POLS 3450: European Politics

Department of Political Science – University of Guelph – Fall 2017

Mondays and Wednesdays 1.00-2.20, MCKN 228

Instructor: Edward Koning, Ph.D.
E-mail: ekoning@uoguelph.ca
Office: Mackinnon Building 509
Office hours: Mondays 3-5 PM, or by appointment

Course description

The European continent has long been of interest to political scientists. It is generally seen as the cradle of Western systems of government, and it hosts some of the oldest democracies in the world. In addition, Europe proves to be a fascinating laboratory for political science projects. Not only does it feature a supranational organization that is unique in its structure and scope and is therefore of large interest to scholars of international cooperation, it is also marked by the recent history of the Cold War and as such serves as indispensable material for studies of transitions from communism to liberal democracies.

This class offers an introduction to European politics and systems of governance. After a brief introduction to the political history of the European continent, the course begins by reviewing domestic institutions of European states, in particular legislatures, executives, judiciaries, and political parties. The third and fourth sections focus attention on the European Union. We will discuss theories of European integration and look at the structure of EU institutions. The final section reviews some of the most salient policy areas and issues in European politics today, such as the refugee crisis, the economic crisis, the future of the welfare state, and Euroscepticism.

Learning outcomes

At the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Critically engage scholarly discussions about contemporary European politics
- Explain the difference between national and supranational politics and policies
- Evaluate the influence of institutions on European societies and politics
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different theoretical explanations for the emergence of the European Union
- Take part in an informed debate about sensitive subjects in contemporary European politics
Methods of instruction

The primary method of instruction is lecturing. However, many interactive activities are built into the course, including group work and class debate.

Methods of evaluation

The final grade in this class will be based on three major components:

1. Two short essays (20 percent each; total 40 percent)
2. Two quizzes (15 percent each; total 30 percent)
3. Take home exam (30 percent)