



---

**JOHN CABOT UNIVERSITY**

COURSE CODE: "PL 250"  
COURSE NAME: "Western European Politics"  
SEMESTER & YEAR: Fall 2024

**SYLLABUS**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Diego Pagliarulo  
**EMAIL:** dpagliarulo@johncabot.edu  
**HOURS:** MW 4:30 PM 5:45 PM  
**TOTAL NO. OF CONTACT HOURS:** 45  
**CREDITS:** 3  
**PREREQUISITES:** Prerequisite: PL 223  
**OFFICE HOURS:**

---

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The course examines the political systems in Western Europe and major political developments affecting Western Europe since 1945 through a comparative lens. Looking at historical legacies, political cultures, types of government, and party systems shaping the major Western European powers, students will gain an understanding of the constitutive features, and transnational developments, challenges and changes in Western European states.

**SUMMARY OF COURSE CONTENT:**

- The geopolitical origins of Western Europe
- The rise and evolution of the contemporary Western European state model.
- The process of European integration
- Comparative analysis of the political systems of the main Western European countries, including Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy.
- Comparative analysis of the key political challenges faced by Western European countries, such as Brexit, the rise of populism and nationalism, economic crisis, and changing attitudes toward European integration.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

As a result of this course, students will:

- Have the instruments to think critically about the key political, social, geographical, and historical features that define Western Europe.
- Acquire a detailed knowledge of the main political systems of Western Europe as well as the ability to analyze them from a comparative perspective.
- Develop the means to understand the key aspects of decision-making and policy-making at the European level.
- Understand the main political challenges concerning today's Western Europe and develop the skills needed to further explore them through independent research and articulate solutions.
- Improve their note-taking skills.
- Improve their capabilities to select and analyze sources.
- Improve their writing and oral presentation skills.

**TEXTBOOK:**

NONE

**REQUIRED RESERVED READING:**

NONE

**RECOMMENDED RESERVED READING:**

NONE

**GRADING POLICY**

**-ASSESSMENT METHODS:**

Assignment	Guidelines	Weight
Attendance and participation	Regular attendance and active and engaged participation will ensure a high participation (and overall) grade. Absences, scarce preparedness, passive and poor contribution to class discussion, and inappropriate conduct will negatively affect the grade.	15%
Movie Analysis	Essay (max 700 words) or video presentation (max 25 minutes). Provide a critical analysis of the movie “The Iron Lady”). Pay special attention to the following questions: - What are the aspects of Thatcher's character and legacy that are emphasized or played down in the movie? - What is the legacy of the Thatcher revolution on European politics? - How has public perception of political leadership and the mission of government evolved in post-WW2 Western European politics?	10%
Midterm Test	Closed Book. 2 questions/Short essays. 60 minutes	25%
Current Events Analysis	A 1000-word essay that analyzes a major current affairs event concerning Western European politics. Imagine you're a political analyst and you have been asked by the president of the US to provide a concise analysis of a major issue concerning Western European politics. Organize your work along the following lines: - The issue in a nutshell. - The implications for Western European politics. - Your policy advice.	15%
Final Exam	Closed book. 3 questions/short essays. 90 minutes.	30%
Optional Assignments	2 optional essays (max 700 words) or video presentations. 1 extra point added to the overall grade for each completed assignment. - A follow-up to the “European Dream” debate; - An essay on a topic chosen by the student among those featured in Part III of the course schedule.	0%
Oral presentation	Individual/group presentation on one of the topics featured in Part III of the course.	5%

**-ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:**

**A**Work of this quality directly addresses the question or problem raised and provides a coherent argument displaying an extensive knowledge of relevant information or content. This type of work demonstrates the ability to critically evaluate concepts and theory and has an element of novelty and originality. There is clear evidence of a significant amount of reading beyond that required for the c

**B**This is highly competent level of performance and directly addresses the question or problem raised. There is a demonstration of some ability to critically evaluate theory and concepts and relate them to practice. Discussions reflect the student's own arguments and are not simply a repetition of standard lecture and reference material. The work does not suffer from any major errors or omissions and provides evidence of reading beyond the required assignments.

**C**This is an acceptable level of performance and provides answers that are clear but limited, reflecting the information offered in the lectures and reference readings.

**D**This level of performances demonstrates that the student lacks a coherent grasp of the material. Important information is omitted and irrelevant points included. In effect, the student has barely done enough to persuade the instructor that s/he should not fail.

**F**This work fails to show any knowledge or understanding of the issues raised in the question. Most of the material in the answer is irrelevant.

**-ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Attendance is a fundamental component of your class participation grade (which in turn counts for 20% of the final grade). More than two absences will directly affect your class participation grade (and indirectly affect your other assessments).
2. Particularly active and constructive participation in class can round up your overall grade.

3. Readings are mandatory assignments and must be done in advance.
4. Recommended readings and documents provided by the instructor via Moodle are not compulsory assignments. However, they can be useful sources of inspiration for debates, papers, and independent research projects.
5. Students are invited to consult leading newspapers, journals and magazines to keep informed with ongoing news related to Western European politics.
6. Group works require active participation. Failure to perform shared tasks or to show up will be considered a sign of disrespect toward colleagues. This kind of behavior is strongly discouraged. It will bring down your grade and may complicate your colleagues' performances.
7. The use of traditional notebooks and notetaking is encouraged. Laptops and other electronic devices are allowed for the sole purpose of taking notes and enhancing participation during classes.

Regular attendance and active participation in class are essential: this includes punctuality and quick checking of intranet messages. Absences will affect the final grade, unless caused by serious family or medical emergencies. Makeup examinations may be given or late papers accepted only for the same reasons. In order to take full advantage of this class and make it an important learning experience, it is crucial to create a communicative virtuous circle, i.e. an environment where possible misunderstandings are reduced to a minimum or altogether eliminated and potential problems and issues are addressed and solved very quickly. Example: some of you may have a stronger background in Politics, and some a weaker one or none: there is nothing wrong in acknowledging it and alerting the professor, so that he can adjust his pace to the audience and work more with single cases if need be. More specifically, you can contribute quite substantially to the creation of a virtuous circle if you consider the following:

1) Some demeanors are invisible in a large infrastructure, yet become disruptive in a smaller one. They include the following (during class): - walking in and especially out of the room, in absence of an emergency or prior permission; - making use of the internet and/or any social network, such as Facebook, Twitter or a mere sms; - reading or studying for a class other than the one being attended. Taking good note of all this and acting accordingly, besides averting inevitable grade-docking, will greatly help and will be much appreciated. Therefore, you are kindly requested to turn off your iPhones et al. and avoid using a laptop during class. Exceptions can be made only in some specific cases

2) Students should be able to make the difference between occurrences which justify their absences and those which don't, and alert the prof only in the former case. Examples:

Occurrence	Absence Justified?	Communication needed
i) Sickness	yes	yes
ii) Major emergency (accident, serious family issues, permesso)	yes	yes
iii) Travel issues of any kind	no	no
iv) Family/partner/friend(s) are in town (although welcome to class if interested, in which case please notify the prof)	no	no
v) AoB	to be determined on case-by-case criteria	

3) A smaller environment should encourage a more active and direct participation of students and a more effective communication between students and professor. The former are strongly encouraged to intervene in class at any moment if something doesn't sound clear, or in the appropriate discussion time if they wish to raise a specific issue or argue about it (this latter part will be considered for grading purposes, only to the extent it shows interest for the topic and capabilities to support an argument). Opinions can be freely expressed (teacher included) and are never graded as such. Should a student feel uncomfortable about speaking in public, s/he is welcome to contact or email the professor to discuss privately

4) Finally, and on a more academic note, some concrete tips to start off in the best way possible and obtain satisfactory results: - This is a textbook-based course. No matter if individually or in a group, students should get hold of a copy anyway, as all their assignments will be based on it. Alternative routes based on the use of popular websites (e.g. Wikipedia) are strongly discouraged and would lead to poor results - Class lectures do not merely repeat or explain (unless

specifically required) the content of the readings, but aim at completing them by providing additional information and different visual angles. In order to achieve optimal results, students should work on combining their notes with reading assignments and videos screened (see next point) and raise immediately all issues related to any perceived discrepancy, incoherence or misunderstanding - Videos shown in class command the same respect and attention as all other instructional materials and should never be considered as avoidable parts of the course program (or the right moment when to disregard point 1 above) - Whenever possible, students are encouraged to take advantage of extra-credit opportunities (field trips, evening films, Guarini Institute events) even if their score is good, as these could prove ultimately decisive in enhancing their grade.

**ACADEMIC**

**HONESTY**

As stated in the university catalog, any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty, irrespective of the weight of the assignment, may result in the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A student who is reported twice for academic dishonesty is subject to summary dismissal from the University. In such a case, the Academic Council will then make a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decision.

**STUDENTS WITH LEARNING OR OTHER DISABILITIES**  
 John Cabot University does not discriminate on the basis of disability or handicap. Students with approved accommodations must inform their professors at the beginning of the term. Please see the website for the complete policy.

SCHEDULE

*(The course schedule might be subject to changes and updates)*

Week	Topic	Assignments
<b>Part I - What Is Western Europe?</b>		
Week 1	Course introduction The geopolitics of Western Europe	<b>Read:</b> Hancock, Introduction, Marshall, Chapter 4 (pp. 92-113).
Week 2	Western European democracy in the postwar era The context of German and Italian Politics.	<b>Read:</b> Mazower, Chapter 9 (pp. 290-330). Hancock, Chapter 3.1 and 4.1.
Week 3	The transformation of Western European democracy	<b>Read:</b> Mazower, Chapter 10 (pp. 333-366). Hancock, Chapter 1.1 and 2.1. <b>Watch:</b> <i>The Iron Lady</i> , directed by Phyllida Lloyd (2011).

	The Context of British and French Politics.	
Week 4	European integration and the European Union - Part I	<b>Read:</b> Hancock, Chapter 8.1-8.3 (pp. 641-680). <b>Submit:</b> Movie Analysis.
Week 5	European integration and the European Union - Part II	<b>Read:</b> Hancock, Chapter 8.4-8.5 (pp. 681-717). Jeremy Rifkin, "The European Dream. How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream.", <i>Vortrag an der Humboldt Universität zu Berlin am 18. April 2005</i> (FCE3/05). <b>Prepare debate:</b> A "European Dream?"
Week 6	Midterm Assessment	Midterm review. <b>Midterm Test.</b>
<b>Part II - Western European Political Systems: A Comparative perspective.</b>		
Week 7	British Politics	<b>Read:</b> Hancock - Chapter 1.2-1.4.
Week 8	French Politics	<b>Read:</b> Hancock - Chapter 2.2-2.4.
Week 9	German Politics	<b>Read:</b> Hancock - Chapter 3.2-3.4.
Week 10	Italian Politics	<b>Read:</b> Hancock - Chapter 4.2-4.4. <b>Submit:</b> Current Affairs Analysis
<b>Part III - Wither Western Europe?</b>		
Week 11	Brexit Case Study: Great Britain	<b>Read:</b> Hancock, Chapter 1.5. Fintan O'Toole, "Disunited Kingdom: Will Nationalism Break Britain?" <i>Foreign Affairs</i> , Vol. 102, No. 2 (Mar/Apr 2023), pp. 10-108. <b>And one of the following:</b> Drozdiak, Chapter 2. Kirchick, Chapter 6.

		<p><b>Individual presentation</b> on British politics.  <b>Prepare debate</b> on Brexit and British politics.</p>
Week 12	<p>The rise of populism, nationalism, and far right movements in Western Europe.  Case Study: Italy</p>	<p><b>Read</b>  Hancock, Chapter 4.5.  <b>And one of the following:</b>  Drozdiak, Chapter 6.  Perry Anderson, "The Italian Disaster," The London Review of Books, Vol. 36, No. 10 (May 2014), <a href="https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v36/n10/perry-anderson/the-italian-disaster">https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v36/n10/perry-anderson/the-italian-disaster</a>  <b>Individual presentations</b> on Italian politics.  <b>Prepare debate</b> on Italian politics.</p>
Week 13	<p>Globalization, identity, and Western European Politics.  Case Study: France.</p>	<p><b>Read</b>  Hancock, Chapter 2.5.  <b>And one of the following:</b>  Drozdiak, Chapter 3.  Kirchick, Chapter 5.  <b>Individual presentations</b> on French politics.  <b>Prepare debate</b> on French politics.</p>
Week 14	<p>The future of European integration  Case Study: Germany    Final Review Session</p>	<p><b>Read</b>  Hancock, Chapter 3.5.  <b>And one of the following:</b>  Drozdiak, Chapter 1 or Chapter 4.  Kirchick, Chapter 3 or Chapter 4.  Matthias Matthijs, "The Right Way to Fix the EU," Foreign Affairs Vol. 99, No. 3 (May/June 2020) 160-164, 166-170, <a href="https://jculibrary.on.worldcat.org/oclc/8580483673">https://jculibrary.on.worldcat.org/oclc/8580483673</a> .  Olaf Scholz, "The Global Zeitenwende," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 102, No. 1 (Jan/Feb 2023), pp. 22-38.  <b>Individual presentations</b> on German and European politics.  <b>Prepare debate</b> on German and EU politics.</p>
Week 15	<p>Final exams</p>	<p><b>Submit:</b>  Final Essay.</p>