

Comparative Western European Party Systems: Continuity and Change

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Introduction to the course

- **Changes in party systems across Western Europe (WE) have fostered pressuring challenges to democracy**, specially in the last two decades:
 - ▶ Traditional parties have lost fuel (sometimes shockingly, e.g., Italy 2013, France 2017) and the results of elections are becoming harder to predict
 - ▶ Radical parties from the left, but specially from the right, have become mainstream actors in many national parliaments, polarizing the public debate
 - ▶ The large number and variety of parties in parliament complicates the formation of government (e.g., Germany 2017, Belgium 2019-20) and anticipated elections due to broken coalitions are a permanent risk (e.g., Spain 2019)
- **What have provoked these changes? Do they affect all Europe equally? If not, what does explain this variation?**
- **This seminar intends to** provide students with conceptual and empirical tools to **answer these questions** with methodological rigour and from a critical perspective

Course organization

- The course is designed to review the main political theories of party system formation and change in Europe with empirical applications following a (quasi-)chronological logic
- It is organized as a **four-days intensive seminar** divided in two weekend blocks:
 - ➊ **The first block consists of a review of European party systems, focusing on their main changes from the 1960s until now.** We will depart from the origins of major political conflicts across WE to later analyse the impact of consecutive 'transformation waves' on their current shape
 - ➋ **The second block discusses the most relevant demand and supply factors provided by the literature to explain party-system change,** from the formation of new social classes or the effect of immigration to the role of issue politicization by new challenger parties on altering the preferences of the electorate
 - ➌ **Additionally, up to 4 sessions of the second block will be dedicated to the students' presentations**

Requirements and evaluation

To obtain the credits (pass), students are expected to:

- Attend at least 80% of the classes
- Actively engage during class activities
- Complete all the mandatory readings (one per session)
- Select one reading for each weekend (two in total) and write a short response paper (300-500 words) to them
- Prepare a class presentation (30-35 min.) for the second weekend (in group or individually depending on the number of registered students)

The goal here is to generate **dynamic** interactions during the **seminar**, not to give an unidirectional lecture, so I encourage active engagement in class

Additional information

About the course:

- Detailed information about the course can be found in the [syllabus](#)
- You can also explore the [website of the course](#), where I regularly update the content
- And of course, do not hesitate to contact me at alvaro.canalejo@eui.eu if you have any additional questions or doubts

About the professor:

- My name is Álvaro Canalejo-Molero and I am a political scientist from Córdoba, Spain
- Currently, I am a PhD researcher at the European University Institute, in Florence
- You can find more information about me, my research interests and ongoing research at [my website](#)

And that's all! **I am looking forward to meeting many of you!**