

# Contemporary Europe

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## Contemporary Europe (Mundo Actual I: Europa)

Tamar Groves

The overall aim of this course is to provide a broad introduction to contemporary Europe and the challenges facing it at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We will start by getting to know the geographical characteristics of the “Old Continent” as well as the particular pattern of historical evolution that gave rise to the notion of Europe. We will reflect on the differing conceptions of Europe, and see if we can talk about a coherent and distinctive entity or is it more appropriate to view it as an arena of competing forces.

The Europe we know today cannot be understood without a brief survey of its history since 1945. We will thus look at the main developments that characterized the continent from its division into two main blocks with the advancement of the Cold War, to its gradual attempts at unification, intensifying after the fall of the Soviet Union.

The main part of the course will be dedicated to analyzing the challenges facing Europe today reflecting on their political, economic, social and cultural origins. We will start with an analysis of the emergence of the European Union in the past and look at contemporary debates concerning its future. We will move on to review the variety of political systems existing in Europe and try to pinpoint their interaction with the EU on the one hand and regional political entities on the other hand. A related topic to be discussed is the question of the level of political participation of European citizens regarding the different levels of government affecting their lives.

We will then move on to study the ever changing question of European security. We will look at contemporary threats as well as try to evaluate Europe as an international actor having to face globalization trends that threaten not only its international position but also its economic competitiveness. The recent economic crisis will serve us to discuss the varieties of capitalism in the European context and will lead us to look at European societies in general and at one of the most controversial issues in Europe today, immigration.

We will conclude by looking at various cultural domains such as the media and education in order to reflect whether we can talk about Europe as a way of life. This discussion will take us back to where we started the course and to one of the biggest challenges of Europe today: can we speak of a European identity?

- ❖ Getting to know Europe. The idea and its statistics
- ❖ Post-war Europe and the Cold War
- ❖ Prosperity and recession
- ❖ The post Cold War order and the democratization of the east
- ❖ European Integration: More or less?
- ❖ Government and Politics: Transnational? National? Regional?
- ❖ Political Participation: Representative or participatory democracy?
- ❖ European Security and International relations: Does Europe Still Matter?
- ❖ The European Economy: Euro yes, Euro no?
- ❖ Social structure: Are east/west and north/south getting closer?
- ❖ Migration in Europe: Nationalism or integration?
- ❖ European Culture: Europe as a way of life?

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## **Methodology and Assessment:**

Class participation based on reading assignments: 30 %

10 minutes presentation in class: 20 %

Final test/paper: 50 %

## **Bibliography**

Course textbook: Sakwa Richard and Stevens Anna (2012). *Contemporary Europe*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Course sourcebook: Derfler, Leslie and Patricia Kollander (2001). *An Age of Conflict: Readings in Twentieth-Century European History*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College Publishers.

## **Recommended reading:**

Balibar E. (2004). *We, the people of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bernard I.T. (1996). *Central and Eastern Europe 1944-1993*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cameron F. (2005). *The future of Europe Integration and Enlargement*. London: Routledge

Dinan, D. (2010). *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Union*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Delanty, G. (1995). *Inventing Europe*, London: Macmillan Press.

Eley, G. (2002). *Forging democracy: the history of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hobsbawm, E. (1995). *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*. London: Abacus

Judt, T.(2005). *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*. London: William Heinemann.

Judt T. (2011). *A grand illusion? An essay on Europe*. New York: New York University Press.

Ladrech, R. (2010) *Europeanisation and National Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Mazower, M. (1999). *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. London: Penguin.

Risse, T. (2010). *A Community of Europeans*, London: Cornell University Press.

White S., Batt J. and Lewis G. P.(eds.) (2003). *Developments in Central and East Europeans Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

## **Filmography**

*Cinema Paradiso* (1989).

*Goodbye, Lenin!* (2003).

"L'auberge espagnole" (2002).

*The special relationship* (2010).

*Kolya* (1996).

*Kuma* (2013).