

DIS
EPS SU09
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DIS Summer Program 2009

Danish Politics and Society

Denmark has a population of 5.4 million people and is often characterized as a homogeneous society, where “few have too much and even fewer have too little.” At first glance, you would expect a small, stable nation-state to have a limited number of internal conflicts and, consequently, to be rather simple for a social scientist to analyze and categorize. But Danish politics and society are in fact quite complex: Why does the Danish parliament consist of no less than 8 parties? How can a parliamentary system function with almost permanently minority governments? What’s left and right in Danish politics, and where is the centre? Why do Danes act the way they do, and how do you break the code? Are the Danish political values still Danish, and what was the background for “the Cartoon Crisis”? Why does it seem that the welfare state is quite efficient in the globalized competition in spite of increasing challenges of high taxes, large public expenditures, and the need to provide the services the public demands? Why does Danish society have such difficulties dealing with immigration? Why are the Danes “reluctant” Europeans, and what is the background for recent years' activist Danish foreign policy?

Objectives:

The objectives of this course are primarily to provide students with a broad-ranging and systematic knowledge of Danish politics and society, the distribution of power, civic involvement, political and cultural values, such as social equality and the welfare state. Focus will be on the functioning of the Danish political system, contemporary issues of the welfare state, immigration, and EU cooperation. Furthermore, what are the challenges confronting Danish values and national identity in the globalized world?

Content:

The course is organized around six themes:

- Introduction and Danish history – a brief overview
- Politics in Denmark – political history, political system and parties
- Danish values, culture and national identity
- The Welfare State
- Contemporary issues in Danish politics and society, especially related to immigration
- Denmark’s international relations

Planned Schedule

The first week – May 26 to May 29 – consists of two sections every day, a morning session from 9:00 to 11:30 am and an afternoon session from 1:00 to 3:30 pm. It includes an intensive presentation and discussion of the major themes and topics in focus, including a visit to the Danish parliament and a debate with members of parliament with special focus on the immigration issue.

Study tour to Bornholm

The second week – June 2 to June 4 – will be a study tour to the Danish island of Bornholm in the Baltic Sea. On the way to Bornholm it will include a visit to the Swedish Immigration Board in Malmö to make it possible to compare Danish and Swedish immigration policies. On Bornholm there will be visits to the local political authorities and meetings with local politicians to discuss the role and importance of local government in Denmark. The purpose is to get an understanding of how this region of Denmark is administered and what are the conditions for regional development. It may also include the role of the European Union in this respect. Furthermore, there will be an introduction to the history of Bornholm, visits to cultural sites, art museums, and maybe a biking tour.

The third week – June 8 to June 12 – will end the presentation and discussion of Danish politics and society with special focus on Denmark's international relations, and especially Denmark's relation to the European Union – the day after the election to the European Parliament. Furthermore, there will be a special case-session concentration on the "Cartoon Crisis" and what came out of it. Finally, it includes a visit to the Copenhagen Police Department – and a wrap-up session.

Format and course requirements:

The course is taught as a combination of lectures, field studies, student presentations, and a study tour. There is a strong emphasis on dialogue and student participation.

At the end of the first week there will be a short answer test. After the study tour students will have to write an Op-ed paper with special focus on the immigration issue and the Danish restrictive immigration policy. The course includes a final exam in the end.

Readings and Hand-outs

Key readings will be specific chapters in Knud J.V. Jespersen, *A History of Denmark*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004; and John L. Campbell, John A. Hall & Ove K. Pedersen (eds.), *National Identity and the Varieties of Capitalism: The Danish Experience*, Copenhagen: DJØF Publishing, 2006.

Hand-outs and Factsheets