

# Populism in the Twenty-First Century

Cologne Center for Comparative Politics  
Summer Term 2022/23 Seminar (14335.0107)<sup>1</sup>

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday, 15:30 – 17:00 (IBW Building Room 1.11, by appointment)

**Modules:** SM Repräsentation und Wahlen (PO 2021, ECTS Points: 6)

Schwerpunktmodul Seminar Politikwissenschaft I (PO 2015, ECTS Points: 9)

**Course Time & Place:** Tuesday, 10:00 – 11:30

Room 3.40 (IBW Building, Herbert-Lewin-Str. 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor)

**First and Last Sessions:** April 4, 2023 – July 4, 2022

## Course Overview

Over the past few decades, populism has gained a successful foothold and generated new challenges in numerous long-established democracies worldwide. From the Trump presidency and Brexit referendum to the Yellow Vest movement and beyond, populist leaders, parties and movements have gained significant momentum and generated considerable debate and research. Despite this, misconceptions and misunderstandings about the concept have abided to this day.

Even though the most recent elections have not necessarily brought about populist victories, they have made it clear that populists have gone beyond being a noisy opposition. Holding executive offices, forming governments and being at the heart of international/supranational institutions, populists now have gained the capacity to redefine the political narrative, pose challenges to their mainstream competitors spanning the ideological spectrum and —directly or indirectly— shape institutional and organizational structures, legislation and regulations, and relational dynamics in the political, social and economic spheres.

Against such background, the main objective of this course is to provide students with the conceptual, theoretical and empirical foundations to understand the phenomenon of contemporary populism. Looking into the various definitions, varieties, measurements, as well as causes and consequences of populism, the course explores (I) what populism stands for in today's political context, (II) how it differs from its earlier manifestations, (III) how it relates to democracy and affects the political structure, (IV) which strategic

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<sup>1</sup> This syllabus is preliminary and subject to minor changes. Version 1.0: 10.03.2023.

responses are available to mitigate its impacts, (V) why it is often associated with conspiracy theories and fake news, and (VI) what the ongoing debates are about its future trajectory.

## **Course Structure**

The course will follow weekly synchronous sessions that will be predominantly held in person. One to two sessions throughout the semester, however, will take place online via Zoom with guest lecturers to enhance the learning experience. All course materials as well as weekly assignments and an online forum for discussions and collaborative work, will be accessible through ILIAS.

## **Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, the students will be able to:

- Define the concept of populism and outline its core constitutive features.
- Distinguish between the different conceptual approaches to populism.
- Describe the ways of measuring populism at the public and elite levels.
- Identify the differences and similarities that exist among populist cases.
- Explain the demand-side and supply-side factors for the rise and continued success of populism.
- Elucidate the ambiguous relationship between populism and democracy.
- Critically evaluate the competing strategies developed in response to the alleged populist surge.
- Investigate the relationship between populism and the spread of conspiracy theories and fake news.
- Evaluate the ongoing debates the potential trajectory of populism, including the possibility of it being a fleeting trend or a lasting phenomenon that will continue to shape politics.

## **Prerequisites**

This seminar is intended for both novice and experienced undergraduate students. A general understanding of political science concepts and theories, as well as knowledge of fundamental quantitative and qualitative research methods, is sufficient to partake in the seminar.

While perfection is neither expected nor required, students should possess the ability to comprehend and articulate themselves in English, as it will be the primary language used in class.

## **Assessment**

This course adopts a dynamic and interactive seminar format that not only entails individual research, but also group activities, debates and discussions, critical analysis of the course material, and collective exploration of different cases. To fully benefit from the course, students are expected to come prepared by completing the assigned readings in advance of the relevant session. Active participation in class

discussions and group activities in a positive, constructive, and respectful manner is a crucial component of the course and will be reflected in the final grade.

The final grade will be based on the following (details on the format and specific criteria for assessment will be made available to students at ILIAS):

- **Reflection Papers (30%)** — Each week, students will be assigned a question and will have one day to provide a brief written response, usually around 250-300 words. These responses do not require extensive research or a specific format but are intended to encourage critical thinking and personal reflection on the material and discussions of the week.
- **Speech Coding (35%)** — During the semester, students will be asked to form groups of three, follow the training videos provided by the instructor, and collectively perform qualitative content analysis on a sample of texts (speeches given by a president or prime minister). Using the “holistic grading technique” and the rubric established by the Global Populism Database, they will identify the statements indicating populist sentiments in leaders’ discourse and assign a populism grade to the speeches. At the end of the semester, they will be asked to present their findings to each other, ensure inter-coder reliability, assign an averaged final score to the leader and submit their reports.
- **Presentation (35%)** — In the second half of the course, students will give a 10-minute oral presentation on a populist case of their choosing (party, leader, movement, and the like), which can be either historical or contemporary and from any region of the world. In their brief introduction to the case, students will be asked to look for answers to questions by referring to the themes covered in the course, such as: Should this case be considered populist, and if so, why? What kind of populists are they? What structural or institutional factors might have led to their success (or a lack thereof)? What consequences have they had in the political setting within which they exist? Additionally, each student will provide a short critique of one of their classmates' presentations and, only if they take the course as part of Schwerpunktmodul Seminar Politikwissenschaft I, a written report on their selected case. Cases, presentation dates, and discussants will be determined in the first weeks of the course in consultation with the instructor.
- **In-Class Debate (Bonus, 5%)** — Students will have the opportunity to earn an extra 5% on their final grade by participating in in-class debates, each of which will last 15 to 20 minutes, in the final session of the semester. At the beginning of the semester, students will be divided into small groups and assigned specific debate topics and propositions. This will provide them with ample time to research the topic, construct logical arguments, gather supportive evidence, and prepare counterarguments and rebuttals before the debate.

## Grading

At the end of the semester, points will be converted to final grades as follows:

Points	Grade
96 – 100	1,0
91 – 95	1,3
86 – 90	1,7
81 – 85	2,0
76 – 80	2,3
71– 75	2,7
66 – 70	3,0
61 – 65	3,3
56 – 60	3,7
51– 55	4,0
0 – 50	5,0

## Registration

Students have to register for the course and the exam separately via KLIPS. The deadline for exam registration will be communicated later.

## Additional Sources

Below there are some additional sources that students can utilize in their presentations, essays and discussions related to the topics covered in the course.

- Team Populism: <https://populism.byu.edu>
- The Populism Seminar: <http://populism-seminar.com>
- The PopuList: <https://popu-list.org>
- Political Observer on Populism: <https://populismobserver.com>
- POPULISMUS Populist Discourse and Democracy: <http://www.populismus.gr>
- Populist Political Communication in Europe: <https://www.ntnu.edu/populistcommunication>
- Extremism & Democracy: <https://standinggroups.ecpr.eu/extremismanddemocracy>
- Party Facts: <http://www.partyfacts.org>

## Course Schedule

Week	Subject
<p><b>Week 1   April 4</b></p> <p><u>Compulsory Reading</u></p> <p>Rovira Kaltwasser, C., Taggart, P., Ochoa Espejo, P., &amp; Ostiguy, P. (2017). Populism: An Overview of the Concept and the State of the Art. In C. Rovira Kaltwasser, P. A. Taggart, P. Ochoa Espejo &amp; P. Ostiguy (Eds.) <i>The Oxford Handbook of Populism</i>, Oxford University Press, 1-24.</p> <p><u>Recommended Reading</u></p> <p>Mudde, C. (2016). Europe's Populist Surge: Long time in the Making. <i>Foreign Affairs</i>, 95(6), 25-30.</p>	<p><i>Introduction &amp; Populism: Then and Now</i></p>
<p><b>Week 2   April 11</b></p> <p><u>Compulsory Reading</u></p> <p>Gidron, N., &amp; Bonikowski, B. (2013). <i>Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda</i>, Weatherhead Working Paper Series, No. 13-0004.</p> <p><u>Recommended Readings</u></p> <p>Hawkins, K. A., &amp; Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2018). Introduction: The Ideational Approach. In K. A. Hawkins, R. E. Carlin, L. Littvay, C. Rovira Kaltwasser (Eds.) <i>The Ideational Approach to Populism: Concept, Theory, and Analysis</i>, Routledge, 1-24.</p> <p>Mouffe, C. (2018). For a Left Populism. Verso Books, Chapter 1.</p>	<p>Conceptual Approaches</p>
<p><b>Week 3   April 18</b></p> <p><u>Compulsory Reading</u></p> <p>Mudde, C., &amp; Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2013). Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America. <i>Government and Opposition</i>, 48(2), 147-174.</p> <p><u>Recommended Reading</u></p> <p>Mudde, C., &amp; Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2017). <i>Populism: A Very Short Introduction</i>. Oxford University Press, Chapter 2.</p>	<p>Populism around the World, with the participation of a guest lecturer, <b>Eduardo Ryô Tamaki</b> (GIGA)</p>
<p><b>Week 4   April 25</b></p>	<p>Measuring Populism</p>

Week	Subject
<p><u>Compulsory Reading</u></p> <p>Hawkins, K. A., Aguilar, R., Castanho Silva, B., Jenne, E. K., Kocijan, B., &amp; Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2019, June 20-22). <i>Measuring Populist Discourse: The Global Populism Database</i>, Paper presented at the 2019 EPSA Annual Conference in Belfast, UK.</p> <p>Norris, P. (2020). Measuring populism worldwide, <i>Party Politics</i>, 26(6), 697-717.</p> <p><u>Recommended Readings</u></p> <p>Akkerman, A., Mudde, C., &amp; Zaslove, A. (2014). How populist are the people? Measuring populist attitudes in voters. <i>Comparative Political Studies</i>, 47(9), 1324-1353.</p>	
<b>Week 5   May 2</b>	Causes of Populism: Economic Grievances
<p><u>Compulsory Readings</u></p> <p>Hawkins, K., Read, M., Pauwels, T. (2017). Populism and Its Causes. In C. Rovira Kaltwasser, P. A. Taggart, P. Ochoa Espejo &amp; P. Ostiguy (Eds.) <i>The Oxford Handbook of Populism</i>, Oxford University Press, 267-286.</p> <p>Rodrik, D. (2020). Why does globalization fuel populism? Economics, culture, and the rise of right-wing populism. <i>Annual Review of Economics</i>, 13, 133-170.</p> <p><u>Recommended Reading</u></p> <p>Kriesi, H., Grande, E., Lachat, R., Dolezal, M., Bornschier, S., &amp; Frey, T. (2006). Globalization and the transformation of the national political space: Six European countries compared. <i>European Journal of Political Research</i>, 45(6), 921-956.</p>	
<b>Week 6   May 9</b>	Causes of Populism: Cultural Backlash
<p><u>Compulsory Readings</u></p> <p>Inglehart, R. F., &amp; Norris, P. (2016). Trump, Brexit, and the rise of Populism: Economic have-nots and cultural backlash, HKS Working Paper No. RWP16-026.</p> <p>Schäfer, A. (2021). Cultural Backlash? How (Not) to Explain the Rise of Authoritarian Populism. <i>British Journal of Political Science</i>, 1-17.</p> <p><u>Recommended Readings</u></p>	

Week	Subject
	<p>Bale, T., &amp; Kaltwasser, C. (2021). The Mainstream Right in Western Europe: Caught between the Silent Revolution and Silent Counter-Revolution. In T. Bale &amp; C. Rovira Kaltwasser (Eds.), <i>Riding the Populist Wave: Europe's Mainstream Right in Crisis</i>, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-37.</p>
<b>Week 7   May 16</b>	Causes of Populism: Electoral System and Party Competition
	<p><u>Compulsory Reading</u></p> <p>Rooduijn, M., De Lange, S. L., &amp; Van der Brug, W. (2014). A populist Zeitgeist? Programmatic contagion by populist parties in Western Europe. <i>Party Politics</i>, 20(4), 563-575.</p> <p><u>Recommended Reading</u></p> <p>Carter, E. (2004). Does PR promote political extremism? Evidence from the West European parties of the extreme right. <i>Representation</i>, 40(2), 82-100.</p> <p>Mudde, C. (2004). The Populist Zeitgeist. <i>Government and Opposition</i>, 39(4), 541-563.</p>
<b>Week 8   May 23</b>	Populists in Power
	<p><u>Compulsory Reading</u></p> <p>Taggart, P. &amp; Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2016). Dealing with Populists in Government: Some Comparative Conclusions, <i>Democratization</i>, 23(2), 345-365.</p> <p><u>Recommended Reading</u></p> <p>Cas Mudde. 2013. 'Three Decades of Populist Radical Right Parties in Western Europe: So What?' <i>European Journal of Political Research</i>, 52(1): 1-19.</p>
<b>Week 9   June 6</b>	Democratic Backsliding
	<p>Kaltwasser, C. R. (2017). Populism and the Question of How to Respond to It. In In C. Rovira Kaltwasser, P. A. Taggart, P. Ochoa Espejo &amp; P. Ostiguy (Eds.) <i>The Oxford Handbook of Populism</i>, Oxford University Press, 1-24.</p> <p><u>Recommended Reading</u></p> <p>Mudde, C. (2021). Populism in Europe: An Illiberal Democratic Response to Undemocratic Liberalism (The Government and Opposition/Leonard Schapiro Lecture 2019). <i>Government and Opposition</i>, 1-21.</p>
<b>Week 10   June 13</b>	Populism and Crises

Week	Subject
<p><u>Compulsory Reading</u></p> <p>Stavrakakis, Y., Katsambekis, G., Kioupiolis, A., Nikisianis, N., &amp; Siomos, T. (2018). Populism, anti-populism and crisis. <i>Contemporary Political Theory</i>, 17(1), 4-27.</p> <p><u>Recommended Reading</u></p> <p>Wondreys, J., &amp; Mudde, C. (2020). Victims of the Pandemic? European Far-Right Parties and COVID-19. <i>Nationalities Papers</i>, 1-18.</p>	
<b>Week 11   June 20</b>	Populism, Conspiracy Theories and Fake News
<p><u>Compulsory Reading</u></p> <p>Castanho Silva, B., Vegetti, F., &amp; Littvay, L. (2017). The Elite is Up to Something: Exploring the Relation between Populism and Belief in Conspiracy Theories. <i>Swiss Political Science Review</i>, 23(4), 423-443.</p> <p><u>Recommended Reading</u></p> <p>Schulz, A., Wirth, W., &amp; Müller, P. (2020). We Are the People and You Are Fake News: A Social Identity Approach to Populist Citizens' False Consensus and Hostile Media Perceptions. <i>Communication Research</i>, 47(2), 201-226.</p>	
<b>Week 12   June 27</b>	Anti-Populism and Projections for Future
<p><u>Compulsory Reading</u></p> <p>Moffitt, B. (2018). The populism/anti-populism divide in Western Europe. <i>Democratic Theory</i>, 5(2), 1-16.</p> <p>tbd</p> <p><u>Recommended Reading</u></p> <p>tbd</p>	
<b>Week 13   July 4</b>	In Class Debates and <i>Wrap-Up</i>