

# **A Populist Crisis? Understanding Contemporary Populism in Europe and Beyond**

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## **Course Abstract**

Is Europe witnessing a populist crisis? While populist left parties gained power during the Euro crisis in Southern Europe, the migration crisis reinforced the populist far-right spectre in North-Western Europe. Meanwhile, Eastern European mainstream parties seem to turn their back towards Europe, blending populist right discourses on ethnic homogeneity with authoritarian frames. The technocratic institutions of the European Union seem unable to unite citizens around a pro-European, liberal conception of democracy, favouring further deepening and widening of the integration project. This course addresses the European populist crisis from a multi-disciplinary perspective, shedding light on the trajectories of populism during the Great Recession and the European refugee crisis through the lenses of political behaviour, communication science and political economy. It links key events in recent political developments to theoretical accounts on populism in Europe and beyond. Relying on the latest data and empirical evidence in social sciences, the course addresses both the reasons for populist success on the one side, and the consequences for European societies and the European project on the other side.

## Syllabus

1. Introduction – Arriving at a concept of populism.
  - a) Cas Mudde (2004). ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’. In: *Government and Opposition* 39.4, pp. 541–563
  - b) Jan-Werner Müller (2017). *What is Populism?* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press. Chapter 1.
    - Mudde.2017
2. The populist demand – Who supports a populist party?
  - a) Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris (2016). *Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash*
  - b) Jens Rydgren (2008). ‘Immigration Sceptics, Xenophobes or Racists? Radical Right-Wing Voting in Six West European Countries’. In: *European Journal of Political Research* 47.6, pp. 737–765
    - Agnes Akkerman et al. (2014). ‘How Populist are the People? Measuring Populist Attitudes in Voters’. In: *Comparative political studies* 47.9, pp. 1324–1353
3. The populist supply I – System outsiders and issue entrepreneurs
  - a) Sara B Hobolt and Catherine E De Vries (2015). ‘Issue Entrepreneurship and Multiparty Competition’. In: *Comparative Political Studies* 48.9, pp. 1159–1185
  - b) Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak (2018). ‘Putting Brexit into Perspective: The Effect of the Eurozone and Migration Crises and Brexit on Euroscepticism in European States’. In: *Journal of European Public Policy* 25.8, pp. 1194–1214
    - Julia Schulte-Cloos (2018). ‘Do European Parliament Elections Foster Challenger Parties’ Success on the National Level?’ In: *European Union Politics*, p. 1465116518773486
4. **Lab Session: Populist Support**
5. The populist opportunity I – Anti-elite sentiments in times of multiple crises
  - a) Béla Greskovits (2015). ‘The Hollowing and Backsliding of Democracy in East Central Europe’. In: *Global Policy* 6, pp. 28–37
  - b) Jonathan Polk et al. (2017). ‘Explaining the Salience of Anti-Elitism and Reducing Political Corruption for Political Parties in Europe with the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey Data’. In: *Research & Politics* 4.1, p. 2053168016686915

- Matthijs Rooduijn et al. (2016). 'Expressing or Fuelling Discontent? The Relationship Between Populist Voting and Political Discontent'. In: *Electoral Studies* 43, pp. 32–40
6. The populist opportunity II – The dislocating effects of globalization
    - a) Hanspeter Kriesi and Swen Hutter (2019). 'Chapter 1: Crises and the transformation of the national political space in Europe'. In: Cambridge University Press
    - b) Yannis Stavrakakis and Giorgos Katsambekis (2014). 'Left-Wing Populism in the European Periphery: The Case of SYRIZA'. in: *Journal of Political Ideologies* 19.2, pp. 119–142
    - Hanspeter Kriesi, Edgar Grande et al. (2006). 'Globalization and the Transformation of the National Political Space: Six European Countries Compared'. In: *European Journal of Political Research* 45.6, pp. 921–956
  7. The populist style I – Discursive framing beyond left and right politics
    - a) Jan Jagers and Stefaan Walgrave (2007). 'Populism as Political Communication Style: An Empirical Study of Political Parties' Discourse in Belgium'. In: *European Journal of Political Research* 46.3, pp. 319–345
    - b) Laurent Bernhard et al. (2015). 'The Populist Discourse of the Swiss People's Party'. In: *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*. ECPR Press Colchester
    - Extra 1
  8. The populist style II – Demands for direct democracy and referenda
    - a) Paul Taggart (2004). 'Populism and Representative Politics in Contemporary Europe'. In: *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9.3, pp. 269–288
    - b) Shaun Bowler et al. (2007). 'Enraged or Engaged? Preferences for Direct Citizen Participation in Affluent Democracies'. In: *Political Research Quarterly* 60.3, pp. 351–362
    - Giorgos Katsambekis (2017). 'The Populist Surge in Post-Democratic Times: Theoretical and Political Challenges'. In: *The Political Quarterly* 88.2, pp. 202–210
  9. The populist channel I – Communication and campaigns in post-factual times
    - a) Sven Engesser et al. (2017). 'Populist Online Communication: Introduction to the Special Issue'. In: *Information, Communication & Society* 20.9, pp. 1279–1292

- b) **Jacob Groshek and Karolina Koc-Michalska (2017). ‘Helping Populism Win? Social Media Use, Filter Bubbles, and Support for Populist Presidential Candidates in the 2016 US Election Campaign’.** In: *Information, Communication & Society* 20.9, pp. 1389–1407
  - Benjamin Krämer (2017). ‘Populist Online Practices: The Function of the Internet in Right-Wing Populism’. In: *Information, Communication & Society* 20.9, pp. 1293–1309
10. The populist channel II – The paradox of modern democracy
- a) **Marc F Plattner (2010). ‘Populism, Pluralism, and Liberal Democracy’.** In: *Journal of Democracy* 21.1, pp. 81–92
  - b) **Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2012). ‘The Ambivalence of Populism: Threat and Corrective for Democracy’.** In: *Democratization* 19.2, pp. 184–208
  - Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2012). ‘Populism and (Liberal) Democracy: a Framework for Analysis’. In: *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or corrective for democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–26

## Course Objectives

The course provides students with the skills to assess different faces of populism across time and across countries both from a theoretical as well as from an empirical perspective. Participants will be able to link the most important concepts in the study of populism to current developments within and beyond the European Union. By the end of the course, they are expected to supplement their theoretical knowledge with techniques and methods to empirically analyse and test key hypothesis in the study of populism.

## Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- ... summarize and critically assess different theoretical concepts of populism
- ... draw on a broad range of sources in the academic literature
- ... bridge theoretical approaches from different fields within social sciences
- ... demonstrate the ability to apply basic research methods (research design, data analysis, and interpretation)
- ... condense and discuss key hypotheses and problems in the study of populism
- ... evaluate and apply information from different academic disciplines to create cohesive arguments

## **Course Requirements**

- Write one 500-word response paper to the readings for a given session
- Participate actively in class
- Engage with the two core readings before each session
- Think critically!