**The Future of the European Union**

**Introduction**

In June of 2016, the United Kingdom voted in a plebiscite to leave the European Union. Although this vote came as a shock to many, it was partly as a result of a buildup of years of tensions that have existed within the “European Project.” Popular anger over EU policies and the “democratic deficit” of the European Union exist beyond that of the UK, and in the wake of the British vote, other Eurosceptic leaders in France, the Netherlands, and other nations also began to call for their own citizens to have their own votes on EU membership, threatening the existence of the European Union.

Although there are many reasons for dissatisfaction with the European Union, some of the major ones include:

* A “democratic deficit” in EU institutions, specifically, a weakness of the European Parliament
* A feeling that “unaccountable Eurocrats” in Brussels are overriding national laws and dictating decisions that should be left with national legislatures
* The free movement of individuals within the European Union
* Continuing concerns with the Euro, especially in the “Southern” European states
* Unease over the goal of “ever closer Union” by some members of the EU, which includes “broadening” and “deepening” the EU to more closely resemble a Federal state
* Lack of strong leadership or vision within the EU itself
* Lethargic economic growth in EU member states

These do not include existential threats currently facing the EU, such as terrorism, the current refugee crisis or the threat of an assertive Russia.

Although the dissolution of the European Union does not seem possible, the “Brexit” vote of 2016 made it much more of a possibility, and internal strife could weaken or paralyze the European Union for the foreseeable future. While the European Union, founded in the aftermath of World War II to prevent future wars and winner of the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize, should be celebrating its successes, most notably, assisting former communist nations with their transition to democracy, the reality is the EU is under threat as it never has been in its history.

**Procedure:**

In this assignment, students are to perform research into what they think the future of the European Union will be. This assignment asks students to envision the European Union in five or ten years’ time. What do they see for the European Union? Some possible pathways to think about include

* A reaffirmation of the deepening relationship between EU members
* A loosening of EU mandates from Brussels
* A halt to EU expansion
* Increased EU expansion
* More nations joining the UK in voting to leave the EU
* The UK reversing course and deciding to remain in the EU
* The disillusion of the Euro
* Democratic reform within the EU
* Structural reform of EU institutions
* The continued ascension of Germany as the dominate force of the EU
* The EU will have stronger ties to the US
* The EU will have fewer members, but those members will be more strongly connected to one another
* The formal establishment of a “two speed” Europe
* The EU is dissolved
* Status Quo

There are many online resources students could consult of writers who have speculated about the future of the European Union. A sampling of them is below:

* An aggravating absence. (2016, July 02). Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21701545-britains-decision-leave-european-union-will-cause-soul-searching-across-continentand>
* Archick, K. (2016, June 21). The European Union: Current Challenges and Future Prospects. Retrieved August 6, 2016, from <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R44249.pdf>
* Au revoir, l'Europe. (2016, August 06). Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21703373-what-if-france-voted-leave-european-union-au-revoir-leurope>
* Brexit Aftershocks: An Inside Look at the EU's Raging Power Struggle - SPIEGEL ONLINE. (2016, July 1). Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/brexit-triggers-eu-power-struggle-between-merkel-and-juncker-a-1100852.html>
* Derviş, K. (2016, June 9). European integration with or without Britain. Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/european-integration-with-or-without-britain/>
* Dews, F. (2016, July 1). What Brookings experts are saying about Brexit. Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <https://www.brookings.edu/2016/07/01/what-brookings-experts-are-saying-about-brexit/>
* How Brexit Will Change the World. (2016, June 25). Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/06/brexit-change-europe-britain-us-politics-213990>
* Letta, E. (2016, August 1). EU: Relaunch or die. Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <http://www.politico.eu/article/the-eu-must-relaunch-or-die-brexit-consequences-reform-europe-future/>
* McBride, J. (2016, June 30). The Debate Over Brexit. Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <http://www.cfr.org/united-kingdom/debate-over-brexit/p37747>
* Palmeri, T. (2016, February 08). Ministers of ‘core’ Europe plan EU’s future. Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <http://www.politico.eu/article/ministers-core-europe-plan-eu-future-rome-meeting-founding-members-integration/>
* Ruparel, R. (2015, August 13). Lack of support for ever closer union | Open Europe. Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <http://openeurope.org.uk/today/blog/appeal-of-ending-ever-closer-union-stretches-well-beyond-the-uk/>
* Ruparel, R., & Booth, S. (n.d.). A blueprint for reform of the European Union | Open Europe. Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <http://openeurope.org.uk/intelligence/britain-and-the-eu/a-blueprint-for-reform-of-the-european-union/>
* Scarpetta, V. (2015, June 04). A more flexible EU is the way to go | Open Europe. Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <http://openeurope.org.uk/today/blog/european-politicians-begin-to-see-need-for-flexible-eu-but-remain-confused-about-how-to-achieve-it/>
* Siegel, J. (2016, June 27). Can the European Union Survive Brexit? Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <http://dailysignal.com/2016/06/27/what-brexit-means-for-the-european-unions-future/>
* Techau, J. (2016, January 12). Four Predictions on the Future of Europe. Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/?fa=62445>
* The EU must now decide what it stands for. (2016, June 24). Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21701343-brexit-call-reform-brussels-unsure-about-what-means-eu-must-now-decide>
* The start of the break-up. (2016, August 06). Retrieved August 06, 2016, from <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21703390-what-do-other-countries-make-brexit-start-break-up>
* Youngs, R. (2016, August 08). Democratizing Europe. Retrieved August 09, 2016, from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2016-08-08/democratizing-europe>

Students can also look at a series of articles posted on the Bruegel website at <http://bruegel.org/tag/brexit/>

For this assignment, students will need to write a 3-4 page paper in which they outline their thoughts as to what the future of the European Union holds. As there are many possibilities, students will be graded on their ability to support their argument with facts, not on their specific vision of the future. To be successful at this assignment, they should be able to cite from a variety of sources and back up their argument with data and specific information.

Due to the nature of this assignment, the teacher may wish to give students one week or more to conduct research and compose their paper. They may also decide to schedule time in class to assist students with formulating their thoughts and going through research regarding the future of the European Union.

In addition to submitting a written paper, the day the essay is due students will participate in an in-class discussion where all members of the class will share their thoughts on the future of the EU, and also debate their visions of the future of the EU.

The rubric for the essay and in-class debate is presented below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2/1 | 0 |
| 1. Accuracy  | All information presented is accurate. | There is no more than one *minor* error. | There is no more than one *crucial* error. | There is little or no evidence of comprehension of the topic. | No assignment submitted. |
| 2. Thoroughness of Content | Specific, illustrative content demonstrates the development of sophisticated ideas. All assignment requirements are completed. | Sufficiently developed content with adequate elaboration.  | Limited content with inadequate elaboration and explanation. | Superficial and/or minimal content. | No assignment submitted. |
| 3. Focus | Sharp, distinct controlling point made about a single topic with evident awareness of the task. | Apparent point made about a single topic with sufficient awareness of the task. | No apparent point but evidence of a specific topic. | Minimal evidence of a topic. | No assignment submitted. |
| 4. Organization | Sophisticated arrangement of content with evident and/or subtle transitions. | Functional arrangement of content that sustains a logical order with some evidence of transitions. | Confused or inconsistent arrangement of content with or without attempts at transition. | Minimal control of content arrangement. | No assignment submitted. |
| 5. Grammar,Mechanics,Conventions, and Style | Evident control of grammar, mechanics, spelling, usage, and sentence formation as well as precise, illustrative use of sentences and words. | Sufficient control of grammar, mechanics, usage, and sentence formation as well as a generic use and variety of sentences and words. | Limited control of grammar mechanics, spelling, usage, and sentence formation as well as limited word choice and control of sentence structure. | Minimal control of grammar, mechanics, usage, and sentence formation as well as poor word choice and control of sentence structure. | No assignment submitted. |
| 6. Introduction | Your paper had an introduction that had appropriate background and a strong thesis  | Your paper had an introduction with some appropriate background and a thesis | Your paper had an introduction with limited background information and a thesis | Your paper lacked an appropriate introduction and/or had a vague, weak thesis | No assignment submitted. |
| 7. Conclusion | Your paper had a conclusion which fully and completely summarized your main arguments | Your paper had a conclusion which summarized most of your main arguments | Your paper had a conclusion which summarized some of your arguments | Your paper had elements of a conclusion, however, it was underdeveloped and did not summarize your paper | Non assignment submitted |
| 8. Works Cited | Your paper had a works cited page in proper MLA format, and had works cited appropriately throughout the document | Your paper had a works cited page with some minor MLA errors, and had works cited appropriately throughout the document | Your paper either was missing a works cited page or proper parenthetical citations |  | No citations |
| 9. Number of Comments during class discussion:How often did you speak?  | 4+ comments | Three comments | Two comments | One Comment | 0 Comments |
| 10. Quality of Comments:A quality comment offers a new idea not yet expressed, or comment takes a new approach to previously stated ideas. Comment moves conversation forward. Demonstrates deep knowledge of text.  | Offers original, deep comment, ideas, and reasons, and connects them to previous discussion | Expresses original ideas and connects them to previous discussion | Paraphrases others comments and attempts to extend them | Repeats others comments | Does not comment |
| 11. Discussion Behavior:Appropriate behavior. Listen to others. Do not distract others. Wait for your turn. Stay on topic. Pay continuous attention to the discussion. | Model behavior | Good behavior | Mostly appropriate behavior  | Average behavior | Inappropriate behavior |

Total Points earned: \_\_\_\_ / 55