

European Comparative Politics and Society

Winter term 2025/26

JTM 750

Lecturers: Prof. PhDr. Lenka Rovná, CSc.,
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Office hours:

LR: Tuesday 9:00 – 9:30 and 11:00 – 12:30 or according to the agreement

U Kříže 8, Praha 5 – Jinonice, room C325

IŠ: Wednesday 10:00-11:00

U Kříže 8, Praha 5 – Jinonice, room C325

Course Description:

The course European Comparative Politics and Society will analyze the pursuit of democracy in Europe. Methodologically, it relies on rigorous comparative analysis and up-to-date empirical data. Similarities and differences will be examined. Concepts of multilevel governance will be utilized, and the nation-state, subnational, and supranational levels will be studied. Actors from the state, market, and society will be considered. Firstly, the conception of Europe will be explored from its historical perspective and various perceptions: territorial, political, spiritual, cultural, and more. Secondly, the defining social cleavages of Europe will be introduced: territorial, economic, religious, national, ethnic, and others.

Furthermore, we will discuss how these cleavages are expressed in the formation of different social interests and their role in organizing interest groups, political parties, and NGOs. We will debate contemporary challenges and explore new approaches. Thirdly, turning to the institutional structures of European parliamentary democracies, we will examine the existence of political party systems, as well as the executive and legislative powers represented by the government and parliament. Fourthly, we will examine the rules and outcomes of various electoral systems, which ensure the regular rotation of political elites in power based on differing principles. Finally, we will assess the enrichment of classical government models in Europe, which, over the last 30 years, have been supplemented by additional players participating in decision-making processes at various levels (local, regional, national, and European) – leading to a new political conceptualization of ‘governance.’ Additionally, while European states remain core units of European integration, the EU influences them, leading to their Europeanization. We will discuss the new challenges facing Europe, including the influence of the American presidency on the continent, current developments in the EU, the ongoing war in Ukraine, populism, immigration, (de)globalization, regionalization, and identity issues.

Primarily political science approach to the topic used by Prof. Lenka Rovná (LR) is supplemented by three legal science excursions into national and European political and constitutional systems presented by Prof. Ivo Šlosarčík (IŠ).

Every student will be responsible for:

1) Class Participation, Group Presentations (in classes taught by LR)

In-class presentation shall test students' orientation within the problems discussed as well as their flexibility to formulate arguments related to specific sub-topics of the researched area. Within in-class presentations, groups of students (per four to five students) will, based on the designated readings and five sub-topics sent by the lecturer before each class, prepare an introduction to the sub-topic, including questions for future discussion. Other students shall take an active part in the classwork. During the contributions, students will show an understanding of the topic, form their position, create arguments, and defend the given position. Other students will be involved in the debates, posing questions or presenting their arguments.

Two unexcused absences can be tolerated.

2) Final paper (January 15 at 24:00)

Each student will write a research paper (2500 words excl. references) in essay form, on one of the following topics:

1. The Impact of EU Integration on National Sovereignty: A Comparative Analysis
2. Rule of Law in the European States and the EU
3. Populism and Its Rise in Eastern versus Western Europe
4. The Influence of Historical Legacies on Political Institutions in Central and Eastern Europe
5. European Political Parties and Electoral Systems: A Comparative Perspective
6. The Effectiveness of Democratic Consolidation in New European Democracies
7. The Role of Regionalism and National Identity in European Politics

Each student will write a paper based on readings and their research. The essay will contain an introduction with a thesis statement, background, a description, and an analysis of the literature and sources used. In the conclusion, a summary and closing statement will be presented.

Detailed instructions can be discussed during the class. Students are encouraged to consult the selected topics with the lecturer.

Quotations and the complete list of sources are compulsory. The paper will be sent electronically via Moodle using Turnitin.

Requirements for the class:

Paper (10 pages)

70%

Oral presentations and participation in the debates
during each class, in the groups, and the class 30%

Structure of lectures:

September 30 (LR)

Introduction

What is Europe? Perception of Europe, European values, a continent in the making, in Tim Bale, European Politics, A Comparative Introduction, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2005, pp. 1 – 31

October 7 (LR)

The Nation-State and Democracy in Europe

Daniel Caramani, Comparative Politics, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2020, pp. 69 – 102
Catherine E.de Vries, Sara B. Hobolt, Sven-Olivier Proksch, Jonathan B. Slapin, Foundation of European Politics, A Comparative Approach, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2021, pp. 19 – 31.

October 14

Forum 2000

October 21 (LR)

Cleavages in Europe, religious, ethnic, economic, social, and ..., in: Jan Eric Lane and Svante Ersson, Politics and Society in Western Europe, Sage Publications, London, 1999, pp. 37 – 75
Daniel Caramani, Comparative Politics, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2020, pp. 231 - 251
Political Parties, history, typology, and specifics in Europe, in: Jan Eric Lane and Svante Ersson, Politics and Society in Western Europe, Sage Publications, London, 1999, pp. 76 – 108

October 28 State Holidays

LR: The elections in the Czech Republic and their aftermath.

The exact timing will be specified.

November 4 (LR)

Elections and Electoral systems, Current elections, Formation of the Parliament, in: Michael Gallagher, Michael Laver, Peter Mair, Representative Government in Modern Europe, Institutions, parties and Governments, Boston, McGraw Hill, 4th edition, 2005, pp. 340-380
in: Edited by Paul Heywood, Erik Jones and Martin Rhodes, Developments in West European Politics 2, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2002, pp. 94 – 114.
Daniel Caramani, Comparative Politics, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2020, pp. 178 - 192
Catherine E.de Vries, Sara B. Hobolt, Sven-Olivier Proksch, Jonathan B. Slapin, Foundation of European Politics, A Comparative Approach, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2021, pp. 89 – 111

November 11 (IŠ)

Do You Want to Build a ~~Snowman~~ Constitution? Constitution Making and Constitution Engineering. Reading: Kosař – Vyhnálek: Constitution of Czechia - Contextual Analysis (Hart 2021), chapters 2 and 3.

November 18 (LR)

Politics outside Parliament, in: Michael Gallagher, Michael Laver, Peter Mair, Representative Government in Modern Europe, Institutions, parties and Governments, Boston, McGraw Hill, 4th edition, 2005, pp. 441-461

Daniel Caramani, Comparative Politics, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2020, pp. 252 - 266

Catherine E.de Vries, Sara B. Hobolt, Sven-Olivier Proksch, Jonathan B. Slapin, Foundation of European Politics, A Comparative Approach, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2021, pp. 203 - 205

November 25 (LR)

From Government to governance, Multilevel Governance in: Edited by Paul Heywood, Erik Jones and Martin Rhodes, Developments in West European Politics 2, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2002, pp. 151 – 183 and 201 – 220.

Daniel Caramani, Comparative Politics, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2020, pp. 267 – 280, 193 - 210

Catherine E.de Vries, Sara B. Hobolt, Sven-Olivier Proksch, Jonathan B. Slapin, Foundation of European Politics, A Comparative Approach, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2021, pp. 32 - 51

December 2

Brussels Field Trip

December 9 (IŠ)

Constitutionalizing the EU and Member States' Response: Cooperation, Complaints, Revolt. Bradley - Judicial Reform and EU Court (Evolution of EU Law 2021), Guastafero. Sincere Co-operation and Respect for National Identities (In Oxford Principles of the EU Law, OPU 2018) pp.350-382

December 16 (IŠ)

Democratic Backsliding in EU States: Not Only Poland and Hungary (illiberal revolutions in PL / HU / SK and the EU reaction: from article 7 TEU procedure to financial conditionality) Readings: Sadurski - Poland's Constitutional Breakdown (OPU 2019), chapters 3 + 4, Pech - Rule of Law (Evolution of EU Law, OUP 2021), Krastev - Holmes: The Light that Failed (Pegasus Books 2020), chapter 1 - "Copycat mind")