

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
EUROPEAN DOCUMENTATION AND RESEARCH CENTRE
Course Descriptions and Bibliographies
ACADEMIC YEAR 2007-2008
European Studies (Undergraduate)

EST 1030 Introduction to Comparative Politics of Europe (4 ECTS)
Assessment – 2 hour written test at the end of the semester
Lecturer – Mark Harwood

The European Union comprises twenty-seven member states, each with their own unique political culture and political system. Understanding how and why member states make political decisions is a key to understanding dynamics within the Union. The complexity of the political system created by European integration begins with the difficulties of bringing such varied and dynamic political systems together. This complexity is further compounded by the internal dynamics within the various EU institutions and the added convolution of how these actors interact in undertaking the Union's various tasks and responsibilities.

These various elements to understanding the complex political entity which the Union is begin with this credit, which will undertake a comparative analysis of the EU's twenty-seven members, introducing many basic political terms and then applying these to our comparative analysis. Topics covered will include the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, federal and unitary states, electoral systems, political parties, the media, interest groups and the general decision-making process. Particular emphasis will be placed upon the political system of the EU's established democracies before looking at the political institutions of the Eastern European member states.

The topics that are to be covered are the following:

- 1: Political concepts, political systems and liberal democracy**
- 2: The political process and the branches of government**
- 3: Constitutional politics and unitary, devolved and federal states**
- 4: Executive Systems in Europe and the State Bureaucracy**
- 5: Legislative systems**
- 6: The Electoral Process in Europe**
- 7: Political Divides in Europe and Political Parties**
- 8: Interest group representation and the Media**

9: Eastern European Democracies

Select Bibliography

Core text

'European Politics Today'. Patricia Hogwood and Geoffrey Roberts. 2nd Edition. Manchester University Press, UK. 2003.

Additional Reading

'Political Institutions in Europe'. Josep Colomer (Ed.). 2nd Edition. Routledge, UK. 2002.

'Comparative Government and Politics: an introduction'. Rod Hague and Martin Harrop. 5th Edition. Palgrave, UK. 2001.

'Comparative Government'. Jean Blondel. 2nd Edition. Longman, UK. 1995.

'Politics in Western Europe'. M. Hancock, D. Conradt, B. Peters, W. Safran, R. Zariski. 2nd Edition. Macmillan, UK. 1998.

'European Politics Today', Gabriel A. Almond, Russell J. Dalton, G. Bingham Powell, and Kaare Strom, Longman, UK. 2005