

**POL387 H1F**

**POLITICS IN EUROPE**

**Thursdays, 11:00–13:00**

**Location:** UC 179

**Professor:** Randall Hansen

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Office hours: Thursdays, 13:30–15:00

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**Course Description**

Europe is fascinating. The continent has overcome a history of war and ethnic hatred, massive inequality, aristocratic privilege, and genocidal racism to create a zone of peace and prosperity. Across Western Europe, the welfare state is far more generous than anything found in North America. In the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden), gender and economic equality are unmatched anywhere else on the planet. Its cities are among the most beautiful on earth, and their concert halls and museums are outstanding. But the cities are themselves anything but museums: they are magnets for immigrants from across the world, and Berlin, London, Paris, and Madrid, among others, teem with people and crackle with energy. Northern Italy, southern Germany, Catalonia, Île-de-France (the Paris region), and the Nordic countries are among the most economically dynamic places on earth.

Yet they face many challenges, including rising anti-immigrant sentiment and steadily increasing support for the far right. Further contentious issues include a history of racism, genocide, and colonialism that has not been fully confronted, diverging patterns of prosperity between northern and southern Europe, and a militaristic and expansionist Russia that threatens both invasion and everything for which postwar Europe stands.

The course, organized around dramatic events, strange paradoxes, and puzzling outcomes, will provide students with an introduction to the study of Western Europe.

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**Learning Objectives**

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Develop an understanding of, and ideally a passion for, the history, politics, and society of postwar Western Europe.
  2. Improve analytical skills through close engagement with primary and secondary sources.
  3. Compare and contrast European political systems to deepen their understanding of comparative politics.
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## Textbook

There is no required text. Articles and appropriate links will be posted on Quercus.

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## Course Requirements

### 1. Discussion Paper

- **Length:** 2,000 words
- **Due:** Wednesday, October 15, 2025, at 11:59 pm (submit on Quercus)
- **Weight:** 35% of final grade

**Instructions:** Write a 2,000-word essay in response to the assigned podcast: [\*The Rest is Politics: Germany's Fight Against the Far-Right\*](#): [also available on Apple Podcasts].

Your essay must:

- **Engage directly with the podcast (40%):** identify and critically evaluate at least three arguments; quote/paraphrase with timestamps; discuss what is overlooked. You will gain extra points if you pick up on arguments that apply not only to Germany but also France, Italy, and the United Kingdom.
- **Integrate scholarship and journalism (40%):** at least six sources, four peer-reviewed; at least two journalistic/policy; include a working bibliography with 1–2 sentences on each source.
- **Connect to course readings (15%):** refer to at least one concept, author, or framework from a lecture/s [with date(s)].
- **Reflect briefly (5%):** what surprised you? did anything challenge assumptions?

**AI Use Policy:** AI may be used for scaffolding (clarifying concepts, structuring ideas, identifying verified sources) but not for writing. Students must include an AI Use Statement with prompts, reflections, and corrections. Improper use (outsourcing the essay) will result in a failing grade.

### 2. In-Class Midterm

- **Date:** Thursday, October 23, 2025
- **Weight:** 40% (Because reading week falls so late, the midterm covers six lectures and the final exam four. The midterm is thus relatively heavily weighted).
- **NB:** The midterm follows the podcast assignment relatively closely, but as the podcast assignment requires you use the lectures, it will be solid preparation for the midterm. You will also have most course requirements completed by early December (a non-cumulative final test on three classes remains), which will allow you to concentrate on cumulative finals in your other classes.

### 3. In-Class Final Test: November 27, 2025

- **Weight:** 25%
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## Late Penalties & Extensions

- Late penalty: 2% per day (including weekends), up to two weeks.
  - Extensions only for legitimate reasons (illness, family tragedy), requested **at least 3 days before the deadline (for instance, by October 12, 11:59pm for the podcast assignment)**.
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## Email Communication

- Email is a last resort. Raise questions in class whenever possible.
  - TA: Arina Dmitrenko (arina.dmitrenko@mail.utoronto.ca)
  - Instructor: r.hansen@utoronto.ca
  - Please include course number in the subject line.
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## Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses. Students must familiarize themselves with U of T's policy: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

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## Weekly Schedule

### Part I: Building Europe

#### Week 1 – Sept 4: *Introduction: A Phoenix from the Ashes*

- Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, pp. 1–41.

#### Week 2 – Sept 11: *The European Union: A Short History* (Recorded Lecture)

- David Phinnemore, “The European Union: Establishment and Development,” in Michelle Cini & Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, *European Union Politics* (Oxford, 2022).
- Carlo Invernizzi Accetti, [“What is Christian Democracy?”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=jFSxFv_r4Ts&t=246s) European Institute, Columbia: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=jFSxFv\\_r4Ts&t=246s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=jFSxFv_r4Ts&t=246s). The video explores the thesis that the European Union’s crisis results from being a Christian Democratic ‘hermit crab’ in a neo-liberal shell. Watch and reflect on this point as we go through the lectures.

### Part II: The Big Five: Western & Southern Europe

#### Week 3 – Sept 18: *Between the Scylla of Nazism and the Charybdis of Weimar: German Democracy*

- Manfred G. Schmidt. “Germany: The Grand Coalition State,” 2015, pp. 1–36.
- Dalia Marin, “Germany’s Divided Soul,” *Project Syndicate* (2019).

- Timothy Garton Ash, “The New German Question,” *New York Review of Books*, Aug 15, 2013.
- Guy Chazan, “Germany’s Tangled Relationship with Russia,” *Financial Times*, May 22, 2023.
- Kati Marton, *The Chancellor: The Remarkable Odyssey of Angela Merkel* (Simon and Schuster, 2021), “Dictators:” 101–121.

**Week 4 – Sept 25:** *How do you govern a country with 246 varieties of cheese? The French 5th Republic*

- Vincent Wright and Andrew Knapp, *Government & Politics of France* (2006), pp. 24–31 & 49–53.
- Kesselman et al., *Introduction to Comparative Politics* (8th ed., 2019), chapter 3 (“France”).
- Sophie Meunier. “Is France Still Relevant?” *French Politics, Culture & Society* 35(2), 2017: 59–75.
- Robert Zaretsky, “France Is at a Historic Turning Point—and It Has Been Here Before,” *Politico*, July 14, 2024.
- Hanne Cokelore, “How France Voted: Charts and Maps,” *Politico*, July 8, 2024.

**Week 5 – Oct 2:** *Broken Britain: the Westminster Model in the Shadow of Brexit*

- Vernon Bogdanor, *The New British Constitution* (2009), chapter 1 (“A Peculiar Constitution”).
- Leruth, Gänzle, & Trondal (2019) “Differentiated Integration and Disintegration in the EU after Brexit,” *JCMS* 57: 1383–1394.
- Leslie Vinjamurie, “How Brexit and Boris Broke Britain,” *Foreign Affairs*, August 3, 2022.
- Philip Pullman, “On the 1,000 Causes of Brexit,” *The Guardian*, June 25, 2016.
- Mujtaba Rahman, “The EU’s approach to Britain and Brexit needs fixing,” *Financial Times*, August 11, 2024.
- Geoffrey Wheatcroft, “A Tenuous Mandate,” *New York Review of Books*, August 15, 2024.
- Peter Foster, “UK-EU reset: the key points,” *Financial Times*, May 19, 2025.

**Week 6 – Oct 9:** *In Search of Italy: The Second Italian Republic*

- Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (2008), 529–548.
- Robert Leonardi, *Government and Politics of Italy* (2017), chapter 4.
- Diego Garzia, “The Italian parliamentary election of 2022,” *West European Politics* (2023).
- Ian Bremmer, “What Italy’s Political Chaos Means for Europe,” *Time Magazine*, July 23, 2022.

**Week 7 – Oct 16:** *Where Fascism failed to fail: Franco, Spain, and Spanish Democracy*

- Josep M. Colomer, “Political Institutions in a Comparative Perspective,” in Diego Muro & Ignacio Lago (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Spanish Politics* (2020).
- Nigel Townson, *The Penguin History of Modern Spain* (2023), chapter 10.
- “Spain faces uncertain political future after election deadlock,” *Financial Times*, July 24, 2023.
- Sandrine Morel, “Catalonia’s pro-independence movement lose regional majority,” *Le Monde*, May 13, 2024.

**Week 8 – Oct 23: In-Class Midterm**

**NB:** If you miss this exam due to illness, the make-up will be held in January.

**October 30: Reading Week.**

**Part III: Europe at its Best and Worst: Immigration, Welfare, and Social Democracy**

**Week 9 – November 6:** *Gender and Sexuality in Europe*

- Jonathan Dean & Kristin Aune, “Feminism Resurgent? Mapping Contemporary Feminist Activism in Europe,” *Social Movement Studies* (2015), pp. 375–395.
- Laura Hughes, “How to Close the Gender Pay Gap,” *Financial Times*, August 6, 2020.
- Philip Ayoub & David Paternotte, “Europe and LGBT Rights: A Conflicted Relationship,” in Michael Bosia et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Global LGBT and Sexual Diversity Politics* (2019).
- Maddy Savage, “This might be the loneliest country for expats,” *BBC*, October 6, 2016.

**Week 10 – Nov 13:** *Europe Unsettled: Migrants and Refugees on the Old Continent*

- Peter Gatrell, *The Unsettling of Europe*, part 5.
- Randall Hansen, “Making Immigration Work: How Britain and Europe can cope with their immigration crises,” *Government and Opposition* (2016), pp. 183–208.
- Rahsaan Maxwell, “Cultural Diversity and Its Limits in Western Europe,” *Current History* (2016), pp. 95–101.
- Arne Niemann & Natascha Zaun, “Introduction: EU external migration policy and EU migration governance,” *JEMS* 49(12) (2023): 2965–2985.

**Week 11 – Nov 20:** *A Social Democratic Paradise or Welfare Socialism? Nordic Europe*

- Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1989), chapter 2.
- Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy* (2nd ed., 2012), chapter 3, pp. 30–45.
- David Andreas Bell et al. “Nordic welfare chauvinism...,” *International Social Work*, 2023, 66(6): 1786–1802.

**Week 12 – Nov 27:** In-Class Final Test [on material since 6 November]