POLI/EURO 239.001 – Introduction to European Government   Spring 2025

Class Information
Tuesday/Thursday   11:00–12:15
Phillips Hall 206

Instructor
Simon Weschle   Hamilton Hall 250
Associate Professor of Political Science   weschle@unc.edu

Office Hours
Monday 10:00–12:00 and 1:00–2:00   Hamilton Hall 250
or by appointment

Grader
Avi Faber   afaber@unc.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday 12:00–3:00   Hamilton Hall 301

Course Description
The course is designed to familiarize you with European politics. It introduces you to the political institutions and policies of the European countries and the European Union. The course is divided into three sections. The first part focuses on the domestic politics of European countries, and explores topics like voter behavior, political parties, electoral systems, and welfare states. The second part focuses on the history and institutions of the European Union (EU). Finally, we will examine some of the most important challenges and opportunities that European countries and the EU are facing, looking at topics like immigration, populism, democratic backsliding, population aging, and external relations.

Goals and Student Learning Outcomes
The goal of this course is to develop tools to critically analyze contemporary issues in European politics, and to gain an understanding of the political systems of European countries and the European Union. By the end of the course, you are expected to have a strong understanding of the political systems and political history of European countries and the European Union; the ability to understand and discuss how political institutions affect policy outcomes and political representation; and the skills needed to analyze and discuss contemporary issues in European politics.

MAIN THINGS TO KNOW

Course Website
The course website is on Canvas: https://uncch.instructure.com/courses/80942. I will use the course website to post the syllabus, lecture slides, assignments, and other course information. You are expected to check the course website on a regular basis.

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Readings

There are two required textbooks:

- Catherine E. De Vries, Sara B. Hobolt, Sven-Oliver Proksch, and Jonathan B. Slapin. 2021. *Foundations of European Politics: A Comparative Approach.* Oxford University Press (abbreviated FEP).

- John McCormick. 2020. *Understanding the European Union: A Concise Introduction.* 8th Edition. Bloomsbury (abbreviated UEU).

Both textbooks are available for purchase at UNC Student Stores. All other readings are made available on Canvas.

Assignments and Key Dates

- (20%) Midterm Exam (February 27)
- (20%) Final Exam (May 5)
- (20%) 3 Data Exercises: max. 3 pages each (possible dates: January 14, 16, 21, 23, 28, 30, February 4, 6, 11, 13, March 4)
- (20%) Country Position Paper: max. 8 pages plus up to 2 pages with graphs and tables (due April 15)
- (20%) Class Participation, incl. News Roundup

Talk to Me!

If you feel, at any point, depressed, panicked, or anything the like, please come talk to me. You don't have to reveal any details that you don't want to, and I will not judge you in any way. There's always something that can be done to help you and to make sure you are in a position to complete the course. The same goes if you are in danger of failing the class. I'm happy to help, but I cannot read your mind or otherwise intuit what is going on in your life. So, come talk to me as early as possible. It's much more difficult to do something after the fact.

Office Hours

Office hours are the designated time that I set aside each week specifically for meeting with students. If you want to come during that time, you do not need to let me know in advance or ask permission, I will always be there. These hours are your chance to talk to me about course material, college in general, or just to chat so we can get to know each other. I am also happy to meet with you outside of the designated time, but for that you need to schedule an appointment in advance. If you cannot meet during the designated time, please let me know and we'll set up another time.

It is easiest for everyone if you talk to me as early as possible about any issues or questions. Instead of waiting until you get a bad grade in an exam and asking how you can "make up" for it, come talk to me before the exam and ask questions about the material. That way, we can walk through the material together and I can explain a course concept in a different way. Similarly, rather than waiting until the end of the semester to tell me about issues that prevented you from focusing on school, talk to me earlier when there is still time for me to accommodate your circumstances. You get the point–if you find yourself asking whether you should come talk to me about something, come talk to me.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- **January 9:** *Introduction to the Course*

  UEU Ch. 2 (supplementary)

Part 1: Domestic Politics in Europe

- **January 14:** *Democratic Politics*

  FEP Ch. 1 and 2 (you can do either of the Data Exercises)

- **January 16:** *Ideology and Policy Issues*

  FEP Ch. 4

- **January 21:** *How Citizens Vote*

  FEP Ch. 5

- **January 23:** *Electoral Systems*

  FEP Ch. 6

- **January 28:** *Representation*

  FEP Ch. 7

- **January 30:** *Political Parties*

  FEP Ch. 8

- **February 4:** *Party Competition*

  FEP Ch. 9

- **February 6:** *Political Systems and Government Formation*

  FEP Ch. 10

- **February 11:** *Law-Making*

  FEP Ch. 11 (only 3 Data Exercises left)

- **February 13:** *Do Institutions Matter?*

  FEP Ch. 12

- **February 18:** *Welfare States*

  Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. 1999. *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies*. Oxford University Press, Ch. 5 ("Comparative Welfare Regimes Re-Examined")

- **February 20:** *Welfare States: Europe and the U.S.*

    Alesina, Alberto and Edward Glaeser. 2004. *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference*. Oxford University Press, Ch. 1 ("Introduction") and Ch. 7 ("The Ideology of Redistribution").

- **February 25:** *Discussion of 2025 German Elections, Exam Review*

    No assigned reading. Instead, follow media coverage of the election results.

    For the exam review, please submit any questions you want me to address via email by February 24 at noon.

- **February 27:** *Midterm Exam*

Part 2: European Union

- **March 4:** *Multilevel Politics*

    FEP Ch. 3 (last chance to submit a Data Exercise)

- **March 6:** *Regional Integration*

    UEU Ch. 1

- *March 11 and 13: No Class (Spring Break)*

- **March 18:** *Evolution of the European Union*

    UEU Ch. 3

- **March 20:** *Institutions of the European Union*

    UEU Ch. 4 and 6

- **March 25:** *Economic Integration and Economic Crises*

    UEU Ch. 7

- **March 27:** *Integration of Other Policies*

    UEU Ch. 3

- **April 1:** *Democratic Deficit*

    UEU Ch. 5

Part 3: Europe's Challenges and Opportunities

- **April 3:** *Demographic Crisis*

   Eurostat. 2024. *Population Structure and Ageing*. Report.

   Shorto, Russell. 2008. "No Babies?" *New York Times Magazine*.

- **April 8:** *Immigration*

   Bale, Tim. 2017. *European Politics. A Comparative Introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan, Ch. 10 ("Not Wanted, But Needed – Migrants and Minorities")

- **April 10:** *Populism*

   Berman, Sheri. 2021. "The Causes of Populism in the West." *Annual Review of Political Science* 24: 71-88.

- **April 15:** *Democratic Backsliding*

   Sitter, Nick and Elisabeth Bakke. 2019. "Democratic Backsliding in the European Union." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*.

   Country Position Paper due

- **April 17:** *No Class (Well-Being Day)*

- **April 22:** *War and Peace: Europe and Russia*

   Tocci, Nathalie. 2022. "Can Russia Divide Europe? Why a False Peace Could Be Worse Than a Long War." *Foreign Affairs*.

   Meister, Stefan. 2022. "A Paradigm Shift: EU-Russia Relations After the War in Ukraine." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.*

- **April 24:** *Europe-US Relations under Trump, Exam Review*

   Brady, Kate, Anthony Faiola, and Ellen Francis. 2024. "How Europe Is Preparing for a Possible Second Trump Presidency." *Washington Post*.

   Hadfield, Amelia. 2024. "What Trump's Return Might Mean for Europe, and How It's Starting to Prepare for the Challenges." *The Conversation*.

   For the exam review, please submit any questions you want me to address via email by April 23 at noon.

- **May 5 (12:00):** *Final Exam*

MORE DETAIL ON IMPORTANT THINGS

Assignments and Grading

- *2 Exams (20% each).* Exams will take place on **February 27** and **May 5**.

  Format: I will distribute a list of essay questions roughly one week in advance. On the day of the exam, I will randomly chose two of the questions, and you have to answer both of them. You are allowed to bring a 8.5 x 11 sheet of notes (front side only) with you to the exam (we will collect the sheet after the exam). Exams are non-cumulative, so the midterm will cover everything we have discussed up to that point, and the final will cover all material discussed after the midterm.

  Grading: Each answer will be graded out of 50. You are encouraged to incorporate material that you read or that we discussed. It is not necessary that you remember every detail, but you should be familiar with core ideas covered in class. You do not need to provide formal references in the exams. I do not expect you to write a novel in 75 minutes. Short answers that are to the point are better than long and meandering answers.

  The more you research and prepare your answers in advance, the better and more organized your essays will be. Answers that have a more coherent argument, are more original, show more critical thinking, display a greater understanding of the material covered in class, are better organized, and are not full of terrible style and grammar will receive more points.

  AI Usage: You are allowed to use AI tools while preparing your answers. However, I expect your answer to go *beyond* whatever AI offers. Therefore, AI should be used to support and enhance the answer that *you* came up with, rather than the other way around. In other words, if you just plug the questions into the bot and use the answer that it provides (with a few modifications of your own), that will not be a passing answer.

  I reserve the right to orally examine students about the answers in their exams. If it becomes clear that students do not have a firm understanding of their answers, I reserve the right to adjust assignments grades accordingly.

  All assignments in which AI was used need to be accompanied by an AI Disclosure Statement, in which students describe in detail how and for what purposes AI was used. Failure to disclose AI use, or failure to accurately disclose how AI was used, will lead to students failing the assignment.

  Absences: If you have a good reason why you are unable to take the exam and can provide appropriate documentation (e.g. illness, death in the family), please notify me *as soon as you can*. If I know about it in advance, we can work out something on a case-by-case basis. It tends to be harder to find a solution that works for everyone if you only come to me after you have missed an exam.

- *3 Data Exercises (20%).* Possible dates are January 14, 16, 21, 23, 28, 30, February 4, 6, 11, 13, March 4.

  Format: At the end of each chapter of the FEP textbook, there is an interactive data exercise. Each of those exercises provides you with some data to explore, and asks you a number of questions that can be answered with that data. No prior knowledge of data analysis or coding is required to complete the exercises. You should answer the questions succinctly in at most 3 pages (double-spaced).

Grading: You can choose which of the data exercises you submit. Each paper will be graded on a scale from 0 to 10. We will grade up to 4 data exercises, and count the 3 highest grades. Written assignments are due, in hard copy form, at the beginning of the class for which the chapter is assigned. You can expect to receive the graded assignment back one week after you hand it in.

Late Policy: No late assignments will be accepted.

AI Usage: The use of AI tools is prohibited for this assignment. Consider this a blessing: While AI is pretty good at sounding like it has analyzed data, it is pretty bad at actually doing data analysis.

- ***Country Position Paper (20%).*** Due date **April 15**.

  Format: You will write a paper that summarizes one EU country's position on a topic up for discussion in the European Council. The paper should be written from the perspective of the country you represent. It should summarize the country's position on the topic, and it should make a proposal on what the European Union's common position on the topic should be. You can pick any EU member nation, and we will decide on the topic during the semester. When determining the position, you should take into account both the country's specific circumstances as well as the ideological orientation of its current government.

  The paper should be no longer than 8 pages (double-spaced). You are encouraged to use data and statistics to support your argument (you can submit up to 2 additional pages of graphs and tables). A suggested outline is as follows:

  - Introduction
    * Quick overview of background and history of topic
    * Importance of the issue for the EU
  - The issue in your country
    * Why is this issue (not) important in your country? How so?
    * How is your country affected by the issue?
  - Policy proposal
    * What is your country's proposal on what EU policy on the issue should be?
  - Concluding remarks

  Additional information about the paper will be discussed later in the class.

  Grading: Papers will be graded out of 100. Papers that display a greater understanding of the issue, your country's position on it, have a more coherent argument, are more original, show more critical thinking, are better organized, and are not full of terrible style and grammar will receive more points.

  Late Policy: For each 24 hours the paper is submitted late, 5 points are taken off the score. If there are circumstances beyond your control that prevent you from finishing the paper on time, please contact me as soon as you become aware of the situation.

  AI Usage: The AI policy for this assignment is the same as for the exams: You can use it, I expect papers to go beyond what AI offers, I reserve the right to orally examine students about their papers and adjust their grade accordingly, and there needs to be an AI disclosure statement.

- ***Class Participation, incl. News Roundup (20%)***

  Format: Student participation is vital for the success of the course, and your contribution to the class will be an important part of your grade. You are expected to attend on a regular basis, arrive on time, and be prepared to engage in discussions and to ask questions about the topic. To be able to do this, you should complete the assigned reading *before* each class.

  In addition, it is important that you keep up to date with current events in Europe throughout the semester, and to connect them to the topics that we discuss in class. Here are some reputable English-speaking news sources that provide comprehensive coverage of European affairs:

  - *New York Times*. You have free access through UNC Libraries.
  - *The Economist*. You have free access through ProQuest. Pay particular attention to the "Europe" and "Britain" sections.
  - *Washington Post*. You have free access through UNC Libraries.
  - *BBC News*
  - *Deutsche Welle*
  - *France 24*

  Every Thursday, we will begin class with a *news roundup*. During this roundup, students will summarize the most important news stories from Europe for that week. Each student will be randomly assigned to one week's news roundup team. Each team member should present a 1-2 minute summary of one news story. The summary should be your own and be based on numerous news sources. Team members should coordinate in advance so each member presents a different news item.

  Grading Criteria: Your participation grade takes both your regular participation as well as your news roundup contribution into account. Your score will be higher if you regularly participate in class in a thoughtful manner that demonstrates that you have done the readings and thought about the class material.

For your final grade, I use the following scale as a guide: A (93-100), A-(90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B-(80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C-(70-72), D+ (65-69) D (60-64), and F (0-59). However, the final determination about grades is with me and may deviate from this scale. We will post grades to Canvas. You are expected to keep track of your own grade using the raw scores from Canvas and the weights above.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy
AI tools are now a fact of life and are used in the workplace and beyond. One of the key skills that students need to acquire is how to use AI effectively to enhance their own work. Students are therefore generally allowed to use AI tools to help them prepare for class and for class assignments.[1] However, it is crucial that students use AI to enhance their own work, rather than students altering and marginally changing AI output. This is reflected in the course expectation that students' work goes *beyond* whatever AI offers. Thus, work that is mostly based on AI output will be insufficient to pass this course.

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[1]The only exception to this are the data exercises, where use of AI is forbidden.

In addition, students need to be able to have a firm understanding of their written work. I reserve the right to orally examine students about the answers in their papers/exams. If it becomes clear that students do not have a firm understanding of their answers, I reserve the right to adjust assignments grades accordingly.

All assignments in which AI was used need to be accompanied by an AI Disclosure Statement, in which students describe in detail how and for what purposes AI was used. Failure to disclose AI use, or failure to accurately disclose how AI was used, will lead to students failing the assignment.

Grade Appeal Process

The first step is to contact Avi Faber, who will be grading all assignments. Please explain to him why you think your grade is not what it should be. Avi will make a first determination on the merits of your case.

If, after talking to Avi, you still think your grade is not what it should be, you can request a re-grade from me. I will then grade the *entire* assignment *from scratch*. Your grade may therefore go up, stay the same, or go down. This grade is final and cannot be appealed, except in the case of technical errors (e.g. point calculation errors).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: ACADEMIC AND POLICY STATEMENTS

Attendance Policy

As stated in the University's Class Attendance Policy, no right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

- Authorized University activities: University Approved Absence Office (UAAO) website provides information and FAQs for students and FAQs for faculty related to University Approved Absences

- Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by the (EOC)

- Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

Code of Conduct

I expect all students to adhere to University policy and to follow the guidelines of the UNC Code of Conduct. In particular, students are expected to aware of policies related to academic integrity. You can read more about the Code of Conduct at studentconduct.unc.edu. In any course, including mine, what constitutes cheating can change from one activity to another. For example, collaboration may be encouraged for an assignment but qualify as cheating during an exam. Please see my guidelines for each activity, and if you are unsure, please ask me to clarify. There may be many temptations for using online exchange sites, such as Chegg. Note that these sites provide names of students who have used their materials, and they routinely cooperate with institutions around academic integrity issues. Please don't get caught up with Code of Conduct issues just because it appears to be simple and untraceable. It is not!

Syllabus Changes

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

Acceptable Use Policy

By attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) sets the expectation that you will use the University's technology resources responsibly, consistent with the University's mission. In the context of a class, it is quite likely you will participate in online activities that could include personal information about you or your peers, and the AUP addresses your obligations to protect the privacy of class participants. In addition, the AUP addresses matters of others' intellectual property, including copyright. These are only a couple of typical examples, so you should consult the full Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy, which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality and intellectual property.

Additionally, consult the Safe Computing at UNC website for information about data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.

Data Security and Privacy

UNC-Chapel Hill is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities of transparency as a state-sponsored institution of higher learning, protecting certain types of information, and using information Carolina

collects only for appropriate purposes. Consult the UNC-Chapel Hill Privacy Statement for additional information.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: SERVICES AND STUDENT SUPPORT STATEMENTS

Equal Opportunity and Compliance Accommodations

Equal Opportunity and Compliance Accommodations Team (Accommodations – UNC Equal Opportunity and Compliance) receives requests for accommodations for disability, pregnancy and related conditions, and sincerely held religious beliefs and practices through the University's Policy on Accommodations. EOC Accommodations team determines eligibility and reasonable accommodations consistent with state and federal laws.

Counseling and Psychological Services

UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The Heels Care Network website is a place to access the many mental health resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students, offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to the CAPS website or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more. Students can also call CAPS 24/7 at 919-966-3658 for immediate assistance.

Title IX and Related Resources

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC or by contacting the University's Title IX Coordinator, Elizabeth Hall, or the Report and Response Managers in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office. Please note that I am designated as a Responsible Employee, which means I must report to the EOC any information I receive about the forms of misconduct listed in this paragraph. If you'd like to speak with a confidential resource, those include Counseling and Psychological Services, the University's Ombuds Office, and the Gender Violence Services Coordinators. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Policy on Non-Discrimination

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, sex, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered, and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied. If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (email reportandresponse@unc.edu or see additional contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office. Please note that I am designated as a Responsible Employee, which means that I must report to the EOC any information I receive about harassment or discrimination. If you'd like to

speak with a confidential resource, those include Counseling and Psychological Services and the University's Ombuds Office.

Undergraduate Testing Center
The College of Arts and Sciences provides a secure, proctored environment in which exams can be taken. The Center works with instructors to proctor exams for their undergraduate students who are not registered with ARS and who do not need testing accommodations as provided by ARS. In other words, the Center provides a proctored testing environment for students who are unable to take an exam at the normally scheduled time (with pre-arrangement by your instructor). For more information, visit the testing center website.

Learning Center
Want to get the most out of this course or others this semester? Visit UNC's Learning Center to make an appointment or register for an event. Their free, popular programs will help you optimize your academic performance. Try academic coaching, peer tutoring, STEM support, ADHD/LD services, workshops and study camps, or review tips and tools available on the website.

Writing Center
For free feedback on any course writing projects, check out UNC's Writing Center. Writing Center coaches can assist with any writing project, including multimedia projects and application essays, at any stage of the writing process. You don't even need a draft to come visit. To schedule a 45-minute appointment, review quick tips, or request written feedback online, visit *http://writingcenter.unc.edu/*UNC's Writing Center online.