LEUSL2042 – Political Sociology of the EU

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Course Outline

For decades, European studies mainly focused on factors explaining the dynamics of regional integration from the point of view of political actors (institutional and economic actors). The difficult ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and the failure of the Constitutional Treaty put European citizens on stage, while the recent Euro crisis reflects existing resistances facing the creation of new solidarity mechanisms. To understand the reactions of ordinary citizens towards European integration, and in addition to the existing explanatory strands focusing on interests and institutions, the political sociology of the EU questions the weight of socio-political variables that hinder or favour the Europeanization of European societies.

Beyond the study of structures and institutions, the seminar aims to understand whether and the ways in which European integration has affected European citizens, their identities, their resistances and collective representations. The course analyzes the construction of the European Union as a community and as a political order with particular emphasis on its social and political dimensions. Topics under scrutiny include: the modes of interaction between elites and masses at EU level; citizen identifications’ levels and models to understand the attitudes of citizens towards European integration; the process of (de-) politicization of European integration; the impact of Europeanisation (mainly in terms of public policies) on European public opinion.

By questioning the capacity of political sociology - and in particular the study of citizens’ attitudes – to study in a rigorous way the reactions of ordinary citizens, this course aims to familiarize students with empirical analysis. A series of themes and journal articles that address, in a diversified manner, classical objects of political sociology at the European level will be studied. At stake is for students to identify and discuss the approach taken by the authors and thereby for students to use the theoretical and empirical tools to replicate these analyzes on other objects and in other contexts.

Course organization

There is no textbook required for this course. The material used consists in peer-review journal articles. For each session, the reading of one article will be compulsory. Other readings will be suggested for those who feel inclined to have some further readings. The reading for each week must be completed before the class meets. As you read, try to think of questions about the topic that you can answer in your reading. The success of this course depends upon your active participation in class. Therefore, having read all the material before each class and having thought about the readings is crucial to having a meaningful conversation. Readings will be made available to students from Course 2 on. The syllabus may be slightly modified to take into account specific demands of the students.
Assessment

The course will be assessed through:

1. **Readings and participation.** From Course 2 on, readings (typically a published paper or book chapter) are proposed for every session and must be done. Participation is encouraged. Each session will be introduced by the discussion of a topic (among those covered in the course) that will be presented by several student(s). This presentation takes the form of a collective brief written note. This exercise will count for 20% of the final grade.

2. **A written essay** (4000 to 7000 words, ie 8 to 12 pages). The essay topic must be validated by the instructor. The paper is typically related to issues of the course sessions and will be encouraged to use empirical data, either analysed by the student or coming from published papers. The uses of surveys like Eurobarometers, European Social Survey, European Values Surveys is most welcomed as is the (re-)analysis of qualitative data. This written essay will represent 80% of the final grade.

**Evaluation criteria**

The essay should be quite synthetic, with no more than 12 pages for the body of text. Sequence: title page / summary / introduction / body / conclusion / bibliography / appendixes (if any). For the structure of your text, you can rely on the articles presented in the course.

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Grading (total: 20)</th>
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| Introduction | Framing + research question  
|            | Hypothesis / hypotheses  
|            | Announcing text’s structure     | 2                   |
| Structure  | Coherence  
|            | Rigour  
|            | Balance (size of respective sections)                             | 2                   |
| Body       | Theoretical depth  
|            | Quality of demonstration (A to Z)                               | 10                  |
|            | Use of relevant empirical examples  
|            | Continuity (transitions between sections)                      |                     |
| Conclusion | Reminder of research question and hypotheses  
|            | Synthesis of core results and ‘added value’ of report               | 2                   |
|            | Openings, next steps, limitations etc                                 |                     |
| Format     | Style, vocabulary, layout, written English etc.  
|            | Quality of bibliography  
|            | Precision of bibliographical citations in text                  | 4                   |
|            | Interest/originality of appendixes                                 |                     |

NB: + overall “bonus” for originality: testing some particularly original hypotheses, linking up different theories, exploiting original data, gathering extra evidence (e.g. primary sources, interview).
Course plan

Part 1 – 10th November 2015 and 17th November 2015

Part I: The individual determinants of citizens’ attitudes to EU integration: Economics or Identity?

The purpose of this session is to understand why some European citizens are broadly in favour of the EU and the integration process and why other citizens are opposed to it. The session teases out the extent to which Euro-scepticism and Euro-enthusiasm are driven by citizens’ economic situation or by citizens’ sense of national identity. This is indeed a classical question when studying the individual determinants of citizens’ attitudes to EU integration.

Part II: First hands-on session

Part II – 24th November and 1st December 2015

Part I: The contextual determinants of citizens’ attitudes to EU integration: When the context matters

The factors causing citizens’ views on EU integration may vary across citizens depending on the economic context of the citizen (e.g. whether the citizen lives in a rich country or a poor country). But the economical differences are far the only one that needs to be considered in order to understand the national differences in terms of support or resistance towards European integration. This session explores the influence that context can have on citizens’ EU views.

Part II: Second hands-on session

Part III – 8th December 2015 Course 4 – Tuesday, 31st March 2015, 8h00 – 12h30

Part I: (Not-) turning out to vote in European Parliament elections and referendums

Is voting in EP elections similar to voting in national general elections? Do voters rely on the same types of issues? Do voters use EP elections to pass judgement on their domestic incumbent government? To what extent are EP elections actually about the EU and associated issues of European integration? Here, we assess whether EU political concerns influence citizens decision making. This session aims also to assess the evidence relating to how citizens make up their minds how to vote in EU referendums.

Part II: Where are we now? The politicization of European integration and the question of (non) polarisation of citizens’ attitudes

Have European citizens become increasingly Eurosceptic over the last two decades, turning their backs on European integration? Though many journalists, politicians and academics argue that they have, this session suggests that reactions to European integration cannot be reduced uniquely to a rise in Euroscepticism, but that indifference and ambivalence need also to be brought into the picture when studying EU legitimacy and its politicisation.
Summary and Conclusion – Presentation and validation of topics

Readings

3rd November 2015

10th November 2015

17th November 2015

24th November 2015

1st December 2015

8th December 2015

15th December
Main references on the Sociology of the EU


Additional references


