

**GOV324L (#37245)
EUS 350 (#35555)
Government & Politics of Western Europe
Fall 2024**

**UTC 3.132
T-Th 9:30-10:50am**

**Professor: Zeynep Somer-Topcu, PhD
zsomer@utexas.edu**

**Office hours of the professor: T 2-4pm, W 11:30am-12:30pm
Office location of the professor: Batts Hall 3.124**

Introduction

This course provides students with a general introduction to the political institutions, voter behavior, and issues in Western Europe. The objective is to equip students with a broad overview of Western Europe's politics and political systems, as well as concepts, methods, and tools to understand and analyze contemporary developments. By the end of this course, you will have a good understanding of how the advanced parliamentary democracies in Western Europe function and some knowledge of most of the West European countries. Note that the course is organized thematically (rather than country-specific) around a framework that emphasizes the political determinants and policy consequences of institutional differences. Therefore, while we will spend a lot of time on various example countries for each topic, we won't dig too deep into any of the countries' political histories or structures.

We will start the course with a short overview of the countries and the history of Europe. We will then look at political institutions in Europe—ranging from the executive power to the parliaments, electoral systems, parties, and party systems. In the second half of the course, we will discuss the critical issues/problems Western European countries face: (1) regionalism, (2) the European Union, (3) lack of voter interest/knowledge, (4) immigration, and (5) the rise of anti-immigrant politics and challenges the mainstream parties face.

Course Requirements:

Participation in Class Discussion
Two midterms and the Final Exam
In class debate

+3 points (extra credit)
25% (each of the midterms), 30% final
20%

Attendance

Attendance is NOT required. However, the exams will heavily rely on what we will discuss in class. There are more details beyond the slides we will discuss in class, and you will be responsible for those details in the exams. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to come to class.

Participation in Class Discussion (+3 points extra credit)

Class participation is different from attendance and can get you some extra credit at the end of the semester. Students are expected to do the assigned readings **before** we discuss the topic in class and arrive in class ready to discuss the readings. We may start the class with a discussion about that day's readings so be ready to dive in!

Once your extra credit grade is determined (anywhere between 0 to 3), that number will be added to your final course average. Hence, if your course average based on your exams and papers is 88 (B+), and if you earned 3 points extra, your final course grade will be 91 (A-).

In-Class Debate (20%):

Each student, as a member of a three or four-student team, will be responsible for debating one of the topics from the list below. A sign-up sheet for the debate teams will be made available in the second week of the classes. If you do not sign up, you will be randomly assigned to a group.

Debates are in the form of “yes/no,” where one side supports an initiative or idea, and the other side opposes it. There will be three or four students in each debate team. After you sign up for a topic, we will randomly assign you to the “yes” or “no” side of the debate.

You are expected to do the background preparation necessary to be informed about your topic and to address questions from the debate moderator and audience. Each team will receive a grade for the group’s debate performance and each student will receive a grade based on their solo presentation performance. Your final debate grade will be calculated using these two grades.

I will discuss the details of these debates in class.

Debate 1, September 24: A government/Prime Minister party that is polling high and performing well should call for an early/snap election (if the constitution allows for it) to benefit from the positive trends and increase its seat numbers in the parliament vs. calling an early election is risky and must be avoided at all costs. (important note: an early election for this debate is defined

as an election that is called to happen more than six months before the constitutionally scheduled regular election)

Debate 2, September 26: UK should replace the plurality electoral system with the proportional electoral system vs. the UK should keep its plurality electoral system

Debate 3, October 17: The Social Democratic Parties must appeal to more centrist voters vs. to more leftwing voters to win.

Debate 4, October 29: Political parties should give more voice and power to their registered members in selecting their leaders vs. they should take the power away from members and empower party elites in leader selections.

Debate 5, November 5: To compete with the niche parties, mainstream political parties should adopt niche parties' issue positions vs. mainstream parties should stick to their principles.

Debate 6, November 12: Catalonia should separate from Spain vs. it should stay within Spain

Debate 7, November 28: The UK should stay out of the EU vs. the UK should rejoin the EU.

Debate 8, December 5: The European countries should welcome more legal immigrants from outside the EU into their countries vs. they should reduce the legal immigration numbers.

Midterm Exams (25% each) and Final Exam (30%)

There are two midterm exams scattered throughout the semester and the final exam on the final exam date. You will take the midterm exams during the course time (9:30am-10:50am) on the days they are assigned and the final exam on the day and time the university schedules. Each exam will be a combination of multiple-choice questions, short or bullet-point answer questions, and a few long (one-page) essays. The exams are not cumulative.

Grading Scheme:

In this course I will use the following grading scheme:

A	100 - 93.34
A-	93.33 - 90
B+	89.99 - 86.67
B	86.66 - 83.34
B-	83.33 - 80
C+	79.99 - 76.67
C	76.66 - 73.34
C-	73.33 - 70
D+	69.99 - 66.67
D	66.66 - 63.34
D-	63.33 - 60
F	Below 60

In addition, please note that I use the following numerical grade assignment for each letter grade (you will receive letter grades for your debate performance):

A	95
A-	91.67
B+	88.33
B	85
B-	81.67
C+	78.33
C	75
C-	71.67
D+	68.33
D	65
D-	61.67

Please note that, once your final grade is calculated using all the components of your final grade, I automatically round the final course grade .50 or above to the next higher grade (but not before—not for individual components). Requests for additional rounding will not be entertained.

Required Texts:

The following books are available for purchase at the bookstore or can be purchased online:

- Bale, Tim. 2017. *European Politics: A Comparative Introduction*. **Fourth Edition**. Palgrave.
- McCormick, John. 2021. *Understanding the European Union: A Concise Introduction*. **Eighth Edition**. Red Globe Press.

The books for this class are available through the Longhorn Textbook Access (LTA) program, a new initiative between UT Austin, The University Co-op and textbook publishers to significantly reduce the cost of digital course materials for students. You are automatically opted into the program but can easily opt-out (and back in) via Canvas through the 12th class day. If you remain opted-in at the end of the 5th class day you will receive a bill through your “What I Owe” page and have until the end of the 20th class day to pay and retain access. If you do not pay by the 20th class day, you will lose access to the materials and your charge will be removed.

There will also be required news articles or editorials assigned for each class period. These will be based on the current events for the topic under discussion. We will post them on Canvas on Fridays before each week.

There will be additional required articles/chapters for some classes. These readings are denoted with an asterisk (**) in the syllabus, and will be available on Canvas in advance.

MAKE-UP EXAMS AND EXTENSION OF DEADLINES POLICY

Make-up exams will not be offered except in extremely rare circumstances. These extremely rare circumstances can be: (1) University sanctioned events (verification required) (2) extraordinary

circumstances such as medical emergency, or (3) religious observances. Make-up exams and extension of deadlines requested for any other reason will be decided on a case-by-case basis and will be subject to a 20% grade penalty. **Vacations and early departure for breaks do not constitute legitimate reasons for extensions or make-up exams.** If you know you are going to miss an exam or a deadline, notify me as soon as possible BEFORE the exam and the deadline, no later than 14 days prior to the exam date or deadline.

AI Tools

The use of artificial intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT) in this class is strictly prohibited. This includes using AI to generate ideas, to outline an approach, to answer questions, to solve problems, or to create original language. All work in this course must be your own or created in group work, where allowed.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

University's Honor Code governs all work in this course. As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of the person. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with and observe university's policies against cheating and plagiarism. If you have any questions regarding academic honesty, please consult the university's Honor Code: <http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09- 10/ch01/index.html>

Senate Bill 212 and Title IX Reporting Requirements

Under Senate Bill 212 (SB 212), the professor and TAs for this course are required to report for further investigation any information concerning incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking committed by or against a UT student or employee. Federal law and university policy also requires reporting incidents of sex- and gender-based discrimination and sexual misconduct (collectively known as Title IX incidents). This means we cannot keep confidential information about any such incidents that you share with us. If you need to talk with someone who can maintain confidentiality, please contact University Health Services (512-471-4955 or 512-475-6877) or the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center (512-471-3515 or 512-471-2255). We strongly urge you make use of these services for any needed support and that you report any Title IX incidents to the [Title IX Office](#).

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a learning or physical disability, or if you learn best utilizing a particular method, please discuss with me how I can best accommodate your learning needs. I will maintain the confidentiality of your learning needs. If appropriate, you should contact the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement,

Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/> to get more information on accommodating disabilities.

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited:

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

Emergency Evacuation Policy:

In the event of a fire or other emergency, it may be necessary to evacuate a building rapidly. Upon the activation of a fire alarm or the announcement of an emergency in a university building, all occupants of the building are required to evacuate and assemble outside. Once evacuated, no one may re-enter the building without instruction to do so from the Austin Fire Department, University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. Students should familiarize themselves with all the exit doors of each room and building they occupy at the university, and should remember that the nearest exit routes may not be the same as the way they typically enter buildings. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructors in writing during the first week of class. Faculty members must then provide this information to the Fire Prevention Services office by fax (512-232-2759).

Course Schedule

Below is a tentative course schedule. I reserve the right to make changes to the schedule, including exam dates, and it is the student's responsibility to be aware of these changes. **All readings are required unless noted otherwise. Those marked with (**) will be on Canvas.**

August 27, Tuesday **Introduction and Overview of Syllabus**
Optional but recommended: Bale ch. 1, McCormick ch. 2

Module 1: Domestic Political Institutions

August 29, Thursday	The Executive (Presidents vs. Prime Ministers) Bale ch. 4 pp. 105-111 ** News article/ editorial
September 3, Tuesday	Building and Maintaining Governments Bale ch. 4 pp. 111-124 ** News article/ editorial
September 5, Thursday	Details about Debate Assignments and How to do Research
September 10, Tuesday	Parliaments I Bale ch. 4 pp. 124-134 ** News article/ editorial
September 12, Thursday	Parliaments II Review Bale ch. 4 pp. 124-134 ** News article/ editorial
September 17, Tuesday	Parliaments III and Elections and Electoral Systems I Bale ch. 6 pp.187-190
September 19, Thursday	Elections, Electoral Systems, and Referenda II Bale ch. 6 pp. 187-194
September 24, Tuesday	Elections, Electoral Systems, and Referenda III Bale ch. 6 pp.215-221
	Debate 1: A government/Prime Minister party that is polling high and performing well should call for an early/snap election (if the constitution allows for it) to benefit from the positive trends and increase its seat numbers in the parliament vs. calling an early election is risky and must be avoided at all costs. (important note: an early election for this debate is defined as an election that is called to happen more than six months before the constitutionally scheduled regular election)

September 26, Thursday

Elections, Electoral Systems, and Referenda IV

** Schlegel, Benjamin E., Lukas F. Stoetzer, and Patrick W. Kraft. 2023. "When Information Is Not Enough for Strategic Voting." *Electoral Studies* 86 (December):102692.

Debate 2: UK should replace the plurality electoral system with the proportional electoral system vs. the UK should keep its plurality electoral system

October 1, Tuesday

Exam #1

Module 2: European Parties and Party Systems

October 3, Thursday

Patterns in Party Politics and Party Systems

Bale ch. 5 pp.150-174

October 8, Tuesday

Where do parties come from?

**Ware ch.6

October 10, Thursday

Party and Party System Change

** Ware ch. 7

Bale ch.6 pp. 194-211

October 15, Tuesday

Inside European Political Parties: Party Members

** Gallagher et al., ch.10 (up to the section of "Power within Parties")

October 17, Thursday

Inside European Political Parties II: Manifestos, Funding, Candidates

Gallagher et al. ch. 10 (the rest of the chapter)

Debate 3: The Social Democratic Parties have to appeal to more centrist voters vs. to more leftwing voters to win.

October 22, Tuesday

Inside European Political Parties III: Party Leaders

** O'Brien, Diana Z. 2015. "Rising to the Top: Gender, Political Performance, and Party Leadership in Parliamentary Democracies." *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (4): 1022–39.

October 24, Thursday

Anti-System Parties: The rise

** Golder, Matt. 2016. "Far Right Parties in Europe." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 19: 477-497.

October 29, Tuesday

Anti-System Parties: Competition and Concerns

** Meguid, Bonnie. 2005. "Competition between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy and Niche Party Success." *American Political Science Review* 99(3): 347-360.

Debate 4: Political parties should give more voice and power to their registered members in selecting their leaders vs. they should take the power away from members and empower party elites in leader selections

October 31, Thursday

Exam #2

Module 3: Levels of Governance in Europe

November 5, Tuesday

Regional Politics

Bale ch. 2: pp. 39-52

** News articles/ editorials

Debate 5: To compete with the niche parties, mainstream political parties should adopt niche parties' issue positions vs. mainstream parties should stick to their principles.

November 7, Thursday

The European Union I: What is the European Union?

McCormick ch. 1

November 12, Tuesday

The European Union II: Theories to Explain the European Integration Project and the History of the EU

McCormick ch. 1 (continued)

McCormick ch.3

Debate 6: Catalonia should separate from Spain vs. it should stay within Spain

November 14, Thursday

The European Union III: Brexit

**News articles/ editorials

November 19, Tuesday

The European Union IV: The European Institutions

McCormick ch. 4

November 21, Thursday	The European Union V: Elections and the Democratic Deficit McCormick ch. 5 ** Hix, Simon and Michael Marsh. 2007. "Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliamentary Elections." <i>Journal of Politics</i> 69(2): 495-510.
Debate 7: The UK should stay out of the EU vs. the UK should rejoin the EU.	

November 26-28	Thanksgiving Break
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Module 4: A few remaining important topics to understand:

December 3, Tuesday	Immigration, Asylum, and the Challenges Bale ch. 10 ** News articles/ editorials
December 5, Thursday	Voters— Political knowledge, partisanship, vote ** Dalton, Russell. Citizen Politics. Ch. 2 ** Blais, André. 2006. "What Affects Voter Turnout?" <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i> 9: 111-125.
Debate 8: The European countries should welcome more legal immigrants from outside the EU into their countries vs. they should reduce the legal immigration numbers.	

FINAL EXAM: FRIDAY DECEMBER 13, 10:30-12:30 PM, UTC 3.132