

# POPULISM IN 21ST CENTURY POLITICS

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## **COURSE OVERVIEW:**

Populism is one of the political buzzwords of the early 21st century. It is central to current debates about politics, from radical right parties in Europe to left-wing presidents in Latin America to the Tea Party, Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump in the United States. But populism is also one of the most contested concepts in the social sciences. In line with a growing body of literature, populism should be defined in ideational terms, i.e., as a worldview that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite,” and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people. This course will provide an introduction to populism in theory and practice.

The first part of the course will discuss how scholars from different parts of the world studied populism since this phenomenon entered the political and social science agenda in the late 1960s. Is populism an ideology? A strategy? A style of politics? A certain type of discourse? Something else? And, crucially, who are “the people” in populism? Could we, possibly, re-conceptualize populism in a way that is at the same time minimal and with sufficient discriminatory power, politically relevant, analytically compelling, operationally feasible, and clearly pointing to an opposite pole?

Beyond defining populism, this course also examines this phenomenon in the entirety of its geographical variants. Populism is an omnipresent, multifaceted, and ideologically boundless phenomenon. What distinguishes its various manifestations in Europe, Latin America, the United States, and elsewhere across time (old vs. new populisms), region (western vs. eastern; but also Nordic, Baltic, and Southern European), regime type in which they develop (democracy vs. non-democracy), and ideological hue (right vs. left populisms)?

A second part of this course will look at actual populist strategies, how populist leaders gain their appeal, what social conditions increase the likelihood of a populist victory, how populists gain and maintain power. What are the determinants of voting motivation for populist parties? And how do they differ from mainstream parties? This course will also examine what happens once populists come into office, as has happened several times in both Europe and Latin America? Cases such as Hungary, Greece and Venezuela are studied in order to understand the way in which populism comes to power and governs.

**LEARNING GOALS.** In this course, students will:

1. examine key concepts and theories that describe and explain the current phenomenon of populism.
2. explore this concept in a comparative perspective drawing on the populist experience across the globe.
3. develop oral presentation skills through class presentations and class discussions.
4. practice research and analytical skills through three short papers on different aspects of populism.

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## 1. Populism so far. Timeline and conceptualizations

Mudde, Cas. 2004. "The Populist Zeitgeist." *Government and Opposition* 39(4): 542-63.

Betz, Hans-Georg. 2013. "A Distant Mirror: Nineteenth-Century Populism, Nativism, and Contemporary Right-Wing Radical Politics." *Democracy and Security* 9(3): 200-20.

Canovan, Margaret. 2004. "Populism for Political Theorists?" *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9(3): 241-52.

## 2. Re-conceptualizing populism: Democratic illiberalism vs. liberal democracy

Canovan, Margaret. 1999. "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy." *Political Studies* 47(1): 1-16.

Conniff, Michael L. 1982. "Toward a Comparative Definition of Populism." in *Latin American Populism in Comparative Perspective*, edited by M. Conniff. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Rooduijn, Matthijs. 2014. "The Nucleus of Populism: In Search of the Lowest Common Denominator." *Government and Opposition* 49(4): 572-98.

## 3. The geography and varieties of the populist phenomenon

Betz, Hans-Georg. 1993. "The New Politics of Resentment: Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe." *Comparative Politics* 25(4): 413-27.

Greskovits, Bela. 1995. "Demagogic Populism in Eastern Europe." *Telos* 102: 91-106.

Mudde, Cas and Cristbal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2012b. "Exclusionary Vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America." *Government and Opposition* 48(02): 147-74.

## 4. Roots of the populist surge

Barr, R. R. 2009. "Populists, Outsiders and Anti-Establishment Politics." *Party Politics* 15(1): 29-48.

Hawkins, Kirk A. 2003. "Populism in Venezuela: The Rise of Chavismo." *Third World Quarterly* 24(6): 1137-60.

Weyland, Kurt. 2001. "Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics." *Comparative Politics* 34(1): 1-22.

Williamson, Vanessa, Theda Skocpol and John Coggin. 2011. "The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism." *Perspectives on Politics* 9(01): 25-43.

## 5. The appeal of populist leadership

Merolla, J. L. and E. J. Zechmeister. 2011. "The Nature, Determinants, and Consequences of Chavez's Charisma: Evidence from a Study of Venezuelan Public Opinion." *Comparative Political Studies* 44(1): 28-54.

Pappas, Takis S. 2008. "Political Leadership and the Emergence of Radical Mass Movements in Democracy." *Comparative Political Studies* 41(8): 1117-40.

Tismaneanu, Vladimir. 2000. "Hypotheses on Populism: The Politics of Charismatic Protest." *East European Politics and Societies* 15(1): 10-17.

## 6. The populist discourse: Forging the people and producing electoral majorities

Jagers, Jan and Stefaan Walgrave. 2007. "Populism as Political Communication Style: An Empirical Study of Political Parties' Discourse in Belgium." *European Journal of Political Research* 46(3): 319-45.

Rajacic, Agnes. 2007. "Populist Construction of the Past and Future: Emotional Campaigning in Hungary between 2002 and 2006." *East European Politics and Societies* 21(4): 639-60.

### **7. Who is the populist voter?**

Akkerman, A., C. Mudde and A. Zaslove. 2013. "How Populist Are the People? Measuring Populist Attitudes in Voters." *Comparative Political Studies*.

Ivarsflaten, E. 2007. "What Unites Right-Wing Populists in Western Europe?: Re-Examining Grievance Mobilization Models in Seven Successful Cases." *Comparative Political Studies* 41(1): 3-23.

Lupu, N. 2010. "Who Votes for Chavismo? Class Voting in Hugo Chavez's Venezuela." *Latin American Research Review* 45(1): 7-32.

### **8. What do populists do in office?**

Luther, K. R. 2011. "Of Goals and Own Goals: A Case Study of Right-Wing Populist Party Strategy for and During Incumbency." *Party Politics* 17(4): 453-70.

Pappas, Takis S. 2014. "Populist Democracies: Post-Authoritarian Greece and Post-Communist Hungary." *Government and Opposition* 49(1): 1-23.

### **9. Populism and the economic crisis. What is the causal arrow?**

Kriesi, Hanspeter. 2014. "The Populist Challenge." *West European Politics* 37(2): 361-78.

Mair, Peter. 2006. "Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy." *New Left Review* (42): 25-51.

Moffitt, Benjamin. 2014. "How to Perform Crisis: A Model for Understanding the Key Role of Crisis in Contemporary Populism." *Government and Opposition*: 1-29.

Pappas, Takis S. and Hanspeter Kriesi. 2015. "Populism and Crisis: A Fuzzy Relationship." in *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*, edited by H. Kriesi and T. S. Pappas. ECPR Press.

### **10. Hungary as a case study**

Muller, Jan-Werner. 2011. "The Hungarian Tragedy." *Dissent* (Spring): 5-10.

Palonen, E. 2009. "Political Polarisation and Populism in Contemporary Hungary." *Parliamentary Affairs* 62(2): 318-34.

Palonen, E. 2012. "Transition to Crisis in Hungary: Whistle-Blowing on the Naked Emperor." *Politics & Policy* 40(5): 930-57.

Schedler, Andreas 2010. Authoritarianism's Last Line of Defense. *Journal of Democracy* 21(1): 69-80.

Slater, Dan. 2013. "Democratic Careening." *World Politics* 65(04): 729-63.

### **12. Normative implications: Is populism a corrective or a threat to democracy?**

Krastev, Ivan. 2007. "The Strange Death of the Liberal Consensus." *Journal of Democracy* 18(4): 56-63.

Mounk, Yascha. 2014. "Pitchfork Politics: The Populist Threat to Liberal Democracy." *Foreign Affairs* (5 September/October): 27-36.

Plattner, Marc F. 2009. Populism, Pluralism, and Liberal Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 21(1), 81-92.

Rovira Kaltwasser, C. 2012. The Ambivalence of Populism: Threat and Corrective for Democracy. *Democratization* 19(2): 1-25.