

# Contemporary Europe

Svanur Pétursson  
[svanur.petursson@gmail.com](mailto:svanur.petursson@gmail.com)  
Office: Conklin 337 (Rutgers)  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1.30-2.30 (Zoom)

History 372  
Tuesdays/Thursdays 1.00-2.20  
CKB 114  
Fall 2024

## Course Description:

Contemporary Europe is today comprised of over 40 countries (44 to be exact according to the United Nations), each with their individual national histories, yet each tied together by shared global and often national interests. However, for a large part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Europe was divided both politically and economically into an East and a West; between a communist political system organized around central state planning in the East, and the capitalist liberal democracies of the West. Things would dramatically change with the fall of the Iron curtain and the end of the Cold War in 1989/91 which renewed the idea(l) of a common Europe, reigniting hopes of a truly United Europe. The last three decades have witnessed the attempts to create that ideal, specifically through the supranational European Union, which today consists of 27 member states from both the old West and the East. This course will focus on these last three decades, focusing on two interrelated themes; the creation and function of the European Union as a unifying factor, and the legacy of Communism not only for the former Communist countries of the East, but also how that has colored the attitudes of the “West” towards those countries.

## Course Objectives:

The students of the course will analyze historical events and movements of Contemporary European history and assess their subsequent significance. Students will use critical thinking and problem solving skills to analyze information, especially when it comes to current news sources covering contemporary Europe. Additionally students will learn how to synthesize historical and geographical information acquired through the understanding of maps and primary source information.

## Course Goals:

Upon completion of this course, students should specifically be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate knowledge of some of the fundamental concepts and theories of historical events and ideas related to Contemporary Europe.

- Evaluate the social, political, religious, and intellectual traditions of the various countries of modern day Europe
- Read, analyze, organize and synthesize, evidence, historical problems, and interpretations connected to the history of Contemporary Europe.

### **Required Textbooks:**

Pinder, John and Simon Usherwood: *European Union: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press. (2007). This book is available Online through the NJIT library website.

Ther, Phillip: *Europe Since 1989: A History*. Princeton University Press (2016). This book is available through online retailers, and as an e-book for around \$15.

The rest of the material will be posted on the Canvas site either as links or as Pdf documents.

### **Course Requirements:**

The course will be heavily weighted towards discussion throughout the semester, and students are expected to be well prepared for each class session. This will not be a simple lecture class, although there will be occasional short lectures, scattered through the semester. Each class session we will discuss the major themes and ideas of the assigned readings, and once a week we will also discuss the major news events from Europe (the instructor will provide links to each week's news readings the previous Friday). Therefore active participation is expected and required each week. Students will write three short reaction papers on that week's European news during the semester, with the top two grades counting towards the final grade (each reaction papers worth 10% of the final grade). There will also be one midterm exam and then a final exam, but for those exams students will receive a comprehensive guide to prepare for them.

### **Grading;**

In-class participation: 20%

Midterm Exam: 25%

Final Exam: 25%

Documentary Reaction Papers: 30%

Grade scale is as follows:

A: 90 points and higher

B+: 85-89.99

B: 80-84.99

C+: 75-79.99

C: 70-74.99

D: 60-69.99

F: 59.99 and lower

### **Attendance:**

Attendance is required and attendance will be taken at the start of every class.

If you plan to claim a religious holiday as an excused absence, you must inform me of this fact within the first two weeks of class.

### **Academic Integrity:**

Plagiarism is passing off someone else's work as your own and will not be tolerated. Students are expected to write their own original work and to give credit in the form of footnotes (i.e. citations) for any material that is not their own. Plagiarized assignments will be given an automatic "0" with no possibility of a rewrite. Violations will be brought to the immediate attention of the Dean of Students and adjudicated in accordance with the NJIT Honor Code.

### **Schedule of Topics and Readings:**

#### **Week 1**

Introduction

#### **Week 2**

Tue:

Readings: EU – Chapter 1: What the EU is for

Thu:

Readings: EU – Chapter 2: How the EU was made

### **Week 3**

Tue:

Readings: EU – Chapter 3: How the EU is governed

Thu:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

### **Week 4**

Tue:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 1: Introduction (optional)  
Ther – Chapter 2: Where the East Meets the West

Thu:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

### **Week 5**

Tue:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 3: The Revolutions of 1989-91

Thu:

Readings: Documentary Viewing

### **Week 6**

Tue:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 4: Getting on the Neoliberal Bandwagon

Thu:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

### **Week 7**

Tue:

Readings: Tony Judt – The Grand Illusion (Pdf on Canvas)

Thu:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

### **Week 8**

Tue:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 5: Second Wave Neoliberalism (part 1), p. 112-132

Thu:

Readings: EU: Chapter 4 – Single Market, Single Currency

**Week 9**

Tue:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 5: Second Wave Neoliberalism (part 2), p. 132-160

Thu:

Readings: EU – Chapter 5: Agriculture, regions, budget: conflicts over who gets what

**Midterm Exam due on Canvas on Sunday at the end of this week**

**Week 10**

Tue:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 6: Capital Cities Compared

Thu:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

**Week 11**

Tue:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 7: The Great Recession: 2009-9 and Its Consequences

Thu:

Readings: Documentary Viewing

**Week 12**

Tue:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 8: Southern Europe: The New East?

Thu:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

**Week 13**

Tue:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

**Week 14**

Tue:

Readings: EU – Chapter 7: ‘An area of freedom, security, and justice’

Thu:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 9: Cotransformation: The Case of Germany

**Week 15**

Tue:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 10: The Roads Not Taken

Thu:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

**FINAL Exam:** Exam date to be decided based on final exam schedule