

Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Lille

2nd semester 2021-2022

Populism in a global perspective

Syllabus

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Content and aims of the course

From the Philippines to Poland, from India to the United States, it seems that we are currently witnessing a global, populist trend with different local manifestations. But what is populism? Is this term relevant to understand the apparent democratic malaise? What are the stakes linked to its different uses in the political arena, in the media sphere, in academia? Why does it emerge in very different historical, political and cultural contexts? Does it represent a threat for democracy or is it a healthy and necessary component of democratic debate? Adopting a global perspective, this seminar aims at better understanding the various forms of populism that have existed across time and space, as well as their consequences for liberal understandings of democracy. The analysis does not only include parties and party leaders but also social movements and organizations (e.g. agrarian, conservative, alter-globalist, progressive, religious movements, etc..), as well as public opinion makers (e.g. different media outlets and media "entrepreneurs", intellectuals). Moreover, the course assesses the transformative impact of different varieties of populism on legislation and public policies (e.g. criminal law, fiscal and immigration policies), as well as on institutions (e.g. the use of direct democracy, the reform of the judiciary, etc) and on the broader evolution of democracies. By thus doing, it aims at shedding light on the double-edged nature of populism: while, in some cases, populism can pave the way for authoritarian rule or dictatorship, in other cases it can be a powerful mode of mobilization to voice the concerns of under-represented groups, to articulate democratic claims or to bring about democratic revolutions.

Required works

An oral presentation (20', 2 students - tbc) on a topic chosen from a pre-selected list of topics.

! Oral presentations **must rely on academic sources**, at least for the theoretical framework

Course structure

Class 1. Introduction to the topic and work assignments

- *Are we experiencing a “populist” moment?*
- *A contested concept: scientific notion or Kampfbegriff?*

Class 2. Definitions and historical origins

- *The US and Russia as cradles of populism?*
- *Conditions of emergence and opportunity structures*

Reading : Charles Postel (2019) « Populism as a Concept and the Challenge of U.S. History », *IdeAs* [Online], n° 14, 2019.

Class 3. Populism and democracy: a complex relationship

- Populism as a “pathology “ of democratic politics
- Populism as a reaction to depoliticized governance

Reading: Lawrence C. Goodwyn (1971), “Populist Dreams and Negro Rights: East Texas as a Case Study”, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 76, No. 5, p. 1435-1456.

Presentation: The 2020 & 2021 presidential and senatorial elections in Georgia (US): a renewal of the multiracial, populist coalition?

Class 4. Theoretical models and types of populism

- Modernity, post-modernity & competing theoretical models
- Types of populism

Reading : Maria Sawyer (2008), “Framing Feminists: Market Populism and its Impact on Public Policy in Australia and Canada”, in Yasmeen Abu-Laban (ed) *Gendering the Nation-State*, University of British Columbia Press, 2008.

Presentation: Authoritarian, left-wing populism in Venezuela and Nicaragua.

Class 5 (03/03) Populist leaders: male and charismatic?

- The “charismatic thesis” reconsidered
- The gendered dimension of populism

Reading: Mudde and Kaltwasser, (2015), “Vox populi or vox masculini? Populism and gender in Northern Europe and South America”, *Patterns of Prejudice*, n°49, p. 16-36.

Presentation: Right-wing, female populist leaders: gender as a strategic identity?

Class 6. Populism, changing media landscapes & polarized public spheres

- *Populism and types of media outlets*
- *Populism and conspiracy theories*

Reading: Jay D. Hmielowski, Michael A. Beam, Myiah J. Hutchens (2016), "Structural Changes in Media and Attitude Polarization: Examining the Contributions of TV News Before and After the Telecommunications Act of 1996", *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 28(2), p. 153–172.

Presentation: The use of social media by populist leaders: comparing Donald Trump and Narendra Modi.

Class 7. Is there a specific, populist voter type?

- Debating the "anywheres vs "somewheres" theory
- The different constituencies of the "populist" parties

Reading: Gest, Justin (2016), *The new minority. White working-class politics in an age of immigration and inequality*, "Introduction", Oxford University Press, p.1-20.

Presentation: Revenge of the "peripheries"? The urban/rural cleavage in the 2016 & 2020 US presidential election and in the 2016 Brexit referendum.

Class 8. Populism and social movements

- *Are the new social movements populist?*
- *Conservative social movements and populism*

Reading: Ernesto Castañeda, (2014), "The Indignados and Occupy movements as political challenges to representative democracy: a reply to Eklundh", *Global discourse*, vol. 4.

Presentation: The Tea Party and its impact on the Republican party.

Class 9. Populists in government

- *Populists in power: a stocktaking*
- *Populists in times of pandemics: unable to deliver?*

Readings: Jonathan Kennedy (2019), "Populist politics and vaccine hesitancy in Western Europe: An analysis of national-level data", February 2019, *The European Journal of Public Health*, 29/3.

Presentation: Does poor performance in times of pandemics affect populist leaders' popularity? Comparing Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro.

References

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Bobba, Giuliano and Nicolas Hubé (2021), *Populism and the politicization of the Covid-19 crisis in Europe*, Palgrave.

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