

# Party Competition in Postindustrial Europe\*

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WS 2024-2025

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## Course Description

European multi-party systems have undergone drastic changes in the postindustrial age. Alongside major societal and economic transformations, we have witnessed significant evolution of issue agendas, weakening historical alignment of socio-structural and socio-economic groups with traditional party families, the rise of new political challengers such as green and radical right parties, and the decline of many historically dominant mainstream parties. As a result, many of today's party systems are more fragmented, volatile, and polarized than at any other point in the past 75 years.

This course offers a systematic overview of these concurrent and interrelated developments. Participants will learn about continuity and change in European party systems, the causes and consequences of evolving patterns of party competition, and the electoral opportunities and strategic challenges that parties face today. To this end, we will engage with theoretical, conceptual, and empirical contributions alike. Seeing as we will strongly engage with quantitative empirical research, statistical literacy and prior quantitative methods training at the level of Statistik I + II (or equivalent) is strongly recommended.

## Prerequisites

As a *Bachelorseminar*, this class is directed to advanced undergraduate students with prior instruction in **comparative politics** and, ideally, topics in party systems, party politics, and/or political behavior. Additionally, participants should have prior knowledge of **research methods**, including statistical literacy and the ability to critically assess research strategies in published work.

## Diversity statement

This class brings together students of diverse personal backgrounds and with different levels of prior knowledge of the subject matter. We strive to create an **inclusive and respectful environment** that allows everyone to become part of the conversation and to feel safe in asking questions and voicing problems.

Should you, for any reason, feel like this class does not offer a safe and inclusive learning experience for yourself or others, please feel free to reach out to me (e.g., by emailing me with a request for office hours via Zoom). All concerns will be treated confidentially.

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\*This version: **October 8, 2024**. Syllabus is subject to change.

## Schedule

Next to a general *Introduction (A)*, this course divided into three main blocks – *Party Systems and Party Families (B)*, *Mainstream Party Decline and the Rise of Challenger Parties (C)* and *Polarization (D)*. Each block consists of three reading weeks, which build up towards a contentious question that participants will discuss (i) individually in written essays and (ii) collectively in a roundtable discussion in class.

| Week | Date       | Block | Title                                                                                  | Main Reading(s)                                                | Background                                                                             |
|------|------------|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | 2024-10-08 | A     | Introduction                                                                           |                                                                |                                                                                        |
| 2    | 2024-10-15 | A     | Theory Building and Empirical-Analytical Political Research                            |                                                                |                                                                                        |
| 3    | 2024-10-22 | B     | Party Systems and Party Families                                                       | Kitschelt (2009)                                               | De La Cerda and Gunderson (2024), Mair and Mudde (1998)                                |
| 4    | 2024-10-29 | B     | Postindustrial Party System Change                                                     | Kriesi et al. (2008), Ch. 1                                    | Kitschelt (2004), Beramendi et al. (2015), Ch. 1                                       |
| 5    | 2024-11-05 | B     | Changing Allegiances                                                                   | Kitschelt and Rehm (2023)                                      | Oesch and Rennwald (2018), Kitschelt and Rehm (2014)                                   |
| 6    | 2024-11-12 | B     | Roundtable – Structural Transformations and Changing Patterns of Political Competition |                                                                |                                                                                        |
| 7    | 2024-11-19 | C     | Evolution of Issue Competition                                                         | De Vries and Hobolt (2020), Chs. 1+2                           | Hobolt and Vries (2015), Dancygier and Margalit (2020)                                 |
| 8    | 2024-11-26 | C     | Emergence, Consolidation, and Impact                                                   | Meguid (2008), Chs. 1+2                                        | Meguid (2005), Abou-Chadi (2016), Lehmann (2024), Abou-Chadi and Stoetzer (2020)       |
| 9    | 2024-12-03 | C     | Challenger-Mainstream Party Competition                                                | Krause, Cohen, and Abou-Chadi (2023), Hjorth and Larsen (2022) | Spanje and Graaf (2018), Spoon and Klüver (2020), Cohen, Krause, and Abou-Chadi (2024) |
| 10   | 2024-12-10 | C     | Roundtable – Responding to Far-Right Challengers                                       |                                                                |                                                                                        |
| 11   | 2024-12-17 | D     | Political Identities                                                                   | Zollinger (2024)                                               | Bornschier et al. (2021)                                                               |
| 12   | 2025-01-07 | D     | Norm Change                                                                            | Valentim (2024)                                                | Bischof and Wagner (2019), Valentim (2021)                                             |
| 13   | 2025-01-14 | D     | Affective Polarization                                                                 | Gidron, Adams, and Horne (2023)                                | Gidron, Adams, and Horne (2020), Chs. 1+4, Iyengar et al. (2019), Herold et al. (2023) |
| 14   | 2025-01-21 | D     | Roundtable – Political Polarization & Wrap-up.                                         |                                                                |                                                                                        |
| 15   | 2025-01-28 | D     | Exam week – no class.                                                                  |                                                                |                                                                                        |

## Expectations and assessment

### Grading (*Prüfungsleistung*)

Your *Prüfungsleistung* consists of **three essays**, whose combined length approximates that of a term paper. The essays will be due at different points throughout the semester (for deadlines, see below). While the essays will be graded independently, your final grade will be a weighted average, where your two best grades will each account for 40% of your final grade and your worst grade will account for 20%.

Essays must be prepared individually – no collaboration allowed. Each of your three essays should be between **1,500** and **1,800** words in length, excluding title page, references, and appendices.

### Participation requirements (*Studienleistungen*)

1. **Attendance and active participation:** Active participation is central to this class. You are expected to come to class prepared, which means (a) having read the assigned readings and (b) having prepared any assigned participation requirements for a given session. I encourage you to use the *Discussion Forum* on the Learnweb to post questions of any sort (clarification or discussion) in advance of the weekly sessions.
2. **Response memo:** For each of the reading weeks in blocks *B*, *C*, and *D*, I will share a set of “guiding questions” in advance. Each participant is required to prepare and submit **one written response memo**, addressing each of the questions in one short paragraph (100-150 words per question).
3. **Roundtable participation:** Your essays give you a chance to deal with three contentious question individually, using both the course readings and additional literature. Roundtable sessions – the final weeks of blocks *B*, *C*, and *D* – give you a chance to exchange your ideas with your classmates in a structured setting. In these sessions, I will moderate an in-class discussion in which one third of the participants act as roundtable experts and share the insights they gained when writing their essays, whereas the rest of the class will act as audience members that will get to ask questions during a Q&A part. Each participant is expected to **act as a roundtable expert once**, i.e., in one of the three roundtable sessions.

### Formal requirements for all written assignments

- Please make sure your submission fully complies with Daniel Bischof’s [formatting guide](#) at the Chair of Comparative Politics [DE/EN].
- Please use this [Word template](#) for your submissions.

### Submissions

Please upload all written assignments via the respective submission modules on the [Learnweb](#).

### Deadlines

#### *Essays*

The submission deadlines for the essays are as follows:

| Day | Date       | Time    | Assignment |
|-----|------------|---------|------------|
| Mon | 2024-11-11 | 9:00 AM | Essay 1    |
| Mon | 2024-12-09 | 9:00 AM | Essay 2    |
| Mon | 2025-01-20 | 9:00 AM | Essay 3    |

Please keep track of your schedules to ensure submissions without delay. **Late submissions** will result in deductions of 1/3 of a grade point per day.

#### *Response memos*

You can submit a response memo for a reading session of your choosing. The deadline is always **Monday, 9:00 AM**, before the corresponding session.

#### *Roundtable participations*

Dates for your roundtable participation will be assigned at the start of the semester. Please make sure to attend on the day of your assigned participation.

## Academic integrity

### Plagiarism

Students must comply with the [university policy on academic integrity](#). You are expected to be familiar with the policy and must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct.

### Responsible use of AI

Artificial intelligence productivity tools, including large language models (LLMs) and generative pre-trained transformers (GPTs), are permeating our daily work routines and will continue to do so in the future. While I encourage you to use these tools frequently and extensively, it is important that you also do so responsibly:

- Adhere to **best practice advice** as, for instance, formulated in this talk by [Olga Kononykhina](#) ([slides](#), [video recording](#))
- **Be transparent:** When using AI productivity tools for generating knowledge, code, or text, you must list the full prompts and answers in a separate appendix. Failure to fully disclose the use of AI for these purposes will be penalized. You do not need to list the use of AI for language editing, grammar corrections, or code debugging.
- Remember: **You own the contents of your submissions, including any mistakes contained therein.** If your submission includes AI-generated contents that contain factually incorrect statements, misattributions of others' work, or plagiarism, these will not be treated as shortcomings of the AI but as your own.

## Detailed course plan

### October 08, 2024: Introduction

Introductory session. We will get to know each other, discuss the course syllabus, and clarify any questions you may have.

### October 15, 2024: Theory Building and Empirical-Analytical Political Research

Throughout this course, we will encounter different types of literature. On the one hand, we will engage with monographs, edited volumes, and review articles that develop theoretical and conceptual frameworks. On the other, we will read journal articles, research notes, and applied research chapters that test theoretical arguments empirically. How can we connect these two types of literatures, and how can we assess which theories are credibly supported by empirical evidence?

### October 22, 2024: Party Systems and Party Families

*Main reading:*

- Herbert Kitschelt (2009). "Party Systems". In: *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Ed. by Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 522–554.

*Background readings:*

- Nicolás De La Cerda and Jacob R. Gunderson (2024). "Are party families in Europe ideologically coherent today?" In: *European Journal of Political Research* 63.3, pp. 1208–1226.
- Peter Mair and Cas Mudde (June 1998). "The Party Family and Its Study". In: *Annual Review of Political Science* 1.1, pp. 211–229.

### October 29, 2024: Postindustrial Party System Change

*Main reading:*

- Hanspeter Kriesi et al. (2008). *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 1.

*Background readings:*

- Herbert Kitschelt (2004). *Diversification and Reconfiguration of Party Systems in Postindustrial Democracies*. Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
- Pablo Beramendi et al. (2015). *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism*, pp. 1–453, Ch. 1.

### November 05, 2024: Changing Allegiances

*Main reading:*

- Herbert Kitschelt and Philipp Rehm (2023). "Polarity Reversal: The Socioeconomic Reconfiguration of Partisan Support in Knowledge Societies". In: *Politics and Society* 51.4, pp. 520–566.

*Background readings:*

- Daniel Oesch and Line Rennwald (2018). "Electoral competition in Europe's new tripolar political space: Class voting for the left, centre-right and radical right". In: *European Journal of Political Research* 57.4, pp. 783–807.
- Herbert Kitschelt and Philipp Rehm (2014). "Occupations as a Site of Political Preference Formation". In: *Comparative Political Studies* 47.23, pp. 1670–1706.

## November 12, 2024: Roundtable – Structural Transformations and Changing Patterns of Political Competition

*Essay 1:* Some researchers have pitted economic and cultural explanations of party system change against one another (e.g., Inglehart and Norris 2017), where the former emphasize structural transformations of society and the workforce while the latter stresses changing dimensions of political competition and value-based conflict. Others argue that structural transformations to post-industrial societies and economies and cultural explanations are inextricably intertwined. What do you think?

## November 19, 2024: Evolution of Issue Competition

*Main reading:*

- Catherine E. De Vries and Sara B. Hobolt (2020). *Political Entrepreneurs: The Rise of Challenger Parties in Europe*. Princeton University Press, pp. 1–315, Chs. 1+2.

*Background readings:*

- Sara B. Hobolt and Catherine E. de Vries (2015). “Issue Entrepreneurship and Multiparty Competition”. In: *Comparative Political Studies* 48.9, pp. 1159–1185.
- Rafaela Dancygier and Yotam Margalit (2020). “The Evolution of the Immigration Debate: A Study of Party Positions over the Last Half-Century”. In: *Comparative Political Studies* 53.5, pp. 734–774.

## November 26, 2024: Emergence, Consolidation, and Impact

*Main reading:*

- Bonnie M. Meguid (2008). *Party Competition Between Unequals. Strategies and Electoral Fortunes in Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chs. 1+2.

*Background readings:*

- Bonnie M. Meguid (2005). “Competition Between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success”. In: *American Political Science Review* 99.03, pp. 347–359.
- Tarik Abou-Chadi (2016). “Niche Party Success and Mainstream Party Policy Shifts - How Green and Radical Right Parties Differ in Their Impact”. In: *British Journal of Political Science* 46.2, pp. 417–436.
- Felix Lehmann (2024). “Why accommodate? How niche pressure and intra-party divisions shape mainstream party strategies”. In: *Journal of European Public Policy* First View.
- Tarik Abou-Chadi and Lukas F Stoetzer (2020). “How Parties React to Voter Transitions”. In: *American Political Science Review* 114.3, pp. 940–945.

## December 03, 2024: Challenger-Mainstream Party Competition

*Main readings:*

- Werner Krause, Denis Cohen, and Tarik Abou-Chadi (2023). “Does Accommodation Work? Mainstream Party Strategies and the Success of Radical Right Parties”. In: *Political Science Research and Methods* 11.1, pp. 172–179.
- Frederik Hjørth and Martin Vinæs Larsen (2022). “When Does Accommodation Work? Electoral Effects of Mainstream Left Position Taking on Immigration”. In: *British Journal of Political Science* 52.2, pp. 949–957.

*Background readings:*

- Joost van Spanje and Nan Dirk de Graaf (2018). "How established parties reduce other parties' electoral support: the strategy of parroting the pariah". In: *West European Politics* 41.1, pp. 1–27.
- Jae-Jae Spoon and Heike Klüver (2020). "Responding to far right challengers: does accommodation pay off?" In: *Journal of European Public Policy*.
- Denis Cohen, Werner Krause, and Tarik Abou-Chadi (2024). "Comparative vote switching: A new framework for studying dynamic multiparty competition". In: *The Journal of Politics* 86.2, pp. 597–607.

## December 10, 2024: Roundtable – Responding to Far-Right Challengers

*Essay 2:* The populist radical right has been the fastest-growing and electorally most significant newcomer in the party systems of post-industrial Europe. There continues to be a vivid debate about how established parties should best respond to far-right challengers, especially if and how they should accommodate the radical right's core issue positions. What do you think? (When) Does or can accommodation work? What are the risks and chances of pursuing this strategy?

## December 17, 2024: Political Identities

*Main reading:*

- Delia Zollinger (2024). "Cleavage Identities in Voters' Own Words: Harnessing Open-Ended Survey Responses". In: *American Journal of Political Science* 68.1, pp. 139–159.

*Background reading:*

- Simon Bornschier et al. (2021). *How "Us" and "Them" Relates to Voting Behavior—Social Structure, Social Identities, and Electoral Choice*. Vol. 54. 12, pp. 2087–2122.

## January 07, 2025: Norm Change

*Main reading:*

- Vicente Valentim (2024). *The Normalization of the Radical Right: A Norms Theory of Political Supply and Demand*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*Background readings:*

- Daniel Bischof and Markus Wagner (2019). "Do Voters Polarize When Radical Parties Enter Parliament?" In: *American Journal of Political Science* 63.4, pp. 888–904.
- Vicente Valentim (2021). *Parliamentary Representation and the Normalization of Radical Right Support*. Vol. 54. 14, pp. 2475–2511.

## January 14, 2025: Affective Polarization

*Main reading:*

- Noam Gidron, James Adams, and Will Horne (2023). "Who Dislikes Whom? Affective Polarization between Pairs of Parties in Western Democracies". In: *British Journal of Political Science* 53.3, pp. 997–1015.

*Background readings:*

- Noam Gidron, James Adams, and Will Horne (2020). "American Affective Polarization in Comparative Perspective". In: *Cambridge Elements: American Politics*. Ed. by Frances E. Lee. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, New Delhi, Singapore: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–88, Chs. 1+4.

- Shanto Iyengar et al. (2019). “The origins and consequences of affective polarization in the United States”. In: *Annual Review of Political Science* 22, pp. 129–146.
- Maik Herold et al. (2023). “Polarization in Europe. An Analysis of Ten European Countries.” In: *Mercator Forum Migration and Democracy (MIDEM)*, Dresden.

**January 21, 2025: Roundtable – Political Polarization & Wrap-up.**

*Essay 3:* The syllabus states that “today’s party systems are more fragmented, volatile, and polarized than at any other point in the past 75 years”. Do you concur with this statement? Discuss how and why the statement is (not) accurate. + Final session: We will review what you have learned, collect feedback, and discuss the course evaluations.

**January 28, 2025: Exam week – no class.**

Exam week – no class.



## References

- Abou-Chadi, Tarik (2016). "Niche Party Success and Mainstream Party Policy Shifts - How Green and Radical Right Parties Differ in Their Impact". In: *British Journal of Political Science* 46.2, pp. 417–436.
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- Hobolt, Sara B. and Catherine E. de Vries (2015). "Issue Entrepreneurship and Multiparty Competition". In: *Comparative Political Studies* 48.9, pp. 1159–1185.
- Inglehart, Ronald F and Pippa Norris (2017). "Trump and the Populist Authoritarian Parties: The Silent Revolution in Reverse". In: *Perspectives on Politics* 15.2, pp. 443–454.
- Iyengar, Shanto et al. (2019). "The origins and consequences of affective polarization in the United States". In: *Annual Review of Political Science* 22, pp. 129–146.
- Kitschelt, Herbert (2004). *Diversification and Reconfiguration of Party Systems in Postindustrial Democracies*. Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
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