

**Politics 114:**  
**POLITICAL CHANGE IN WESTERN EUROPE**

Chris Howell  
Fall 2005

Class: King 337, Tuesday and Thursday 9.30am-10.45pm.  
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**Introduction**

This course provides an introduction to the politics of Western Europe with particular emphasis upon changes in the contours of party politics. It is both a survey of major political institutions (parliaments, electoral systems, and so on) and political developments, and an examination of the theme of change in European party systems. In most West European countries, the stability of party systems began to break down in the 1960s, and in some cases (most notably Italy) party systems have been transformed since the end of the 1970s. This shift has involved several elements: a decline in democratic participation; a decline in the traditional parties of the Left and Right; and the rise of new kinds of parties on both the Left and the Right. These parties are organized around new social groups and new sets of issues, like immigration and ecological politics. The transformation of party politics has also involved the emergence, or rediscovery, of new forms and practices of politics, including extra-parliamentary protest and the formation of new social movements.

The dual purpose of this course – both survey and exploration of the transformation of party systems – means that the syllabus proceeds country by country, first examining the main political institutions in Britain, France, Italy and Germany, and then using those countries to illustrate significant developments in their respective party systems: the British case focuses upon neoliberalism and “Third Way” politics; the French case focuses upon Mediterranean socialism and the rise of the far-right; the Italian case focuses upon Eurocommunism and regional separatist parties; and the German case focuses upon new social movements in the form of the Green Party. There is also a brief discussion of social democracy in Sweden, and an examination of extra-parliamentary movements.

The last part of the course shifts gears to look at the process of European integration which has gathered pace in the last fifteen years, leading to a single European market, free movement of goods and people within the European Union, a single currency and a European constitution. We will examine why European integration has taken the form that it has, and what its implications are for European politics and party systems.

**Requirements**

This course does not assume or require any prior knowledge of European history or politics, though clearly any background in the history of the region would be helpful. This is primarily a

lecture course, though there will be some time set aside for discussion in class. The main requirements are that students come to class and do the assigned reading (between 150 and 200 pages a week). I use the reading both to cover material that I deal with in class and to provide detail, texture, and argument that I do not have time for in class. There will be an in-class mid-term exam, worth one third of the grade, on Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup>. There will also be a short research paper, which can be done individually or in groups, examining one set of elections that have taken place in the last two years in one European country. This will be worth another one third of the grade, and will be due by 4.00pm on Wednesday November 23<sup>rd</sup>, just before Thanksgiving. This project will center around research into a particular issue or problem, ideally one I have not had time to cover in class, in one or more European countries. The final third of the grade will come from a take-home essay/exam designed to take two hours. The essay questions will be given out at the end of the last class on December 15<sup>th</sup>, and will be due a week later. These are all requirements and late work will be penalized in the interest of equity.

There will inevitably be some changes in the schedule of the readings, in assignments, and do on. I will provide updates in the “announcements” section of the *Blackboard* web site for this course: <http://bb.oberlin.edu/>. You **MUST** register for this course in *Blackboard* (which is a separate and additional task to registering for the course itself – **the password to register is: hogwarts**), and check the *Blackboard* site at least once a week. If you miss a class, you should always check the web site in case I have announced something of importance. Instructions for the use of *Blackboard* are provided at this URL: [http://www.oberlin.edu/OCTET/Bb/FAQ\\_Students.htm](http://www.oberlin.edu/OCTET/Bb/FAQ_Students.htm) .

### **Course readings**

Only one book has been ordered for this class: Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger, et al., *European Politics in Transition [Fifth Edition]*, Houghton Mifflin, 2006. It is available at the Oberlin Bookstore and you are strongly advised to buy it. It is the best textbook summary of the political systems and contemporary politics of European countries. Please note that it comes with a supplementary booklet on the recent EU referenda.

For the other readings we will be using the *ERes* (Electronic Reserve) system. The password for this course is: **Union** (case sensitive). The course readings are scanned into Adobe Acrobat and can then be accessed with a password from any computer on the campus network with a web browser. You can then read and print this material. When looking for a particular reading from the syllabus on *ERes*, look for the author’s name which is highlighted in **bold** on the syllabus. Check page numbers carefully, so that you read the correct section of each reading.

### **CLASS SCHEDULE:**

**September 6, 8, 13, 15 & 20**

**Political Parties in Capitalist Democracies**

David **Held**, *Political Theory and the Modern State*, chapter 1 (pages 11-55).

Gianfranco **Poggi**, *The State: Its Nature, Development and Prospects*, chapter 3 (pages 34-51).



Hans-Georg **Betz**, *Radical Rightwing Populism in Western Europe*, chapter 3 (pages 69-106).

Edward **Declair**, *Politics on the Fringe: The People, Policies and Organization of the French National Front*, chapters 5 & 7 (pages 115-137 and 172-192).

### **November 8, 10, 15 & 17                      New Social Movements in Germany and Britain**

Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger et al., *European Politics in Transition*, chapters 16 & 17 (pages 303-347).

Stephen **Padgett**, “Germany: Modernising the Left by Stealth” (pages 38-57) in *Parliamentary Affairs* [2003].

Claus **Offe**, “Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics” (pages 63-105), in Charles Maier, ed. *Changing Boundaries of the Political*.

Nancy **Fraser**, “From Redistribution to Recognition?” (pages 68-93), in *New Left Review* [July-August 1995].

Andrei **Markovits** and Philip Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond*, chapters 5-7 (pages 115-236).

Barbara **Harford** and Sarah Hopkins *Greenham Common: Women at the Wire*, pages 1-55.

### **November 22, 29 & December 1      Italy: Eurocommunism and a New Party System**

Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger et al., *European Politics in Transition*, chapters 21, 22 & 24 (pages 403-444 & 463-484).

Martin **Bull**, “Italy: The Crisis of the Left” (pages 58-74) *Parliamentary Affairs* [2003].

Paul **Ginsborg**, “The Patrimonial Ambitions of Silvio B” (pages 21-64) in *New Left Review* [2003].

Daniela **Gobetti**, “La Lega: Regularities and Innovation in Italian Politics” (pages 57-82), in *Politics & Society* [1996].

### **December 6, 8, 13 & 15                      European Integration and the Future of Party Politics**

Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger et al., *European Politics in Transition*, chapters 1-4 (pages 39-111). Plus booklet “The European Union Constitution: ‘Non’ for Now – or Forever?”

**The Economist**, “Outgrowing the Union: A Survey of the European Union” (all, pages 1-14) *The Economist* [September 25, 2004].