How a Common Currency Threatens the Future of Europe (W. W. Norton, 2016), both for the class discussion of Economic and Monetary Union and for one of the assignments (the book review).

Learning Outcomes
Knowledge of European political issues, institutions, and policies
Knowledge of the European Union
Ability to write a book review and a short policy paper

Assignments
1. Review of Stiglitz, The Euro (20% of course grade)
   a. Deadline: October 8
2. Short policy paper on an aspect of European politics, chosen by the student in consultation with the instructor (20% of course grade)
   a. Deadline to agree on topic: September 24
   b. Deadline to submit paper: November 26
3. Final exam (60%)

Background Reading
Students should keep up-to-date with European politics. The following sources are useful for that purpose:
Politico (Europe): https://www.politico.eu
Financial Times: https://www.ft.com
Spiegel Online: http://www.spiegel.de/international/
The Economist: https://www.economist.com
EurActiv, https://www.euractiv.com
Social Europe, http://www.socialeurope.eu/
Strategic Europe (Carnegie Endowment), http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/
VoteWatch Europe: http://www.votewatch.eu
EUROPP (European Politics and Policy, LSE): http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europppblog/
Project Syndicate: https://www.project-syndicate.org

Class Schedule
Session 1, August 27
Introduction: Politics in Europe Today: Actors, Issues, and Institutions; Multi-Level Governance
Background Reading:
Paul Krugman, “The world has a Germany problem,” NYT, August 19, 2019:

“Italy’s Prime Minister Conte resigns,” Economist, 20 August 2019:

Tony Barber, “Democracies need renewal,” FT, August 19, 2019:
https://www.ft.com/content/300881a0-c031-11e9-89e2-41e555e96722

“EU rejects Boris Johnson’s request to remove backstop,” Guardian, 20 October 2019:

Session 2, September 3

The EU: What it is; why it exists; and how it developed

Background Reading:
[Will be e-mailed to students]

Finland’s Presidency of the Council of the EU: https://eu2019.fi/en/frontpage

European Council 20-21 June 2019:

European Council: A New Strategic Agenda, 2019-2024:

Session 3, September 10

EU Institutions, Governance, and Policies
Readings will be e-mailed to students

Session 4, September 17

EU Institutions, Governance, and Policies (continued)
Readings will be e-mailed to students
[Discussion of the European Parliament plenary session, September 16-19]

Session 5, September 24

Brexit: Why is the UK leaving the EU? Why is the process so messy? What are the implications for UK politics and constitutional affairs?
Readings will be e-mailed to students
Deadline to agree on policy paper topic

Session 6, October 1

Elections, Political Parties, Parliaments, and Governments
Readings will be e-mailed to students
[Discussion of the European Parliament hearings on the European Commissioners-designate, September 30-October 8]
Session 7, October 8
*Europe’s Political Economy: The Single Market, Economic and Monetary Union; the Euro Crisis*
Readings: Stiglitz, *The Euro*
Other readings will be e-mailed to students
*Deadline for review of Stiglitz, The Euro*
[Discussion of the European Parliament hearings on the European Commissioners-designate, September 30-October 8]

[Note: There is no class on October 15]

Session 8, October 22
*The European Parliament: elections; structure and organization; roles and responsibilities*
Guest Presenter: Mr. Ryan Meilak, Visiting European Parliament Fellow
Readings will be e-mailed to students
[Discussion of the European Council meeting, October 17-18]

Session 9, October 29
*Migration and European Politics*
Readings will be e-mailed to students
[Discussion of the European Parliament plenary session, October 21-24, including the EP’s vote, on October 23, on the College of the European Commission]

Session 10, November 5
*France and Germany: National Politics and EU Leadership*
Readings will be e-mailed to students
[Discussion of Brexit, which is expected to happen on October 31]

Session 11, November 12
*Regionalism and Separatism*
Readings will be e-mailed to students

Session 12, November 19
*The Western Balkans and EU Enlargement Policy*
Readings will be e-mailed to students
[Discussion of the European Parliament plenary session, November 13-14]

Session 13, November 26
*Foreign, Security, and Defense Policy*
Readings will be e-mailed to students
*Deadline for policy paper*

Session 14, December 3
*Conclusion*
Readings will be e-mailed to students
[Discussion of the European Parliament plenary session, November 25-28]

Final Exam: December 17

University Policies:

**Academic Integrity**: Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask the instructor for guidance and clarification.

**Disability**: If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; http://ods.gmu.edu) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) speak to your instructor about your accommodation needs.