

International Encyclopedia of Political Science
Entry: Jean Blondel (1929-...)
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Jean Blondel is a leading French scholar in both English-speaking and French speaking political science. He has had a major contribution in the field of comparative politics—as a student of political parties and governments—as well as in the development of the European political science—as one of the founders of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR).

Born in Toulon (France) on October 26, 1929, Jean Blondel received a Jesuit education before studying at the *Institut d'Etudes Politiques* in Paris from 1950 to 1953. He, then, continued his education at St Antony's College, Oxford University, where he wrote, after a long fieldwork, a thesis on local politics in the state of Paraíba in Brazil (Blondel 1955). After this first research work, Blondel remained in Great Britain where he took up a research studentship at Manchester (1957-1958) and a lectureship at the University of Keele (1958-1963). At the turn of his academic career, he went to Yale as an American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) fellow in 1963-1964 before becoming professor of government at the newly established University of Essex in 1964. At Essex, he founded the Department of Government, the Essex Summer School in Research and Methods, and in 1969 the European Consortium for Political Research which he directed for ten years. In 1984, Blondel left Essex and was appointed scholar of the Russell Sage Foundation in New York. The following year, he moved to the European University Institute in Florence where he became Emeritus professor in 1994.

Throughout his career, Blondel endeavoured to develop a comparative political research. His numerous comparative works have had a lasting impact in the study of political parties and governments. In a seminal article published by the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Blondel proposed a typology of party systems as having two parties, two-and-a-half parties, and so on to replace the traditional typology of two-, three- or multiple-party systems (Blondel 1968). Above all, he continuously undertook the collection of comparable and detailed data on government structures and processes. Out of this effort came out several books: from studies of the individual careers of ministers and leaders—reflecting the influence of American behaviourism—to studies of the structures and rules of governments—reflecting a certain French love for order and logic as well as the development of the new institutionalism in political science. All this research enterprise benefited from a European-level-research spirit and cross-national mobility instilled by the institutions which Blondel pioneered.

Jean Blondel is a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and of the Academia Europaea and holds honorary doctorates from the Universities of Salford, Essex (GB), Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium), and Turku (Finland). In 2004, his intellectual and institutional outstanding contributions were recognized by the award of the Johan Skytte Prize in Political Science.

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