

Culture and Politics*

Hauptseminar Spring 2024

Room 214 Inseliquai 10

1 Course description

Why are citizens of Eastern Germany more likely to vote for the radical right? Why do people turn out to vote even if their likelihood of influencing the election outcome is minimal? How is it possible that support for LGBTQi+ policies increases simultaneously with support for conservative parties? Traditional political science accounts focusing on voters' rationality and institutions fall short of explanatory power to answer these and related questions. Instead, cultural explanations are gaining prominence, and the increasing availability of digitalized historical and text data has provided the ground to test them systematically. Following this trend, this course introduces students to the developing field of Political Culture, with a particular focus on applications in political behavior topics. The course combines a well-curated reading list with introductory lectures and seminar discussions to foster critical thinking about the role of culture in politics. Students who take this course will acquire the skills to analyze political behavior from a cultural perspective, developing original research ideas and designs.

*This course takes inspiration from the courses *Political Culture*, by Elias Dinas at the European University Institute, *Political Culture & Norms: How Societies Change*, by Daniel Bischof at Aarhus University, and *Advanced Topics in Political Economy*, by Amuiz Garmendia at the University Carlos III of Madrid.

2 Course organization

The course is organized as a block seminar that will run during the Spring term of 2024. Each block will consist of three/four sessions concentrated on Fridays. The first block will introduce the core conceptual tools in the study of political culture, such as the concepts of social norms, group identity or cultural transmission. The second and third blocks will then delve into specific political behavior topics revisited from a cultural perspective, such as voting preferences, electoral turnout or inter-group relations. We will also investigate the interaction between political and cultural change and assess the conditions under which they may reinforce or contain each other. Finally, students will present their research proposals on one of these topics.

3 Learning outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- **(knowledge)** approach political science topics from a cultural perspective. They will have a clear notion of the concepts of social norms, social identity, cultural origins, transmission and persistence. Moreover, they will have a clear overview of the main cultural explanations of political behavior.
- **(competence - critical reading)** read scientific articles critically, and connect ideas from different fields, such as cultural sociology, historical political economy, and political behavior, in an interdisciplinary manner.
- **(competence - research skills)** develop original ideas, frame them within the relevant literature, turn them into testable hypotheses, and come up with feasible research designs to test them.
- **(competence - writing skills)** write critical response papers to scientific articles on political culture topics. They will also be able to write a research proposal following scientific standards.

- **(competence - communication)** debate in front of and with their colleagues; communicate complex concepts effectively to a broad audience.

4 Teaching policy

Each session will consist of a mix of lecturing parts, in which the lecturer will present, discuss and expand on the readings, and discussion parts, where we will engage in open debates and group activities to reflect critically on the session topic. These latter parts will also focus on the research design aspects of the readings and how to carry students' ideas. The goal is to build research skills gradually so that the final evaluation assignment is dealt with since the beginning of the course.

All students are expected to study all the mandatory readings before class. Slides are not intended to replace given texts and will only be distributed after each session.

5 Integration and interaction policy

Discrimination due to race, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation is strictly forbidden in this course. Students are encouraged to use inclusive language and to respect the sexual and gender identification of others. During each session, the lecturer will actively promote equal participation within the class. More generally, interventions must be carried out respectfully, integrating and engaging with different views and perspectives. Discouraging language or other bullying strategies are strictly forbidden, too.

6 Evaluation

Mandatory requirements (4 credits)

To receive the credits, students are expected to fulfil the following criteria:

1. Attend all the sessions

Attendance is mandatory. Students can miss a maximum of two sessions. Missing more sessions without a justified certificate of absence implies failing the course.

2. Study the mandatory readings before each session

Studying = reading + critical thinking.

Students can find the texts in the materials folder in OLAT.

3. Participate actively

Active engagement involves intervening during the discussion with questions, comments and ideas, reflecting on the content of the readings. Students are always encouraged to raise original arguments as long as they are linked to the course topics.

4. Write two response papers

Students must select one session from Block II and one session from Block III, and write one short response paper (500-700 words) to each of them. The response papers should focus on one of the mandatory readings, however, students will benefit from linking them with ideas from additional readings.

A good response paper should:

- *Start with a short summary of the paper.* It should not be a summary of the content but of the main argument and findings.
- *Identify the contribution.* It should state clearly what bigger problem or question the author is contributing to addressing.

- *Evaluate the argument from a critical perspective.* It should identify the main limitations of the paper and propose ways in which these limitations should be addressed either by the author or in future research.

The **submission rules** are:

- Students must upload their response papers to the *Response papers* folder in OLAT.
- The deadline for submitting the response paper is at least one week before the corresponding session, that is, the **previous Friday at noon (12:00)**.
- The file must be in Word. The title should include the session's number followed by the student's surname in capital letters and the response paper number (either 1 or 2). For example: *session05_CANALEJO_1*.

5. Write a research proposal

Objective

The primary objective of this assignment is to enable students to conceptualize and design an original research study on a topic related to political culture. This task will draw upon the readings, discussions, and ideas explored throughout the course, allowing students to apply their knowledge in a practical and creative manner.

Format

The research proposal will follow the structure of a standard academic paper. However, unlike traditional research papers, students are not required to include a data and results section. Instead, the emphasis will be on crafting a robust research design that could feasibly be executed in the field. The papers must have **between 2500 and 3500 words**.

Components of the research proposal

1. Introduction

- **Research Question:** Begin with a clear and well-articulated research question. This question should be both relevant to the course material and original in its perspective.
- **Justification:** Explain the significance of your research question. Why is it important? How does it contribute to the existing body of knowledge?

2. Literature Review

- Survey the existing literature relevant to your research question.
- Identify gaps or areas of contention in the current literature that your research aims to address.
- Ensure that your sources are credible and relevant to your topic.

3. Theory Section

- Develop a theoretical framework that will guide your research.
- Clearly state the assumptions you're working under.
- **Hypotheses:** Based on your theoretical framework, propose specific hypotheses that you aim to test or explore with your research.

4. Research Design

- Describe the methodology you intend to use to test your hypotheses.
- Discuss your choice of research methods, be it qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods.
- Explain how your chosen methods are best suited to address your research question and hypotheses.
- Consider potential challenges or limitations of your research design and discuss how you plan to address them.

Submission deadline

The deadline for submission is **Wednesday 1st of May at noon (12:00)**, the week after Block III. The papers must be sent by e-mail to the lecturer at alvaro.canalejo@unilu.ch with the subject *Research proposal YOURSURNAME* (e.g., *Research proposal CANALEJO*).

Recommendation

While students are encouraged to choose any topic of interest within the realm of political culture, it is advisable to consult with the lecturer during the topic selection process to ensure alignment with course objectives and academic rigor.

Topics related to the political culture of the students' country of origin are particularly encouraged.

6. Present their research proposal

Following the submission of the research proposal, students will receive personalized feedback from the lecturer. They must reflect on this feedback, make corrections and improvements to their research proposal, and prepare a presentation that will take place on the last Block of the course.

The research proposal evaluation will mostly fall under the quality of their work during the presentation. Therefore, the most crucial aspect of the course is not that much that students write a good research proposal but that they are able to pick up the feedback from the lecturer and add the necessary corrections so that the final output address the limitations and pitfalls of the proposal.

The presentation must follow the same structure as the research proposal and make explicit references to the changes made in response to the lecturer's feedback. It must last a maximum of 15 minutes and will be followed by an open discussion.

The presentation slides must be uploaded to the folder *Presentations* in OLAT at the beginning of the week of the last Block, **by Monday 6th of May at noon (12:00)**. This will allow students and the lecturer to prepare comments in advance. The name of the slides file should be *presentation_slides_YOURSURNAME* (e.g., *presentation_slides_CANALEJO*).

7. Serve as discussant

At the beginning of the course, during the organization of the presentations, each student will be assigned as a discussant of another student's presentation. The discussant will

use the presentation slide to prepare comments in advance that will share after the presentation.

Grading policy

- 10% of the grade is determined by the quality and quantity of the participation in class.
- 20% of the grade is determined by the response papers.
- 20% of the grade is determined by the written research proposal.
- 40% of the grade is determined by the presentation.
- 10% of the grade is determined by the quality of the discussion.

(Haupt-)seminar paper (6 credits)

Students can choose to write a (haupt-)seminar paper to obtain six extra credits. The seminar paper must have between 5500 and 6500 words. The topic should be agreed upon between the instructor and the student. To this end, students are asked to write a paper outline of 1-2 pages consisting of the following elements:

- Introduction of the topic
- Research question
- Academic and societal relevance
- Theories and hypotheses
- Approach and structure of the paper (including a tentative empirical design)

The deadline for the submission of the paper outline is **May 1st 2023**.

The deadline for the submission of the seminar paper is **September 1st 2023**.

Please refer to the [Guidelines on How to Do Research of the Department of Political Science](#) for more details.

Students are strongly encouraged to develop their research proposal assignment for their pro-seminar paper.

7 Office hours

This course is a block seminar and does not follow a weekly basis. Therefore, there are not weekly office hours. Instead, any student can send an e-mail to the lecturer at alvaro.canalejo@unilu.ch to schedule a meeting within a one-week time.

8 Course schedule

Block I. Introduction to Political Culture (08.03.24 / 9:15–17:00)

This block introduces the conceptual framework of the course. It discusses the notions of culture, social norms and group identity, exploring how cultural differentiation occurs and persists. This introductory block aims to provide the analytical tools to study political behaviour from a cultural perspective. It will allow us to dig into specific topics in blocks II and III.

Session 1. Introduction to the course (08.03.24 / 9:15–10:45)

Required readings:

- Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). The weirdest people in the world? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 33 (2–3), 61–83, discussion 83–135.

- Jared Rubin (2020). Culture in Historical Political Economy. [Broadstreet blogpost](#)

Session 2. A scientific approach to culture (08.03.24 / 11:00–12:30)

Required readings:

- Henrich, J. (2015). *The Secret of Our Success: How Culture Is Driving Human Evolution, Domesticating Our Species, and Making Us Smarter*. **Ch. 1-2**
- Lena, J. C., Lizardo, O., McDonnell, T. E., Mische, A., Tavory, I., Wherry, F. F. V., ... & Frye, M. (2019). *Measuring culture*. Columbia University Press. **Introduction & Conclusion**

Additional readings:

- Bail, C. A. (2014). The cultural environment: Measuring culture with big data. *Theory and Society*, 43(3), 465–482.
- D’Andrade, R. (2008). Some kinds of causal powers that make up culture. In *Explaining Culture Scientifically*, 19-36.

Session 3. Social norms and social identity (08.03.24 / 13:45–15:15)

Required readings:

- Bicchieri, C. (2016). *Norms in the wild: How to diagnose, measure, and change social norms*. Oxford University Press. **Ch. 1**
- Huddy, L. (2001). From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory. *Political Psychology*, 22(1), 127–156. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00230>

Additional readings:

- Cialdini, R. B., & Trost, M. R. (1998). Social influence: Social norms, conformity and compliance. In *The Handbook of Social Psychology*. Wiley.

- Shayo, M. (2009). A Model of Social Identity with an Application to Political Economy: Nation, Class, and Redistribution. *American Political Science Review*, 103(2), 147–174. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055409090194>
- Tajfel, H. (1982). Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 33(1), 1–39. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.ps.33.020182.000245>
- Valentim, V. (2023). Social Norms (Entry for the Encyclopedia of Political Sociology).

Session 4. Cultural origins, evolution and persistence (08.03.24 / 15:30–17:00)

Required readings:

- Axelrod, R. (1997). The dissemination of culture: A model with local convergence and global polarization. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 41(2), 203–226.
- Lowes, Sara. (2022). “Culture in Historical Political Economy”. National Bureau of Economic Research, no. w30511.

Additional readings:

- Alesina, A., Giuliano, P., & Nunn, N. (2013). On the origins of gender roles: Women and the plough. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 128(2), 469–530.
- Axelrod, R. (1986). An Evolutionary Approach to Norms. *American Political Science Review*, 80(4), 1095–1111. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1960858>
- Bisin, A., & Verdier, T. (2011). The Economics of Cultural Transmission and Socialization. In J. Benhabib, A. Bisin, & M. O. Jackson (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Economics* (Vol. 1, pp. 339–416). North-Holland. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-444-53187-2.00009-7>
- Dehdari, S. H., & Gehring, K. (2017). The origins of common identity: Division, homogenization policies and identity formation in Alsace-Lorraine. CESifo Working Paper Series.

- Michalopoulos, S. (2012). The origins of ethnolinguistic diversity. *American Economic Review*, 102(4), 1508–1539.
- Nunn, N., & Wantchekon, L. (2011). The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa. *American Economic Review*, 101(7), 3221–3252. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.101.7.3221>
- Nunn, N. (2022). On the Dynamics of Human Behavior: The Past, Present, and Future of Culture, Conflict, and Cooperation (Working Paper 29804). National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w29804>
- Talhelm, T., & English, A. S. (2020). Historically rice-farming societies have tighter social norms in China and worldwide. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 117(33), 19816–19824. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1909909117>

Block II. Topics in Political Culture I (22.03.24 / 9:15–15:30)

This block dives into the study of specific political behavior topics from a cultural perspective. It focuses on three topics: vote choice, electoral turnout and inter-group conflict.

Session 5. The cultural determinants of vote choice (22.03.24 / 9:15–10:45)

Required readings:

- Ziblatt, D., Hilbig, H., & Bischof, D. (2023). Wealth of Tongues: Why Peripheral Regions Vote for the Radical Right in Germany. *American Political Science Review*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423000862>
- Domènech, J., & Sánchez-Cuenca, I. (2022). The Long Shadow of Agrarian Conflict: Agrarian Inequality and Voting in Spain. *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(4), 1668–1688.

Additional readings:

- Albertus, M. (2023). The Political Price of Authoritarian Control: Evidence from Francoist Land Settlements in Spain. *The Journal of Politics*, 000–000. <https://doi.org/10.1086/723991>
- Acemoglu, D., De Feo, G., De Luca, G., & Russo, G. (2022). War, Socialism, and the Rise of Fascism: An Empirical Exploration. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 137(2), 1233–1296.
- Carillo, M. F. (2018). Fascistville: Mussolini’s New Towns and the Persistence of Neo-Fascism.
- Charnysh, V., & Peisakhin, L. (2022). The Role of Communities in the Transmission of Political Values: Evidence from Forced Population Transfers. *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(1), 238–258.
- Menon, A. (2022). The Political Legacy of Forced Migration: Evidence from Post-WWII Germany. *Comparative Political Studies*, 00104140221141833.
- Haffert, L. (2022). The Long-Term Effects of Oppression: Prussia, Political Catholicism, and the Alternative für Deutschland. *American Political Science Review*, 116(2), 595–614.
- Paulsen, T., Scheve, K., & Stasavage, D. (2021). Foundations of a New Democracy: Schooling, Inequality, and Voting in the Early Republic. *American Political Science Review*, 1–19.
- Ponticelli, J., & Miao, M. (2022). Eclipses and the Memory of Revolutions: Evidence from China.

Session 6. The social norm of voting turnout (22.03.24 / 11:00–12:30)

Required readings:

- Gerber, A. S., Green, D. P., & Larimer, C. W. (2008). Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment. *American Political Science Review*, 102(1), 33–48. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305540808009X>

- Doherty, D., Dowling, C. M., Gerber, A. S., & Huber, G. A. (2017). Are Voting Norms Conditional? How Electoral Context and Peer Behavior Shape the Social Returns to Voting. *The Journal of Politics*, 79(3), 1095–1100. <https://doi.org/10.1086/691689>

Additional readings:

- Blais, A., & Achen, C. H. (2019). Civic Duty and Voter Turnout. *Political Behavior*, 41(2), 473–497. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-018-9459-3>
- Gerber, A. S., & Rogers, T. (2009). Descriptive Social Norms and Motivation to Vote: Everybody's Voting and so Should You. *The Journal of Politics*, 71(1), 178–191. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381608090117>

Session 7. Conflicting identities and inter-group relations (22.03.24 / 14:00–15:30)

Required readings:

- Levendusky, M. S. (2018). Americans, Not Partisans: Can Priming American National Identity Reduce Affective Polarization? *The Journal of Politics*, 80(1), 59–70. <https://doi.org/10.1086/693987>
- Turnbull-Dugarte, S. J., & López Ortega, A. (2023). Instrumentally Inclusive: The Political Psychology of Homonationalism. *American Political Science Review*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423000849>

Additional readings:

- Dinas, E., Fouka, V., & Schläpfer, A. (2021). Family History and Attitudes toward Out-Groups: Evidence from the European Refugee Crisis. *The Journal of Politics*, 83(2), 647–661.
- Fouka, V., & Tabellini, M. (2022). Changing in-group boundaries: The effect of immigration on race relations in the United States. *American Political Science Review*, 116(3), 968–984.

- Gershon, R., & Fridman, A. (2022). Individuals prefer to harm their own group rather than help an opposing group. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119(49), e2215633119.
- Rubenson, D., & Dawes, C. T. (2022). Subtle primes of in-group and out-group affiliation change votes in a large scale field experiment. *Scientific Reports*, 12(1), 22526.

Block III. Topics in Political Culture II (19.04.24 / 9:15–15:30)

This block digs further into the relationship between culture and politics, exploring how political change can induce cultural change and *vice versa*. It also looks at the opposite: how ‘sticky’ cultural preferences can contain political change. The goal is to identify patterns of reinforcement and contention between politics and culture.

Session 8. Political change and ideological (de-)stigmatization (19.04.24 / 9:15–10:45)

Required readings:

- Valentim, V. (2022). Political Stigmatization and Preference Falsification: Theory and Observational Evidence (SSRN Scholarly Paper 4023263). <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4023263>
- Dinas, E., Martínez, S., & Valentim, V. (2023). Social Norm Change, Political Symbols, and Expression of Stigmatized Preferences. *The Journal of Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1086/726951>

Additional readings:

- Alesina, A., & Fuchs-Schündeln, N. (2007). Good-bye Lenin (or not?): The effect of communism on people’s preferences. *American Economic Review*, 97(4), 1507–1528.

- Bursztyn, L., Egorov, G., & Fiorin, S. (2020). From extreme to mainstream: The erosion of social norms. *American Economic Review*, 110(11), 3522–3548.
- Clayton, K., Davis, N. T., Nyhan, B., Porter, E., Ryan, T. J., & Wood, T. J. (2021). Elite rhetoric can undermine democratic norms. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118(23), e2024125118. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2024125118>
- Colombo, F. (2022). Collective Memory and the Stigmatization of Authoritarian Nostalgia: Evidence from Italy.
- Dinas, E., & Northmore-Ball, K. (2020). The ideological shadow of authoritarianism. *Comparative Political Studies*, 53(12), 1957–1991.
- Valentim, V. (2021). Parliamentary Representation and the Normalization of Radical Right Support. *Comparative Political Studies*, 0010414021997159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414021997159>

Session 9. Institutions and cultural change (19.04.24 / 11:00–12:30)

Required readings:

- Bau, N. (2021). Can Policy Change Culture? Government Pension Plans and Traditional Kinship Practices. *American Economic Review*, 111(6), 1880–1917. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20190098>
- Tankard, M. E., & Paluck, E. L. (2017). The effect of a Supreme Court decision regarding gay marriage on social norms and personal attitudes. *Psychological Science*, 28(9), 1334–1344.

Additional readings:

- Finseraas, H., Kotsadam, A., & Polavieja, J. (2020). Ancestry Culture, Assimilation, and Voter Turnout in Two Generations. *Political Behavior*, 1–26.
- Fouka, V. (2020). Backlash: The unintended effects of language prohibition in US schools after World War I. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 87(1), 204–239.

- Lowes, S., Nunn, N., Robinson, J. A., & Weigel, J. L. (2017). The evolution of culture and institutions: Evidence from the Kuba Kingdom. *Econometrica*, 85(4), 1065–1091.
- Villamil, F., & Balcells, L. (2021). Do TJ policies cause backlash? Evidence from street name changes in Spain. *Research & Politics*.

Session 10. Cultural change and backlash (19.04.24 / 14:00–15:30)

Required readings:

- Gándara, N. (2023). ‘We are your pack’: Feminist Social Movements on Countering Violence Against Women
- Anduiza, E., & Rico, G. (2022). Sexism and the Far-Right Vote: The Individual Dynamics of Gender Backlash. *American Journal of Political Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12759>

Additional readings:

- Baccini, L., & Weymouth, S. (2021). Gone for good: Deindustrialization, white voter backlash, and US presidential voting. *American Political Science Review*, 115(2), 550–567.
- de Abreu Maia, L., Chiu, A., & Desposato, S. (2023). No Evidence of Backlash: LGBT Rights in Latin America. *The Journal of Politics*, 85(1), 000–000.
- Guess, A., & Coppock, A. (2018). Does counter-attitudinal information cause backlash? Results from three large survey experiments. *British Journal of Political Science*, 1–19.
- Off, G. (2022). Gender equality salience, backlash and radical right voting in the gender-equal context of Sweden. *West European Politics*, 1–26.
- Schäfer, A. (2021). Cultural Backlash? How (Not) to Explain the Rise of Authoritarian Populism. *British Journal of Political Science*, 1–17.

- Walter, S. (2021). The backlash against globalization. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 24, 421–442.

Block IV. Presentations (10.05.24 / 9:15–17:00)

In this final block, students will present their research proposals and connect them to the topics studied during the course. If time allows, the final session will include a feedback loop and a wrapping-up discussion.

Session 11. Presentations I (10.05.24 / 9:15–10:45)

Session 12. Presentations II (10.05.24 / 11:00–12:30)

Session 13. Presentations III (10.05.24 / 13:45–15:15)

Session 14. Presentations IV / Wrap-up session (10.05.24 / 15:30–17:00)