

SMU
Political Science 3340
Spring 2008 (9:30-10:50 AM TTh)
Course website: <http://faculty.smu.edu/jhollifi>

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Western European Politics and Government

Content and Structure

This course is designed to introduce students to the major political and social features of contemporary Britain, France, Germany, and the European Union. The goals of the course are to understand and explain how politics differs and how it is similar in these major European states and the EU. Improving our knowledge of politics and government in societies other than our own will enable us better to understand the political world in which we live, its roots, its tensions, and its prospects.

The course assumes little prior knowledge of European history or politics. For this reason the course begins with a discussion of some of the key concepts and approaches to the study of politics. The introduction, which emphasizes modern political systems, is very important, because the discussion of individual countries flows from it.

After the introduction, we shall move quickly into a study of the politics and governments of three major European democracies and the European Union. Each case study will be preceded by a review of the country's political and social history, which may take us back as far as the Enlightenment. These reviews are crucial to our understanding of government and politics in twentieth-century Europe. How could one expect to understand American Politics and Government without some knowledge of the Revolution, the Founding, and the Civil War?

The overall goal of the course is to familiarize students with the development of democracy in Western Europe. At the end of the course you should be able to explain, for example, why Britain developed the first stable, parliamentary regime; why democracy broke down leading to fascism in Germany; why France has been plagued by political instability; and why Europeans have struggled since 1945 to unify the continent into a single market and currency area. By seeking answers to these and other questions, you will be in a better position to evaluate the performance of democratic institutions and to understand the problems that similar societies, including your own, must face.

Readings

Most of the books for the course will be available for purchase at local bookstores. All of the readings, including those for purchase, have been placed on reserve in Fondren Library. Four books are listed as required reading, meaning that the bookstores have ordered enough copies for every member of the class:

Samuel Beer, Modern British Politics (Introduction and chapters 1-3, available at <http://faculty.smu.edu/jhollifi>)

David P. Conradt, The German Polity

Philip Norton, The British Polity

William Safran, The French Polity

David Wood and Birol Yeşilada, The Emerging European Union

I have listed as **reserve reading**:

Samuel Beer, Modern British Politics, also listed under the title British Politics in the Collectivist Age

Robert Dahl, Modern Political Analysis, selected chapters.

Samuel Beer, "The Roots of New Labour: Liberalism Revisited," *The Economist*, February 7th 1998, also available at <http://faculty.smu.edu/jhollifi>.

Ralf Dahrendorf, Society and Democracy in Germany, selected chapters.

James F. Hollifield and George Ross, eds., Searching for the New France

It has been my experience that learning about politics and government in Europe is more enjoyable for students who follow current political developments in the country under study. For this reason, I suggest a steady diet of European news. Two British publications which have excellent coverage of European politics are the daily *Financial Times* or *The Economist*, which is a weekly magazine. If anyone would like to have information about either of these publications, I shall be happy to provide it. The current issues are available in the periodicals room of Fondren Library, and you also can read them on the web. Finally, for those who would like to hone their language skills, and at the same time follow developments in Europe, the Library carries several of the European dailies, including *Le Monde*, *Corriere della Serra*, *El País*, and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*. These and others are available on the internet.

Format and Grading

This is primarily a lecture course, although class participation will be encouraged and rewarded. Students should come to class prepared for weekly quizzes on the lectures and readings.

In addition to the quizzes, we shall have two formal examinations: an hour-long mid-term and a three-hour final. The exams will consist of multiple choice and short-answer questions, drawn from the readings and lecture materials. **Class attendance is very important, because the lectures will not simply recapitulate the reading materials.**

You also will be asked to write a short essay (10 pages). The topics for the essay will be given to you several weeks in advance. No make-ups will be given for the quizzes, however students may request a make-up for the mid-term or final exam, if they have a legitimate excuse. **A hard copy of the essay must be submitted by the student in person in class on the due date. Submissions by e-mail will not be accepted and late papers will be assessed a ten-point penalty (one letter grade) for each day they are late.** The overall course grade will be calculated as follows:

1) Quizzes and class participation	20 percent
2) Mid-term exam	20 percent
3) Short essay	20 percent
4) Final exam	40 percent

Outline of Topics and Readings*

I. **Politics and government: what are they?** *Week 1*

A. What is politics?

Dahl, Modern Political Analysis (MPA), chapter entitled “What is Politics” (on reserve)

B. Why compare, or are some forms of government "better" than others?

Dahl, MPA, chapter entitled “Political Systems: Differences”

C. Transitions to Democracy in Europe.

Beer, Modern British Politics (hereafter MBP), Introduction

II. **Politics and government in Great Britain: the modernity of tradition.**

Weeks 2-5

A. The origins of parliamentary government.

Norton, The British Polity (BP), Chapter 1, 3
Beer, MBP, Chapters 1-2

B. A political culture of gradualism?

Beer, MBP, Chapter 3
Norton, BP, Chapter 2

C. Pluralist politics in the two-party system.

Norton, BP, Chapters 4-7

D. Cabinet government and policymaking: yes Minister?

Norton, BP, Chapters 8-12
A short film from the BBC series *Yes Minister* will be shown in class

E. Whatever happened to Disraelian conservatism and Fabian socialism?

Norton, BP, Chapters 13, 16
Samuel Beer, “The Roots of New Labour: Liberalism Revisited”

*Note that lecture outlines are available at <http://faculty.smu.edu/jhollifi>

(mid-term exam, tentatively scheduled for February 21st)

III. Politics and government in France: The "One and Indivisible Republic?"

Weeks 5-7

A. The Republican synthesis.

Safran, The French Polity (FP), Chapters 1-2

B. Breaking the stalemate society.

Hollifield and Ross, Searching for the New France (hereafter SNF),
Conclusion
Safran, FP, Chapter 3

C. The Fifth Republic: parliamentary or presidential?

Safran, FP, Chapters 6-9
Hollifield and Ross, SNF, Chapter 2
Screening of The Battle of Algiers

D. The two-block party system and group politics.

Safran, FP, Chapters, 4-5

E. Janus and Marianne.

Hollifield and Ross, SNF, Intro
Safran, FP, Chapter 10

IV. Politics and government in Germany: from fascism to liberal democracy.

Weeks 8-10

A. The German Question.

Dahrendorf, Society and Democracy in Germany, Chapters 1 and 3 (on
reserve)
Conradt, The German Polity (GP), Chapter 1

B. The *Rechtsstaat* and the culture of conformity.

Conradt, GP, Chapters 3-4
Dahrendorf, Society and Democracy in Germany, Chapter 25 (on reserve)
Screening of the film Cabaret

C. The Basic Law, the Bonn and the Berlin Republics.

Conradt, GP, Chapters 7-9

D. Parties, groups, and the civic culture.

Conradt, GP, Chapters 5-6

E. The wall after The Wall: the Berlin Republic and the politics of unification.

Conradt, GP, Chapter 2

(paper is due Thursday, April 17, no exceptions!)

VI. Conclusion: the European Union or a "United States of Europe?"

Weeks 11-13

A. The Treaty of Rome and the founding of the European Economic Community.

Wood and Yeşilada, The Emerging European Union (EEU), Chapter 1-4.

B. Maastricht and EMU and the debate over CAP

Wood and Yeşilada, EEU, Chapters 5-8

C. Broadening or Deepening: Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals?

Wood and Yeşilada, EEU, Chapters 10-12

D. The Democratic Deficit.

Wood and Yeşilada, EEU, Conclusion

(Final Exam, Wednesday, May 7th, 8:00 – 11:00 AM)