

POLS 322/500 Western European Government and Politics

Texas A&M University

Instructor:	Francesco Bromo	Meeting Times:	T/R 15:05-16:20
Email:	bromofra@tamu.edu	Class Location:	ALLN 1016
Office Hours:	M 10:00-12:00	Term:	Fall 2023
Office Location:	ALLN 3108	Credit Hours:	3

Course Overview

This course offers an overview of the political institutions and ideas of “Western” European democracies. We will examine patterns and particulars of Western Europe’s governance structures through theoretical and data-driven perspectives. We will discuss and evaluate the causes and consequences of variation in institutional features and development in the region. We will do so by considering relevant comparative political, historical, cultural, and economic contexts. Meeting times are **Tuesday** (T) and **Thursday** (R) **15:05 to 16:20** in [ALLN](#) 1016. Office hours are Monday (M) 10:00 to 12:00 in [ALLN](#) 3108 or by appointment (via Zoom).

Course Prerequisites

POLS 206 or approval of department head.

Student Learning Outcomes

Texas A&M University has identified several [student learning outcomes](#) that describe our institutional commitment to educational goals, including the ability to **demonstrate critical thinking, communicate effectively, demonstrate social, cultural, and global competence**, and **work collaboratively**. The goal of this class in particular is to hone the following outcomes:

- Make reasoned assessments of the main political debates and issues that pertain to Western Europe
- Identify the key characteristics of political systems in Western Europe and their consequences for everyday politics
- Use political science theories to explain similarities and differences in the political environment across Western European countries as well as similarities and differences between Western European institutions and American institutions

Required Texts

There are no required textbooks. All required readings will be made available through Canvas. Lecture slides will be made available through Canvas before each class.

Course Requirements

Students must complete all required readings and be ready to talk about them before each class. Discussion in class will take place in a friendly *but academic* environment.

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and complete all assignments. Attendance is not mandatory and you will not be graded for it, however, I will take attendance for the purpose of grading participation. You can be excused for the reasons stated in [Student Rule 7](#), or other reasons deemed appropriate by the instructor. “Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor” ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)). Please note that “the instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence” ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)).

The final grade will account for:

- **Participation (10% of final grade).** In-class discussion will be a crucial part of this course. Participation *means* engaging with the readings and topics discussed in class, including asking clarifying questions. Participation *does not mean* trying to dominate the conversation or impress the audience, discrediting other people’s ideas in a non-constructive manner, or voicing uninformed opinions.
- **Weekly talking points (20% of final grade).** Each week, starting from week 3, you will be asked to submit one short “talking” or “discussion” point engaging with the assigned readings or material. You can pick one specific reading, or make a broader point about the topic covered that week. **Talking points must be submitted on Canvas by 23:59 every Wednesday.** These points are critical for me to track and assess your understanding of the material and progress throughout the course. Each point must not exceed 200 words. Remember: quantity is not necessarily quality. You can touch upon *most* aspects of the readings or material, as long as you do so critically, that is, do not simply summarize what you read. Examples of questions you might consider include: (1) What is the explanation or concept proposed by the author(s) and why is it important? (2) What contributions do you think a piece makes to the literature and our understanding of a particular topic? (3) Is the evidence provided by the author(s) or method of analysis convincing? (4) Are there alternative explanations or factors that might affect the findings presented by the author(s)? (5) Are there any fallacies in the theory or explanation and, if so, how would you fix them?
- **Discussion leadership (25% of final grade).** You will be randomly divided into groups. Each group will lead two class discussions of the assigned material for 30 minutes, starting from week 3. The group must prepare a one-page document (maximum 500 words) for the class discussion of the day. Each group must designate one member responsible for sending the document to the instructor via email (bromofra@tamu.edu) **by 15:05 on Monday** (Tuesday lecture) and **by 15:05 on Wednesday** (Thursday lecture). Make sure you (1) use your official TAMU email address and (2) CC your teammates. The team will receive a single grade for this assignment. To ensure equal work by team members, each member will evaluate each other members’ contributions to the project (sending these evaluations to me via e-mail on the day the paper is due). If a majority of your teammates do not grade your effort an A, you personally will receive a grade 1 letter lower on the paper.
- **Midterm exam (20% of final grade).** Closed-book, closed-note **in class** midterm exam. Multiple choice and/or short open-ended questions.
- **Final exam (25% of final grade).** Closed-book, closed-note **in class** final exam. Multiple choice and/or short open-ended questions.

Without a university-excused absence, there will be no make-up exams. It is your responsibility to inform me of any university-excused absences or university-approved accommodations.

Grading Policy

Grades are assigned based on final averages as follows:

A = 100 – 89.5

B = 89.4 – 79.5

C = 79.4 – 69.5

D = 69.4 – 59.5

F = below 59.4

There are no individual extra credit assignments in this course.

Late Work Policy

Talking points submitted after the deadline (23:59 on Wednesday) will not be graded unless you were granted an extension *prior to* the deadline or have an excused absence. I will deduct 5 percentage points for discussion leadership summaries turned in after the deadline (15:05 on Monday/Thursday).

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in [Student Rule 7](#), or other reasons deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)).

"The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See [Student Rule 24](#)).

Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1

- **August 22: Course Introduction**
 - Read the syllabus
- **August 24: Europe**
 - [What is Europe?](#)
 - [Who are Europeans?](#)
 - Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEyY40vY3AM> (Source: TLDR News EU)
 - Recommended: Watch [Deutschland 83](#), Season 1, Episodes 1-2 (Hulu)

Week 2

- **August 29**
 - American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, no class
- **August 31**
 - American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, no class

Week 3

- **September 5: The Origins and Principles of Representative Government**
 - Stasavage, David. 2016. "Representation and Consent: Why They Arose in Europe and Not Elsewhere." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19(1): 145-162.
 - Manin, Bernard. 1997. *The Principles of Representative Government*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pages 1-7.
- **September 7: The Rise of Parliamentary Democracy in Europe**
 - Berman, Sheri. 2007. "How Democracies Emerge: Lessons from Europe." *Journal of Democracy* 18(1): 28-41.
 - Cheibub, José A. and Bjørn E. Rasch. 2022. "Constitutional Parliamentarism in Europe, 1800-2019." *West European Politics* 45(3): 470-501.

Week 4

- **September 12: Parliamentary Systems I**
 - Strøm, Kaare. 2000. "Delegation and Accountability in Parliamentary Democracies." *European Journal of Political Research* 37(3): 261-289.
 - Gerring, John, Strom C. Thacker and Carola Moreno. 2009. "Are Parliamentary Systems Better?" *Comparative Political Studies* 42(3): 327-359.
- **September 14: Parliamentary Systems II**
 - Siaroff, Alan. 2003. "Varieties of Parliamentarianism in the Advanced Industrial Democracies." *International Political Science Review* 24(4): 445-464.
 - Louwerse, Tom. 2014. "Unpacking 'Positive' and 'Negative' Parliamentarism." Paper presented at the workshop "The Evolution of Parliamentarism and Its Political Consequences," Joint Sessions of Workshops of the European Consortium of Political Research, Salamanca, Spain, April 10-15, 2014.

Week 5

- **September 19: Western European Presidents and Semi-Presidentialism**
 - Elgie, Robert. 1999. *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pages. 1-21.

- **September 21: Legislatures and Executive Prerogatives**

- Laver, Michael. 2008. “Legislatures and Parliaments in Comparative Context.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, ed. Donald A. Wittman and Barry R. Weingast. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 121–140.
- [French Constitution \(1958\)](#)
 - Title II, Articles 5, 6, 8, 12
 - Title III, Articles 20, 21
 - Title V, Articles 49, 50
- [German Constitution \(1949\)](#)
 - VI, Articles 63, 64, 67, 68
- Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cCEzA66qZw> (Source: France 24)

Week 6

- **September 26: Election Timing**

- Schleiter, Petra and Margit Tavits. 2016. “The Electoral Benefits of Opportunistic Election Timing.” *The Journal of Politics* 78(3): 836-850.
- Watch: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjSdXAnso_4 (Source: Sky News)

- **September 28: Electoral Systems**

- Lijphart, Arend. 1994. *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, 1945-1990*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pages 10-56.

Week 7

- **October 3: Cabinet Formation**

- Golder, Sona. 2015. “Government Formation and Cabinets.” In *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Robert A. Scott, Stephen M. Kosslyn, Marlis Buchmann. John Wiley & Sons.
- Recommended: Watch [Borgen](#), Season 1, Episodes 1-2 (Netflix)

- **October 5: Coalitions**

- Bergman, Torbjörn, Hanna Bäck and Johan Hellström. 2021. *Coalition Governance in Western Europe*. Pages 1-40.

Week 8

- **October 10**

- Fall break, no class

- **October 12**

- **MIDTERM**

Week 9**• October 17: Minority Governments**

- Field, Bonnie N. and Shane Martin. 2022. *Minority Governments in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pages 3-18.

• October 19: Non-Partisan Governments and Caretaker Periods

- McDonnell, Duncan and Marco Valbruzzi. 2014. “Defining and Classifying Technocratic-Led and Technocratic Governments.” *European Journal of Political Science* 53(4): 654-671.

Week 10**• October 24: Cabinet Durability and Termination**

- Grofman, Bernard and Peter van Roozendaal. 1997. “Modelling Cabinet Durability and Termination.” *British Journal of Political Science* 27(3): 419-451.

• October 26: The Opposition

- Williams, Laron K. 2011. “Unsuccessful Success? Failed No-Confidence Motions, Competence Signals, and Electoral Support.” *Comparative Political Studies* 44(11): 1474-1499.
- Tuttnauer, Or and Simone Wegmann. 2022. “Voting for Votes: Opposition Parties’ Legislative Activity and Electoral Outcomes.” *American Political Science Review* 116(4): 1357–1374.

Week 11**• October 31: Party Systems**

- Mair, Peter. 2013. *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracies*. London/New York: Verso. Chapter 2.
- Wagner, Markus and Thomas M. Meyer. 2017. “The Radical Right as Niche Parties? The Ideological Landscape of Party Systems in Western Europe, 1980–2014.” *Political Studies* 65(1): 84–107.

• November 2: Social Movements and Participation

- Koopmans, Ruud. 1996. “New Social Movements and Changes in Political Participation in Western Europe.” *West European Politics* 19(1): 28-50.
- Hutter, Swen and Rens Vliegthart. 2018. “Who Responds to Protest? Protest Politics and Party Responsiveness in Western Europe.” *Party Politics* 24(4): 358-369.

Week 12**• November 7: Referendums**

- Qvortrup, Matt. 2014. *Referendums Around the World*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Pages 1-16 and 43-64.

• November 9: Judicial Review

- Holland, Kenneth M. 2000. “Judicial Activism in Western Europe.” In *Handbook of Global Legal Policy*, ed. Stuart Nagel. New York: Routledge. Pp. 179-208.

Week 13

- **November 14: Federalism and Regionalism**

- Swenden, Wilfried. 2006. *Federalism and Regionalism in Western Europe: A Comparative and Thematic Analysis*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Pages 6-47.

- **November 16: The European Union**

- Pollack, Mark. A. 2005. "Theorizing the European Union: International Organization, Domestic Polity, or Experiment in New Governance?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 8(1): 357-398.
- [The European Union: A Guide for Americans](#).

Week 14

- **November 21**

- Review

- **November 23**

- Thanksgiving Holiday, no class

Week 15

- **November 28: Identity Politics, Populism, and Brexit**

- Noury, Abdul and Gerard Roland. 2020. "Identity Politics and Populism in Europe." *Annual Review of Political Science* 23(1): 421-439.
- Hobolt, Sara B. 2016. "The Brexit Vote: A Divided Nation, a Divided Continent." *Journal of European Public Policy* 23(9): 1259-1277.

- **November 30: Contemporary Western European Politics**

- Ford, Robert and Will Jennings. 2020. "The Changing Cleavage Politics of Western Europe." *Annual Review of Political Science* 23(1): 295-314.

Week 16

- **December 5**

- Reading week, no class

- **December 7**

- Reading week, no class

Week 17

- **December 12**

- **FINAL 13:00-15:00**

Classroom Conduct

In this course, each voice in the classroom has something of value to contribute to all discussions. Everyone is expected to respect the different experiences, beliefs, and values expressed by fellow students and the instructor and will engage in reasoned discussion that refrains from derogatory comments about other people, cultures, groups, or viewpoints.

Americans With Disabilities (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below). Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability-related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

Disability Resources is located in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit <https://disability.tamu.edu/>.

Title IX and Statement on Limits of Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions:

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University's goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [Counseling & Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#).

You can learn more about reporting and the investigation process at: <https://titleix.tamu.edu/>.

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student's academic success and overall well-being. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care by

utilizing available resources and services on your campus.

Students who need someone to talk to can contact [Counseling & Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) or call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>.

Academic Integrity

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

“Texas AM University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one’s work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case” ([Honor System Rules, 20.1.2.3](#)).

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. “Misconduct in research or scholarship includes fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data” ([Honor System Rules, 20.1.2.3](#)). The Aggie Honor System Office defines cheating and plagiarism as:

- **Cheating:** “Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices or materials in any academic exercise. Unauthorized materials may include anything or anyone that gives a student assistance and has not been specifically approved in advance by the instructor” ([Honor System Rules, 20.1.2.3.1](#)).
- **Plagiarism:** “The appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit” ([Honor System Rules, 20.1.2.3.5](#)).

AI text generators (e.g., ChatGPT) should not be used for any work for this class. The use of AI text generators in this manner could be considered cheating and plagiarism according to the [Honor System Rules](#).

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at <https://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/>.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records by limiting access to these records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their educational records and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through informal and formal hearings. Currently enrolled students wishing to withhold any or all directory information items may do so by going to howdy.tamu.edu and clicking on the “Directory Hold Information” link in the Student Records channel on the MyRecord tab. The complete [FERPA Notice to Students](#) and the student records policy is available on the Office of the Registrar webpage.

Items that can never be identified as public information are a student’s social security number, citizenship, gender, grades, GPR, or class schedule. All efforts will be made in this class to protect your privacy and to ensure confidential treatment of information associated with or generated by your participation in the class.

Directory items include name, UIN, local address, permanent address, email address, local telephone number,

permanent telephone number, dates of attendance, program of study (college, major, campus), classification, previous institutions attended, degrees honors and awards received, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, medical residence location and medical residence specialization.