During the George W. Bush Presidency, Europe was often held up as an alternative model to the US. It was widely seen as a place where capitalism was fairer and just as productive while democracy allowed for more voices, often due to the multiparty systems that predominate in European national states. Moreover, the European Union appeared to give smaller national states a greater voice in international politics. In the Obama years, this positive picture had to be revised. Europe was slower to recover from the post-2008 economic crisis, and its democracies were clearly struggling from a variety of new voices that didn’t always fit the existing parties. And the EU itself suddenly was struggling on issues as diverse as how to handle Greeks in the EU, Russians in Ukraine, and migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. Now, under Trump, it’s just hard to say what US policy towards Europe is (to be fair, he may want it that way). Fights over trade, Iran, climate change, and NATO have dominated headlines since early 2017.

There’s no doubt that European politics has become fascinating again…and, for many Americans, also plenty confusing. Are the U.S. and Europe blood brothers in confronting Islamic radicalism…and or do Americans only have real friends in London? (Paris? Warsaw?) Are the U.S. and Europe bound together in the struggle to re-invent capitalism for the 21st century…or are we bitter commercial rivals who have less in common than we used to think? Are the U.S. and Europe two pillars of a pluralist cultural community informed by Christianity and Judaism with Islam, Buddhism and other faiths influencing at the margins….or are Americans and Europeans actually from “different planets”? Finally, is the EU still “rescuing European nation states” or has it inappropriately “eroded their sovereignty”?

This course takes on these questions (and more) first by backing up and looking at the entire post-World War II era and not just this week’s headlines. It introduces the politics of contemporary Europe by looking at selected countries. For much of the post-WWII era, it was widely assumed that “becoming modern” meant becoming like the United States. Yet Britain, France, Italy and Germany all developed prosperous economies and stable democracies that differ in important ways from the US and from each other. What are these differences? Where do they come from? Why, if at all, do they matter? Are they at the heart of the recent and sometimes bitter debates between the US and some European countries? These are the broad themes of the course.

We spend two weeks on each of the four European democracies listed above. In addition, we look at the transformation processes in Central and Eastern Europe and the role of the European Union. Generally, the first Tuesday of each block starts with an in-class quiz on the textbook chapters for the country in question. Once we have an important set of data in common, we can move on to analysis for the next two classes. In the final session of most of the blocks, we will step back and consider some broader problem in European politics of which the nation just studied is a particularly good example: Britain (the struggles of the nation-state challenged by the European Union), France (dealing with immigration), Italy
(the refugee situation), Germany (populism and the European economic crisis), Central and Eastern Europe (the transformation to democracy and capitalism), and the European Union (political legitimacy). These are our bi-weekly “fighting Thursdays” where you do some of your work in the identity of a European politician, and you have to argue with classmates who have been assigned a different identity. This is a lot of fun (even if you get nervous about arguing). Speaking of arguing, we’ll also have a two-class negotiation exercise in which we mock out the Brexit negotiations between the UK and the EU. For this, we’ll have London-based think tank expert Hans Kundnani.

This is a fun, challenging class, in which I have two major objectives. First, there is a “content” objective. I want you to come away with a new set of ideas about how capitalist democracies work and where and how they are struggling to adapt to new challenges. Second, I want to help you improve your ability to communicate that newfound knowledge. Whatever you have already mastered when you enter the class, I hope – through written and oral assignments – to help you improve your skills. Political science 200 is a prerequisite for this course for polisci and IR majors, and I expect that students will use the knowledge gained there in writing their papers. European Studies and other majors are welcome in the class without taking POL 200, but they should be prepared to produce excellent prose and be open to learning to meet new expectations.

The two departmental learning outcomes I emphasize are that students should be able to:

- “Think critically and analytically about government, political processes, and political theories, including the components of a good society.”
- “Write and speak with originality and clarity, providing reasons and evidence to support claims using proper citation of source material.”

The requirements are two papers of six to eight double-spaced pages, reading responses (via email) to our “non-textbook” readings, an in-class exercise on Brexit plus a take-home final. There also will be quizzes on the textbook (“KKJ”) readings. I put a particular emphasis on student writing, and this means you’ll get a lot of feedback and reactions. Some of that feedback will be fairly blunt. I do this because writing skills are more important than most students realize. I find if I’m too indirect or gentle, many people miss the point. Grades are calculated as follows:

- Two 6-8 page Papers (15% each) 30%
- Final Exam 20%
- Bi-weekly Quizzes 15%
- Reading Responses 15%
- Brexit Exercise 10%
- Participation 10%

You will think, write and argue about a range of political issues. In doing so, you will need to grapple with the arguments of others – those of your classmates and of the assigned readings. The course will be a mix of lecture and discussion. The reading will range from
50-150 pages per week. Plan enough time for the heavier weeks. The first section of the class is the most “lecture heavy,” and specific lecture titles are provided for the first six classes. After that, we move to much more discussion and fewer (and shorter) lectures.

You participate by identifying and discussing the main issues in the texts we will read. Note that our authors will often contradict one another, so you will agree with some more than others. Read carefully, and come to class ready to make connections to other readings or to contemporary events, to synthesize points and to ask questions. Actively, appropriately, and consistently joining class discussions will push up your grade. Discussion is also a way to clarify your understandings and to try out your conclusions with your classmates. It’s fine to be a bit unsure. You don’t have to be certain in order to open your mouth in this class. We’ll cover lots of complex material, and no one will understand everything right from the start.

In all papers, the prose must ultimately, of course, be your own, and you should use standard social science composition form for attribution of ideas to others (i.e., Author: Page) plus a bibliography. The internet has made plagiarism easy, but it has also made catching plagiarism easy; please don’t compromise our standards of integrity by plagiarizing. While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the internet. Details about Academic Honesty can be found at (https://catalog.byu.edu/policy/academic-honesty).

The papers are due as indicated in the syllabus, and no extensions will be given except in the case of exceptional circumstances. Students should also familiarize themselves with BYU’s fairly strict policy on incompletes, a policy that I do not control and cannot change.

Finally, US law prohibits sex discrimination in education. It covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU’s policy extends not only to university employees but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk to me about it or contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895 or (801) 367-5689 (24 hours). Moreover, BYU reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. The Services for Students with Disabilities Office can be reached at 422-2767.

Reading and Email Assignments

The main text is Kesselman, Krieger and Joseph (henceforth, “KKJ”), Introduction to Comparative Politics (8th edition, 2019). Do not buy an older edition. It will have all the wrong leaders, all the wrong parties and lots of outdated information. I have asked the bookstore to sell codes for the e-text, which is cheaper and has some features the hardback does not have (including updates). There are also practice quizzes and links to outside resources for each chapter of the text. If you prefer having a hard copy to mark up (or for any other reason), you can buy the e-text with additional loose-leaf pages (an extra $10).

I will give you instructions on how to access additional required readings on Learning Suite. Always print out a hard copy and bring the “packet” texts to class. Our discussions work much better when you have marked up copy of your readings at your side. Finally, you
should read a European newspaper regularly. There is a list of English-language sites at [http://www.world-newspapers.com/europe.html](http://www.world-newspapers.com/europe.html). You may be surprised to learn that, for example, there are about a half a dozen Czech sites available in English. For the broadest English-language coverage, I recommend London’s *Financial Times*, though you may have to register for their site. Of course, if you read another European language, your options are broader still. A current sent of links to European newspapers, including a majority in the vernacular languages but still with many in English, is at [http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/](http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/).

The assignments are structured by weeks of the semester. At the end of each class meeting, I usually will give specific information about which readings are next in line, although the general rule is that the syllabus is arranged in chronological order. The syllabus is subject to change as needed. Before each class that does not have a textbook assignment, you should submit, via email, a short set of reading responses and questions about that day’s reading assignment. **However, if you have not actually done all of the reading, then you should not submit a response.** Such responses waste your time (and mine), and it is usually quite obvious when students have not read carefully. 15% of your grade will be determined by these submissions, which should generally be between 300-500 words. They are due by 10:00 am on the day of class. Each student may miss two without penalty. **Again, no responses are due on days we have textbook (“KKJ”) readings.**

**Finally, I don't allow laptops or cellphones in class.** The best recent research reported in *Scientific American* and *Harvard Business Review* shows that note-taking with pen and paper leads to more learning than note-taking on laptops. Keep the electronics zipped in your backpacks once class begins (Given that we have an e-text, I am fine with people reviewing the class text or other online materials prior to the start of class on quiz days).

Weeks 1-4: (September 4 – 27) Europe’s Hard Road

(9/4) *Politics in Europe*, KKJ, pp. 2-22. **Lecture: ‘How to defend yourself against bad arguments.’**


(9/20) Free time to work on papers. I will hold extra office hours during this time.


Weeks 5-6: (October 2 – 11) Great Britain: Exceptionalism

(10/2) KKJ, Chapter 2 (Quiz 1).


(10/10) Brexit Negotiation Simulation, Working Dinner at my house (1655 Pine Lane, Provo) at 6:30 pm.


Weeks 7-8: (October 16 – 25) France: Immigration and its Discontents

(10/16) KKJ, Chapter 3 *(Quiz 2).*


Weeks 9-10: (October 30 – November 8) Germany: Still a Problem?

(10/30) KKJ, Chapter 4 (*Quiz* 3).


Weeks 11-13: (November 13 – 29) Italy: The Decline of Babies and Parties


(11/20 – 11/22) Thanksgiving Break: No Class. Reminder: second paper is due Tuesday, November 20 at 4 pm at the political science secretaries’ office.


Week 14: (December 4 – 6) The European Union: Shaky or Stable?

(12/4) KKJ, Chapter 5 (Quiz 5).


Week 15: (December 11 – 13) Central Europe: Making Markets and Democracies


A take home final will be handed out the second to last day of class (December 11). It is due to the political science secretaries (745 KMBL) by 4 pm on Tuesday, December 18. You may also turn it in before this day and time.