The European Welfare State
4406G/9710B
Winter Term, 2015

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Office hours: Tuesday 2-3, Thursday 10-11, or by appointment

Course Description:

As is perhaps to be expected in the case of a complex political phenomenon subjected to intense politicization, the welfare state has been variously and often erroneously interpreted. It is certainly the case that the conditions that supported the welfare state in earlier decades have weakened, if not dissolved, but the meaning of this remains far from clear. As we will see, the welfare state was always plural, deriving from a number of different social, ideological, and institutional sources, and assuming qualitatively different forms in different contexts. There are at least three welfare ‘worlds’ or regimes rather than just one welfare state. However, in the face of powerful changes which surfaced during the final third of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, the argument has been made in many quarters that the welfare state has become unsustainable or, worse, a hindrance to progress. Evaluating such a claim will draw us deeply into the following questions. What contribution, if any, did the welfare state make to the functioning of advanced European economies and polities? Is welfarism in Europe on the way out, or are the reports of its death greatly exaggerated? Are the pressures for retrenchment directed at the whole of the welfare state, or just at certain of its component parts? Should the welfare state be abandoned, either in whole or in part? Are we seeing a process of convergence, according to which the welfare regime types will be replaced by a single liberal model? The attempt to treat these questions will also shed light on such related matters as citizenship, ideology, state formation, and economic development.

Learning Outcomes

Participants in this seminar will:
(a) acquire an understanding of the relationship between the welfare state and the key elements of modernity;
(b) become able to critically assess the case for the existence of three or more welfare regime types rather than a singular welfare state, as well as the application of this framework to a significant number of countries;
(c) learn to make sense of and apply the major theories explaining both the emergence and retrenchment of welfare states, and to evaluate the extent to which retrenchment or other forms of change have occurred and may continue to do so.
Assignments and Grading:

In addition to keeping up with the weekly readings, you will be required to provide one substantial presentation and submit two take-home examinations over the course of the term. The presentation and the final take-home examination will require limited additional research and reading. I will also expect active, informed, and consistent participation from the members of the seminar. The breakdown of the grade will be as follows:

(a) presentation (15-20 minutes): 20%;
(b) seminar participation: 20%;
(c) mid-term take-home exam (6-8 pages; 12 pages for graduate students, based on course materials): 20%;
(d) final take-home exam (12-14 pages; 20 pages for graduate students, based on course materials plus three additional articles or book chapters of choice): 40%.

Readings

Unit One: Modernity and the Welfare State
(January 14, 21)


Unit Two: The Different Welfare Worlds

A. Theory
(January 28)

Gosta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton University Press, 1991), chapters 1, 2, 3, 5 (pp. 105-11, 133-8), and 6 (pp. 144-50, 157-8.). Chapter 4 recommended.
B. Social Democratic  
(February 4)


C. Liberal  
(February 11)

Jones, The Making of Social Policy in Britain, chapters 7, 9-12.

**Mid-Term Take-Home Exam Due in Class on February 25th.

D. Conservative Corporatist  
(February 25, March 4)

i. Germany

ii. France
Unit Three: Reforming the Welfare States

A. Forces for Change:
(March 11)


B. Neo-conservatism and the Sources of Social and Institutional Resistance
(March 18)


C. Third Ways, New Ways, No Ways:
(March 25, April 1, 8)

i. Vices, Virtues, and Path Dependent Change?

ii. Convergence or Regeneration as a Social Investment State?

*** The Reworking of the Social Democratic Welfare State?

**Final Take-Home Exam Due April 27th at 5 pm.**