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Polsc. 307 I

European Politics

Spring 2015. TTh 12:00-1:15

Web 103

### I. *Description:*

This course on European politics will start with a discussion of issues that will continue to dominate the European political agenda throughout this year and probably beyond. The recent terror attack on the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris illustrates growing tensions about fundamental cultural differences that are partly caused by the growth of immigrant populations with religious identities that clash with a radical secular culture. This clash is especially prominent in France whose political identity is connected with the expressively anti-Catholic French Revolution of 1789. We will discuss these tensions and their ethnic and racist dimensions in detail.

Before the *Charlie Hebdo* event, there was another crisis that shook up European politics. That crisis was triggered by the Ukraine's attempt to gain closer association with the European Union (EU) and preoccupied European and Western attention in general since the end of 2013. We will use this crisis in order to find out what motivated the Ukraine to launch the process and why Putin's Russia intervened in the violent way it did. We will ask the question whether the tension illustrates the strength or the weakness of the EU as a political project. Does Russia feel threatened by the emergence of the EU as a confederated political formation of 29 states and 560 million citizens?

The Ukrainian crisis sheds light on the appeal of the EU for some countries that still want to join. Yet this appeal has been overshadowed since the major financial crisis of 2008 that has affected Greece and other member states especially in the Southern part of the continent in a major way. The Euro crisis that was accompanied by huge international bail-out schemes for the troubled economies and seemed to have been contained has recently become rekindled by a political stalemate in Greece. We will discuss whether the EU in its present configuration is threatened by internal tensions it cannot control? An additional question will be whether the

growing nationalism in some member states like France and the UK will ultimately defeat the political project of the EU?

Still, despite the voices of EU-skepticism the EU has remained attractive to many countries that want to join it and to people from outside the EU. Millions of people from sub-Saharan Africa and the troubled Middle East attempt to reach, in a desperate and sometimes deadly way, the shores of the European continent. These mostly illegal immigrants seek asylum in the EU because of war and terror and/or deteriorating economic conditions in their countries. The refugees from Libya, Iraq and Syria have provoked xenophobic movements in many of the asylum countries. Since many of these refugees from the turmoil in the Arab world are Muslim, anti-Islamic resentments have intensified the xenophobic movements in the EU.

We will discuss the impact of old and new racism on European societies. We will discuss the features of the social welfare state that characterize most continental societies. We will also look at nationality issues in the UK and Spain and ask the question why many Scots and Catalans want to leave their respective nation states but not the EU.

Finally, we will talk about the role Germany plays within the EU. Has its economic power and as a consequence its political power become too threatening to some member states? What political role should Germany play in the center of the EU and Europe?

## *II. Requirements:*

There will be no exams, but 2 short (each 3 pages) and one long paper (7 pages) will be required. Each student has to select one or, depending on the size of the state, two member states of the European Union (EU) and regularly report in class about new events or developments in these states and their impact on the EU as a whole. A written summary 3-page report should be orally presented in class. It constitutes the first paper. The second paper will be on a topic chosen from a list of topics I will provide to the class before the spring recess. A sign-up list for countries students should report about will be circulated in the second class meeting. The semester-long country watch could become the theme for the 7page paper at the end of the semester; it may cover most of the major issues which emerged during that observation period or focus on one specific subject matter. However, the long paper can focus on any European topic students are interested in.

In addition, students have to join discussion groups that will focus on specific issues. These issues may concern the EU as a whole or specific countries and regions. The discussions will start in the groups that will have each 3 members and then, towards the middle of that class

session, involve the class as a whole in the discussion. Dependent on the number of enrolled students, these will be the topic groups for the semester:

1. EU Identity: Does the EU have a shared European Identity?
2. EU Racism and Xenophobia: How widespread are these attitudes and how damaging are they for the future of the EU?
3. EU Institutions: Which EU institutions are essential for the success and survival of the EU?
4. EU Enlargement: Should the membership be limited to a certain number of states or should it potentially include all European states?
5. EU Immigration: Since most European countries have a negative birthrate, should immigration be unlimited? Should there be ethnic and/or religious exclusions?
6. EU Welfare State: Should the European welfare state be adjusted to American standards?
7. EU-USA Relations: Should the EU retain close relations with the US or should it seek to become more self-reliant as a power?

In addition to the reader (*Europe Today*), sources of information for country reports would be US newspapers like the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, and the *BBC News* (weekdays 6:00 to 6:30 on PBS), *PBS News Hour* (weekdays 6:30 to 7:30). Many European newspapers have English language editions on line. The German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*, for example, has an international edition. However, students can use any media they have access to that report about European news. Electronic devices are welcome in class.

Required Text: Ronald Tiersky/ Erik Jones (eds.), *Europe Today*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 2014.

### III. *Format of the Class:*

I will try to lecture as little as possible, even though I will find it difficult to always abide by this promise. I will lecture at the beginning of classes and hope that student groups will slowly move in and take over discussions. The scheduled calendar of topics will remain flexible, so that we can always respond to major current developments.

### IV. *Calendar of Class:*

- 1/13 General Introduction
- 1/15 Discussion of Contemporary European Issues.
- 1/20 The history of European integration (*Europe Today*, 295-316)
- 1/22 Continued
- 1/27 Continued
- 1/29 European Law and Politics (*Europe Today*, 369-390)
- 2/3 Migration in Europe (*Europe Today*, 391-416)
- 2/5 Germany's Return to the Center (*Europe Today*, 87-118)
- 2/10 The problem with Germany's power
- 2/12 France and its current discontents (*Europe Today*, 17-50)
- 2/17 The United Kingdom in the EU (*Europe Today*, 51-86)
- 2/19 The UK leaving the EU
- 2/24 Italy after Berlusconi (*Europe Today*, 119-152)
- 2/26 Scandinavia's move towards Europe (*Europe Today*, 153-194)
- 3/3 Poland's assertion of European leadership (*Europe Today*, 257-294)
- 3/5 The Baltic States (Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania) as former Soviet Republics and present EU member states
- 3/10 Former Soviet satellites (Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia) in the EU
- 3/12 Russia's European identity claims (*Europe Today*, 219-256)
- 3/17 Continued
- 3/19 Continued
- 3/23 – 3/27 Spring Recess
- 3/31 Europe and the USA (*Europe Today*, 417-446)

- 4/2 Continued
- 4/7 Europe and the People's Republic of China
- 4/9 Europe and Africa
- 4/14 Xenophobia and racism in contemporary Europe
- 4/16 Continued
- 4/21 The future of the EU model
- 4/23 The EU as model for other world regions
- 4/28 The possibility of the EU's failure
- 4/30 Europe without the EU
- 5/5 Conclusion
- 5/11 Deadline for Papers.