I. COURSE PRESENTATION AND OUTCOMES

This seminar course aims to compare the political systems of European countries as well as provide an overview of the main elements in contemporary European democracies. The course also seeks to introduce and assess multiple approaches to the study of social and political science, from rational choice to political anthropology as well as the sociology of elected officials. Finally, it offers a glimpse at the unity and diversity within the European political system. Within this framework, special attention is given to the French political system. The course seeks to circumscribe its specificities through in-depth comparison with other European democracies. The current situation, i.e. the French Presidential election of May 2017, will be especially considered.

Each session follows the same structure:
- The course presents an array of European political systems for each given topic.
- The course looks in depth at the French system taking into account its distinctive peculiarities.
- The reading of the day is collectively discussed.
- A topical event is examined through: an oral presentation by a student or a collective discussion.

The course is accessible to students with no previous experience in political science. The course, including seminars and visits, is conducted entirely in English.

Outcomes
By the end of this course, students will have developed:

- a thorough knowledge of the diversity of the European national political systems: common features of the European systems as well as main lines of cleavage and major exceptions to common trends;
- an understanding of the on-going change within European democracies, especially the capacity of systems to produce both legitimate and efficient political institutions;
- a special analysis of the situation of France among European democracies with an emphasis on the controversial notions of French model or French exception.
- the ability to read, understand and critically analyze political science academic texts written in English;
- the ability to formally present a thorough critical and structured analysis of a political issue, be it written or oral, based on sources and concepts requiring basic research.
II. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Out-of-class workload:
- Mandatory readings for each session. About 25 pages by session.
- Press review on topical event for each session
- In-depth research for the essay
- In-depth research for the oral presentation

Oral presentation: 20%
These individual 10-minute oral presentations deal with a specific aspect of each given session, examining a French perspective on the topic of the day. For instance, during session 6 dealing with legislatures, the subject of the oral presentation will be “Should the French Senate be abolished?”.

Essay: 20%
The take-home 4,000-word essay is due on session 14 and addresses the following question: “From a comparative European standpoint, is the domestic leadership of the French President unusual?”

2 tests: 20% (10% + 10%)
In-class tests 1 & 2 will consist of multiple choice questionnaires (20 questions each).

Final exam: 30%
In-class final exam will consist both of a multiple choice questionnaire (20 questions) and an analytical question that encompasses several aspects of the course.

Participation and preparedness: 10%
Included in this grade is weekly homework, which involves following current news and events in Europe and France and participating in discussions during each class session. This grade also takes into account the quality of a student’s presence in class, energy, relevance of comments, attendance and punctuality.

Attendance Policy
1 absence (class session or activity) = -1 point on the overall grade
4 or more unexcused absences = grade of F for the course
Missed assignment or test = grade of 0 for the assignment
Plagiarism on an assignment = grade of 0 for the assignment

NB: Excused absences must be justified by a doctor’s note or a scheduled internship interview.

Academic Conduct
It is every student’s responsibility to read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be “…expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the Dean.” You can view the entire Academic Conduct Code here: http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/
**Plagiarism (BU Policy)**

All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on the examinations or for plagiarism may be ‘expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the dean.’ Read the full Academic Conduct Code online at [http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/](http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/).

**III. CALENDAR**

(visit dates can be subject to change and oral presentations will be adapted according to the final number of students)

**Session 1. Comparing France and Europe**
- The epistemology of comparison
- The special features of France in question
- **Topical event:** the Brexit


**Session 2. The individuality of the European system**
- The origin of European states
- Common traits between European political systems
- **Topical event:** Chancellor Merkel duration


**Session 3. Diversity within European systems**
- The main divisions of comparative analysis
- Approaches to political science from Liiphart to Tsebelis
- **Topical event:** Scotland and Catalonan status


**Session 4. Executive power**

**Oral presentation #1**
- Heads of State and Prime Ministers
- The rise and fall of governments
- **Topical event:** the popularity of the European leaders


**Session 5. The architectural institutionalisation of politics**

Walk within the Paris political district
Session 6. Legislatures and parliamentary politics
  Oral presentation #2
  Mid-term exam #1
  - Approaches to parliamentary influence
  - Working vs. talking parliaments
  - *Topical event:* the threats over second chambers in Europe


Session 7. The constitution, judges and the law
  Oral presentation #3
  - The spread of a rule-of-law structure
  - Legislative procedure
  - *Topical event:* the 2008 Constitutional reform in France


Session 8. Electoral systems, elections and campaigns
  Oral presentation #4 & 5
  - Proportional representation vs. Majority rule
  - Political financing
  - *Topical event:* the 2017 Presidential election in France: the primaries


Session 9. Political leadership
  Oral presentation #6 & 7
  - Professionalization and plutocracy
  - Parliamentarian roles compared
  - *Topical event:* the 2017 Presidential election in France: which leadership?


Session 10. The topology of social protests
Walk within Paris popular districts
Session 11. Parties, partisan groupings and political divides

Oral presentation #8
Mid-term exam #2
- The widening and dissolution of political divides
- Questioning the political monopolies
- Topical event: the French PS and the Labour party today


Session 12. Administration, centralisation and public policy

Oral presentation #9 & 10
- Types of administration
- Types of public policy
- Decentralization of power
- Topical event: the refugee crisis and the EU


Session 13. Political violence in Europe

Oral presentation #11
Guest lecturer
Readings to be determined

Session 14. The crisis of representation

Essay due
- Institutionalized disagreement
- Unconventional political participation
- Topical event: the rise of the extreme right


Session 15. Which comparative approach to State persons?
Visit to the Charles de Gaulle’s museum in Paris.
Session 16. Hopes for the future

Oral presentation #12

- New forms of political involvement
- Calling e-democracy into question
- **Topical event**: Paris participatory budget


FINAL EXAM

IV. ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Required Reading:**

**Supplementary Readings:**

