



Boston University Study Abroad
Paris

CAS PO 248/CAS IR 305 **Comparative European Politics: France and Beyond**

Credits: 4
Hub Units: Social Inquiry I
Research and Information Literacy
Ethical Reasoning

Schedule: 16 two-and-a-half-hour sessions over 7.5 weeks
(2 weekly sessions + 2 additional sessions)
Final exam: Last Friday

Course visits (examples):

- Walking tour of Parisian political sites and institutions
- Visit to the De Gaulle museum
- Visit or outing related to current events (current exhibition or political rally – TBD)

Tutoring for oral presentations & essays

- Individual meeting with the professor before the oral presentation

Course material:

- On-line academic texts and press articles to be read by the student (Blackboard).
- Additional documents posted on Blackboard: diagrams, maps, statistics, photos, etc.

Assessment for the course:

- Participation and preparedness (10%)
- Two in-class tests (20%)
- Oral presentation (10%)
- Press Review (10%)
- Essay (25%)
- Final exam (25%)

Out-of-class workload:

- Mandatory readings for each session. About 25 pages by session.
- Press review on topical event for one session out of two. Should deal with political issues within one European country or at the European Union level.
- In-depth research for the oral presentation
- In-depth research for the essay

In-class sessions alternate between lecture illustrated with slides, group discussion about readings and press review, students' presentations, and are supplemented by commented group visits.

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

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides analytical knowledge and practical skills to compare the political systems of European countries. It also covers key features of contemporary European democracies, by utilizing multiple approaches of Political Science, from rational choice theory to political anthropology. Finally, it offers a glimpse at the unity and diversity within the European political system. Under 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. Macron's presidential term as well as the increasing governance difficulties in European countries, will be particularly scrutinized.

Democracy in question

Europe and democracy have a long and closely entwined history. It was in Greece that a democratic form of government first made an appearance in 500 B.C.E and it was in Western and Northern Europe that modern representative democracy developed beginning from the 18th century. The democratic process is part of what defines Europe as an entity. Furthermore, democracy is not only an institutional mechanism that allows for the participation and representation of citizens. It has also become, over the course of the 20th century, a complex system of public policy which has an impact on many aspects of daily life, including those of integration, protection, and control of individuals through a diverse array of social protection measures. Thus, understanding the current state of democracy in Europe is imperative to recognizing and understanding transformations taking place in contemporary politics. Within this frame, the differences between majority and consensus democracies and the various kinds of welfare states – liberal or conservative – , with a focus on the specificities of the French semi-presidential political system, will lead students to nurture a deeper reflection on democracy in Europe and by extension on their own vision of democracy as related to their cultural perceptions (United States and other countries). They will thus consider their responsibilities in contemporary society as citizens and potential future decision-makers.

Comparison in question

A central goal of the course is to bring students to recognize the strange in the familiar and examine their own relationship to politics in the light of European democracies and their divisions. The introduction to comparison and comparative politics in this class is designed to familiarize students with the epistemological and ethical challenges related to comparison. When poorly executed, a comparison can serve to flatten or misrepresent a concept, without taking into account the unique cultural and historical contexts of individual cases. This form of exoticism is the antithesis of a method of comparison which shifts focus towards the relationships that people can have with their political systems. The study of four main methods of comparison - Aristotelian categorization, Constitutionalism approach, Rokkan's sociological perspective, Lijphart' political science approach – and of two epistemologies of comparison – Durkheim's positivist studies of social factors and Weber's comprehensive interactionist studies on social activity – will serve as methodological foundations to approach all concepts addressed throughout the course.

Sources in question

Critical reading of academic texts serves as an initiation to contemporary social science research. When discussing an article, great attention is paid to the question of data. This includes identifying data, describing the method with which they are used, and reflecting critically on the status given to evidence in the examined works. The goal is not just to understand what an author says about a subject but also how he or she analyzes it. Additionally, a variety of sources, quantitative and qualitative, primary and secondary—notably photographs, statistics, and newspaper articles – will be consulted throughout the course. Discussion of the veracity and accuracy of these sources will also be at the heart of our analysis. Thus, sources or methods will be systematically scrutinized through a critical approach.

Each session follows the same structure:

- Press review and discussion about current events: every other session, half of the students must briefly present press articles related to political current events in France or Europe;
- 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.

II. HUB AREAS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Hub area: Social Inquiry I (1 unit)

1. By the end of this course, students will be able to:
 - explain the European national political systems in their diversity, including common features, main lines of cleavage and major exceptions to common trends as well as the on-going change within European democracies, especially the capacity of systems to produce both legitimate and efficient political institutions, with a special emphasis on France and the controversial notions of French model or French exception;
 - describe two main ways of grouping democracies in Europe and assess their validity in a contemporary perspective characterized by the lack of confidence between citizens and decision-makers;
 - examine a plurality of comparative politics methods from quantitative statistics to ethnographic observations, recognize them when reading political science paper using them, formulate their own opinion about the scientific merits of each.

Hub area: Research and Information Literacy (1 unit)

1. By the end of this course, students will be able to:
 - discuss political science academic articles, which implies to identify the text main ideas, the author's method, inaccurate arguments such as unrepresentative examples, biased judgments, unclear ideas as well as to assess how data are used and the status given to evidence in the examined works;
 - assess the accuracy and veracity of a variety of sources, quantitative and qualitative, primary and secondary—notably photographs, statistics, and newspaper articles – and articulate a reflection about the limits of the press as reliable sources;
 - autonomously research proper sources of diverse nature (primary and secondary, quantitative and qualitative, such as statistics, press articles, academic articles)..
2. Using the skills above, students will be able to discriminate between reliable and unreliable websites, newspapers, reviews, and identify for each given source its validity, value and limits, in order to formulate a relevant hypothesis and produce formal oral and written arguments.

Hub area: Ethical Reasoning (1 unit)

1. This course not only aims to lead students to learn and understand political systems and issues but also to reflect on democracy as a system and reflect on their own perspective of it. By the end of this course, they will be able to
 - identify, grapple with, and make a judgment about the crisis of representative democracy in the context of the rise of illiberal democracies, about participative democracy and its limits, about the notion of freedom of speech, its ambiguities (“hate speech”) and its different conceptions in different cultures; reflect ethically on these notions, always considering all sides when making a judgement or forming an opinion;
 - identify ethical challenges in the use of specific words (“people”, “democracy”), the different meanings they can take and how they can be instrumentalized;
 - identify their own cultural perceptions of democracy (what seems “natural” to them) compared with the plurality of European political visions – notably about citizenship, welfare, nationalism, freedom of expression - and reassess those perceptions as responsible citizens (or potential future decision-makers);
 - demonstrate the ability to engage in a civil discussion about and with those who hold views different from their own, using the perspective and vocabulary gained through the assessment of comparative methods and the critical approach of articles.
2. A central goal of the course is to bring students to recognize the strange in the familiar and examine their own relationship to politics in the light of European democracies and their divisions. They will by extension reflect on their own vision of democracy as related to their cultural perceptions (United States and other countries) and consider their responsibilities in contemporary society as citizens (and potential future decision-makers).

III. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Participation and preparedness: 10%

Included in this grade is weekly homework, which involves readings and following current news and events in Europe and France, and relevant/constructive participation in each session discussions about required readings, about the press review and about the specific topics addressed during the given session (during the lecture part and the oral presentation). This grade also takes into account the quality of a student's presence in class, energy, attendance and punctuality.

Two tests: 20%

These two tests, comprised of multiple choice questionnaires as well as brief questions, serve to assess the understanding of important concepts previously studied and of the main ideas developed in the readings.

Oral presentations: 20%

There will be two exercises: 1. Presenting a brief individual press review (5 minutes) and 2. leading a discussion (12-15 min.).

1. The **press review** tests students' individual knowledge of European political issues and allows them to participate in the French and European public debate. Students will synthesize current events in France, Europe or elsewhere and the debates that happened in the week prior to the presentation. For the press round up, they must select a single article that covers what they think is an important aspect of current political life in Europe. Two students will present their articles very briefly each class for 5 minutes on three separate occasions.
2. The 10 to 15-minute **class discussion** will be based on a specific prompt indicated in the syllabus. It requires in-depth research and reflection about the general topic and how it is applied in France, in order to produce an organized, synthetical yet comprehensive formal argument leading to a more general analysis of the given topic as related to the idea of democracy and its evolution. Students must present the topic (5 minutes) and then lead a discussion and conclude (7-10 minutes). They need to give to the class a short bibliography of 3 to 5 sources they believe are important on the topic.

The grade for both exercises take into account the quality of oral communication (clarity, dynamism, ability to stimulate group discussion), the quality of the outline (logical and clear organization of ideas), the relevance of research, the synthetical comprehensiveness of the analysis as well as its intellectual depth and originality.

Essay: 30%

This 3,000 words research paper, due two weeks after the oral presentation, is a written development of the oral presentation, replacing the topic of the oral presentation (which is systematically on the French case) in a broader, European context, using critical approaches to sources and comparative methods studied in class, thus resulting in a more comprehensive argument as well as a deeper reflection on the notion of democracy. The grade for this essay takes into account the relevance of research and of the use of sources, the quality of the outline (logical and clear organization of ideas), the comprehensiveness of the analysis as well as its intellectual depth and originality.

Final exam: 30%

For this final exam, students will:

- answer a multiple choice questionnaire;
- comment on a document (statistics, survey, photo, press excerpt), identifying the main topics/ideas related to it and the message it conveys as well as assessing its potential biases and veracity;
- write an analytical essay answering a transversal question related to several aspects of democracy.

Grading conversion (out of 100)

FINAL GRADE FOR THE COURSE				GRADES FOR INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS/ASSIGNMENTS											
93-100 :	A	77-79,5 :	C+	A+	=	97	B+/A-	=	89,5	C+/B-	=	79,5	D+/C-	=	69,5
90-92,5 :	A-	73-76,5 :	C	A/A+	=	96	B+	=	88	C+	=	78	D+	=	68
87-89,5 :	B+	70-72,5 :	C-	A	=	95	B/B+	=	86,5	C/C+	=	76,5	D/D+	=	66,5
83-86,5 :	B	69-60 :	D	A/A-	=	92,5	B/B-	=	85	C	=	75	D	=	65
80-82,5 :	B-	59,5-0 :	F	A/A-	=	92,5	B/B-	=	82,5	C/C-	=	72,5	D/D-	=	62,5
				A-	=	91	B-	=	81	C-	=	71	D-	=	61
				A-/B+	=	89,5	B-/C+	=	79,5	C-/D+	=	69,5	F	=	55

BU Paris Attendance Policy

Our program is subject to French student visa laws where an active student status is mandatory. As the sponsor of your visa, Boston University has the legal obligation to ensure that you comply with visa requirements. If you do not attend classes or your internship as required, you will be considered to be in breach of your visa and can be deported. Any student who does not comply with this policy may be sent home from the program at the discretion of the program director, and may, as a result, forfeit credit and program costs for part or all of the semester.

1 absence (courses* or internship**)	= -1 point on your final grade
More than 3 unexcused absences	= F for the course
Unsubmitted written work Absence for a presentation or exam Plagiarism	= F (0 points) for the assignment in question

***Courses:** class sessions, exposé preparation, in-class presentation

** **Internship:** EUSA meetings, BU Paris workshops, work placement schedule

EXCUSED ABSENCES = - Absence for illness excused by the *certificate of a French doctor*

- Internship interview
- OFII medical visit (must have *convocation*)
- Professional imperative that conflicts with academic workshop

Documentation to be submitted to buparis@bu.edu the day following the absence

TARDINESS

- The professor reserves the right to *not admit* a tardy student to class or to count a tardy arrival as either a **half or whole unexcused absence**.
- **Late arrivals** to class will impact the class **participation grade**.
- **Leaving class** before it ends is considered as tardiness.
- **Late submission** of written work will entail a penalty on the assignment grade.
- Written work submitted **more than a week late** will not receive credit (grade = 0).

Students who do not complete a course on time will be given an F.

There are **no withdrawals** from classes, the internship, nor the internship course.

PLAGIARISM – OFFICIAL BU POLICY

Simply stated, plagiarism is taking another's work and presenting it as your own. It is, in fact, intellectual theft. It is one of the most serious forms of academic misconduct. Plagiarism committed by a student will certainly result in course failure and may result in suspension or dismissal. It can take many forms, including reproduction of published material without acknowledgement, or representing work done by others as your own. This includes the increasing common practice of purchasing and downloading work from the Internet "paper mills". Plagiarism applies to all media – printed matter of all kinds, video, audio, and oral presentation. Even unacknowledged paraphrasing or use of another's methodology, structure or management of material is plagiarism. You must use quotation when quoting even if you do the translating yourself.

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/> as well as the [Policy on Religious Observance](#).

Accommodations for Students with Documented Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at (617) 353-3658 or access@bu.edu to coordinate any reasonable accommodation requests. ODS is located at 19 Buick Street.

IV. INDICATIVE CALENDAR– Readings will be specified in the updated syllabus students will receive once in Paris.

Session	Topics	In-class assignment
1	<p>Theoretical foundations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is political science? ▪ The epistemology of comparison – convergence vs. divergence ▪ Sources and bibliographical tips <p>Methodology #1 Comparing VS explaining Methodology #2 The golden rules of the oral presentation Methodology #3 How to present a compelling press review</p>	x
2	<p>OFF-SITE VISIT: The Paris Of Institutions Walking tour of Paris’ main political district</p>	x
3	<p>Democratic politics: why do we believe in democracy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The origin of European states ▪ Common traits between European political systems ▪ Studying political cultures <p>Methodology #4 Writing an Essay Methodology #5 Ethical Reasoning</p>	Article review, group 1
4	<p>Europe a continent in the making: multi-level politics in Europe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Representative democracy ▪ Supranational Politics in Europe ▪ Subnational Politics in Europe ▪ Federalism and Decentralization 	Article review, group 2
5	<p>European integration – the EU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Council of Europe ▪ The European Union ▪ Harmonization and Economic Policy 	Presentation 1: Is the EU successful in spreading its values around human rights?
6	<p>France and Europe/the European Union</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ France’s place within the continent ▪ Military Cooperation ▪ International politics and Europe 	Article review, group 1
7	<p>Why and how do we vote?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has politics ever really mattered? ▪ Citizen or voters? ▪ What is an ideology? ▪ New political issues and Multidimensional Politics ▪ What is the left and right divide? 	TEST 1
8	<p>OFF-SITE VISIT: Europe on the brink, Paris at the crux Musée de la Libération de Paris</p>	x
9	<p>Electoral systems, elections and campaigns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proportional representation vs. majority rule ▪ Political financing ▪ Political campaigns 	Presentation 2: Are there too many political parties in France?
10	<p>Government and policy: legislature and parliamentary politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Political systems and government formation ▪ Law making in government and Parliaments ▪ Policy outcomes in Europe 	Article review, group 2

11	Executive power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Heads of State and Prime Ministers ▪ The rise and fall of governments 	Presentation 3: Is the French president more or less constrained to act than the US president?
12	The constitution, judges and the law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The spread of a rule-of-law structure ▪ Legislative procedure 	Article review, group 1
13	<p style="text-align: center;">OFF-SITE VISIT: the World comes to Paris Cité internationale universitaire de Paris</p>	x
14	Elitism, meritocracy and populism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Professionalization and plutocracy ▪ Parliamentary roles compared ▪ What is populism? 	Presentation 4: Was populism important in the 2022 French presidential election?
15	The crisis of representation I – democracy under attack <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institutionalized disagreement, political gridlock ▪ Unconventional political participation 	TEST 2
16	The crisis of representation II – democratic renewal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New forms of political involvement ▪ Calling e-democracy into question ▪ New forms of participation? <p>Prepping for the final</p>	Article review, group 2
	IN-CLASS FINAL EXAM	x

V. REFERENCES

Required Reading:

Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy*, Yale University Press, 2nd ed., 2012, chapters 1, 2, 3.

Supplementary Readings:

- Tim Bale, *European Politics*, Palgrave, 3rd ed., 2013.
- Daniele Caramani (dir.), *Comparative Politics*, Oxford University Press, 3rd ed., 2014.
- William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, Sona Nadenichek Golder, *Principles of Comparative Politics*, CQ Press, 2nd ed., 2012.
- Michael Gallagher, Michael Laver, Peter Mair, *Representative Government in Europe*, Mc Graw Hill, 5th ed., 2011.
- Kenneth Newton and Jan W. Van Deth, *Foundations of Comparative Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 3rd ed. 2016.