



Osher Lifelong Learning Institute  
@ Brandeis University  
Rapaporte Seminar: Brandeis at BOLLI



## The European Union: A Political Miracle at Middle Age

Faculty  
George Ross, Ph.D.  
Brandeis University

Monday through Friday  
January 5<sup>th</sup> to January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The European Union is a genuine political miracle. It involves pacific, intense, and binding cooperation among sovereign states – starting with six, now twenty-seven – which for centuries had periodically engaged in bloody warfare. Its institutions and practices have promoted prosperity and deepened democracy on the European continent. Its “internal market” now includes 500 million wealthy consumers. Inside the EU’s “border-free space” are some of the greatest exporters on earth, the largest and most successful financial institutions, unusually humane social policies, the world’s most climate-friendly and proactive environmental practices, and, rarest of the rare, genuine cultural pluralism and toleration. This miracle calls for explanation including: 1) Exploring why former enemies joined together for a greater cooperative good and how they did it, 2) Learning about the EU’s institutions, the core of European cooperation and 3) Discussing the EU at 50. The EU turned fifty years old last year in the midst of what might be called a midlife crisis fed by too much success too fast and new dilemmas created by a globalizing world. The structure of the program will include:

**Why Did They Do It?** What were the circumstances that led the original members of the EU to abandon centuries of national competition and conflict? How did they do this? How much can be credited to the Cold War and US policies? How did the first six “Europeans” negotiate their differences? What kinds of cooperation did they initiate?

**How Did/Do They Do It?** Generating unprecedented international cooperation involved establishing institutions purpose-built to do so – bodies like the European Commission, the European Court of Justice, the Council of Ministers and the European Council, and the European Parliament. These institutions also had to connect with national institutions. These connections have usually worked to make things happen, but there have been periodic problems that led to European integration getting stuck. When and why have such problems arisen and how have they been resolved institutionally?

**Problems and Prospects:** Over its first five decades, the EU survived and thrived to contribute a great deal to the lives of Europeans and to the international community. It is common when we celebrate the fiftieth birthdays of individuals to reflect on the virtues and problems of their maturity. Political formations like the EU are not human, of course, but similar reflections are in order. Thus we will discuss:

- **The European Economy:** The EU is based primarily on economic cooperation. The nature of this cooperation has changed greatly over five decades, as have the challenges that the EU faces, both internally and internationally. Where does the EU economy stand today, and how does it stand up in a globalizing world presently in grave crisis?
- **Political Credibility and Legitimacy:** For some time the EU has experienced problems of credibility and legitimacy with its citizens and recent efforts to change EU institutions have been frustrated by national rejections in referendums in France and the Netherlands (2005) and Ireland (2001 and 2007). These problems are often bundled into the catch-phrase of “democratic deficit.” How can we explain these problems and the EU’s responses to them?
- **The EU in the World today** The EU originated in inward-looking efforts to promote economic and, to a lesser degree, political cooperation in a war-torn and war-prone Europe after World War II. Its great successes have obliged it to turn outward and learn to be an actor in world politics. The process is incomplete, but worth discussing. What role does the EU play in the global governance of international trade? With the Kyoto protocol the EU assumed a global leading role on climate change issues. Where does this stand today? The EU has been hesitant about foreign and defense policies, but recently it has been moving toward new roles in both areas which we need to explore. Finally, the EU has emerged as an important player in transatlantic affairs, particularly with the US. Where do these matters presently stand in the Obama moment that is opening?



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**George Ross, Ph.D.** is the Morris Hillquit Professor in Labor and Social Thought (Sociology and Politics) at Brandeis University. This program will be his last at Brandeis as he is becoming *Ad personam* Jean Monnet Chair at the University of Montreal, Canada this January. The following is a sample of Professor Ross' *recent* scholarship.

Ross, George W, James Cronin, James Shoch, eds. What's Left of the Left: Spaces and Places of the Center-Left in Comparative Perspective. Raleigh-Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2008. (forthcoming)

Ross, George W. "The Puzzles of European Integration and the Center-Left." What's Left of the Left: Spaces and Places of the Center-Left in Comparative Perspective. Ed. Cronin, Ross, Shoch. Raleigh-Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2008. 45. (forthcoming)

Ross, George W/Arthur Goldhammer. "The Traumas of The French Left in Globalization." What's Left of the Left?. Ed. Cronin,Ross,Shoch. Raleigh-Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2008 (forthcoming)

Ross, George W. "Review of Territorial Cohesion and the European Model of Society, edited by Andreas Faludi (Cambridge MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2007)." Journal of Regional Planning Winter 2008: 10.

Ross, George W. "The European Union and the Future of European Politics." European Politics in Transition. sixth ed. Ed. Kesselman, Krieger, Ross et al. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008. 70.

Ross, George W. "What do "Europeans" Think? Analyses of the European Union's current crisis by European elites." Journal of Common Market Studies (2008): 25.

Ross,George W, with Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger, et al.. European Politics in Transition. 6th edition ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008.

**REGISTRATION: The European Union**  
 (Space is limited. Please register soon.)

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Questions? Contact Mary Ann Sliwa

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