

# Comparative Perspectives on Political Phenomena: Populism (period 1)



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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the B.A. course titled *Populism*, which is part of the study module Comparative Perspectives on Political Phenomena. A few important practical info's before the class begins:

We meet on **Tuesdays 14:15-15:45 & Fridays 10:15-11:45** at Porthania P673.

All the materials for each lecture, including readings and course slides, can be found under the corresponding date below. It is essential that you read the texts mentioned in daily descriptions beforehand!

I'll make sure that our class presents a welcoming environment at all times for you to show an active participation during classes. I sincerely hope that all of you take most advantage of this.

Course slides become available automatically by the end of each session so you can access and download them afterwards.

The course contains one group assignment and a final online exam. We will discuss how to set the groups up and deal with all practicalities on the first day. **Thus it is essential that you do not miss it!**

Your final grade will comprise of attendance (20%), group assignment (20%), and final exam (60%).



[Announcements](#)

## FEEDBACK FORM

Not available

## FINAL EXAM

Restricted Available from **21 October 2022, 10:00 AM**

21.10.2022, 10:00-12:00

The exam questions will be available here from 14:00, when a link titled **Exam Questions & Submission** appears below.

Please answer **two of the three questions in 2 hours** (or 3hrs if you are entitled to an extension) and submit your answers as a single word or pdf file. If you face problems in doing so, you could also email me your answers before the deadline. Barring previously agreed-upon time extensions, medical or other emergencies that can be documented, (over a few minutes) late submissions will not be considered. Question texts can be found as PDF files titled Question 1, Question 2 and Question 3.

Besides making references to course readings in a way that displays command over them (not necessarily the page numbers etc. but central “concepts”, “ideas” and “authors”), what is especially important is that your own voice/take on the issue can be heard in your answers. This means that you are expected to make use of the ideas, discussions and arguments presented in the course while critically engaging with empirical political issues and popular opinions. Please try keeping your answers below 750-words for each question and note that the italics are there to give you a hint for what to look at.

In case of any problems, you can reach me via e-mail ([halil.gurhanli@helsinki.fi](mailto:halil.gurhanli@helsinki.fi)) or via phone (0401363693) immediately during the exam.

Good luck!

## COURSE SCHEDULE

## PART A – Populism: What’s in a Name?

This part introduces the concept of populism to the student by exploring its “conceptual history” as well as different approaches to it through a selection of essays which identify it as an ideology, syndrome, political style or political logic. Taking a journey to the historical and ideological roots of populism, it takes issue of the uneasy relationship between the “democratic regime” as we know in contemporary Western politics, and populism as its shadowy “other.” Group assignment challenges students to “dissect” the populist message hidden in the speeches and slogans of politicians of their choice. Groups that are set during the first day will walk everyone through their “autopsies” and present their findings.

13.9 – A Conceptual History of Populism

16.9 – Populism & Neo-Liberalism

20.9 – Populism as the Ideology of Democracy

23.9 – Populism as Politics Per Se

27.9 & 30.9 – Group Assignment

## PART B – Populism in Praxis

In this part, the course goes through the infamous phenomenon that is “neo-populism” in Europe, its re-emergence on the other side of the Atlantic, as well as in Turkey. Since the end of the Cold War, the West has had more than its share of “populists”, mostly from right of the ideological spectrum with a distinctly nationalist, exclusionary and more often than not xenophobic, homophobic and even racist undertones. In today’s 24-hours news cycle where commercial success is the life-blood of TV, print and online media, it is hardly surprising that this has an effect on the ways in which traditional and social media interact with populist politics. Finally, various approaches to populism covered throughout the course are brought together in praxis through an examination of one of the most prominent cases of populism in contemporary politics: Turkey.

4.10 – Radical Right Populism in Europe

7.10 – American Populism

11.10 – Populism Alla Turca

14.10 – Populism & Media

21.10 – Online Exam

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## PRE-COURSE ASSIGNMENT

Please take The Guardian’s *How Populist Are You?* quiz **before the first class** by clicking [here ↗](#). Then answer a few questions related to that quiz by clicking “Submit Answers Here” link below.

Once done, also have a look at the following two brief critical takes on the Guardian quiz, which appeared in [Jacobin Magazine](#) and [Critical Legal Thinking ↗](#) website.

 [Submit Answers Here](#)

Please write your answers to the following questions below:

1. What were the most (A) and least (B) similar names to your results populism quiz?
2. Do you consider neither, one (A or B), or both (A&B) of them as populists?
3. If you had the chance, would you like to meet neither, one (A or B), or both (A&B) of them socially, e.g. over some coffee or drinks?

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## SESSION 1 - CONCEPTUAL HISTORY OF POPULISM

On this very first day of the course we will take a journey into the “conceptual history” of populism, searching for answers to questions such as:

Where does the term come from?  
 When was it first used and by whom?  
 Who were the first populists?  
 Has it always meant what it does nowadays?

Please make sure that you read Houwen's (2011) and Jäger's (2018) works beforehand, have a look the three brief news/opinion pieces below, which are illustrative of popular views on populism today.

There is also an additional optional reading by Jones (2019), which trace the intellectual roots of today's mainstream view on populism back to 1950s.

 [Houwen \(2011\) - Conceptual History of Populism](#)

Required reading for the day.

 [Jäger \(2017\)](#)

required reading for the day

 [Jones \(2019\)](#)

\*Optional

 [CAP & AEI Joint Report on Populism in the US](#)

These two biggest liberal and conservative players of mainstream political "think-tank-osphere" joined their forces and recently unveiled their common take on populism in the US, which pretty much equates it with authoritarianism. Have a look.

 [CAP & AEI Joint Report on Populism in Europe](#)

Same institutes but different region; this time it's Europe.

 [Donald Tusk's Speech](#)

Council President sees populism as the "virus" that threatens Europe (13.10.2016).

 [Trump's Secret Weapon: Silent Majority](#)

Conservative pundit's take before Trump's election (27.8.2015)

 [Session 1 Course Slides](#)

Slides are available after the lecture.

## [SESSION 2 - NEO-LIBERALISM & POPULISM](#)

In this session, we will look at the neoliberal hegemony that has shaped the particular form liberal democracy has taken in the Western politics and, arguably, paved the way for the current populist upsurge. Main focus of the day is the uneasy relationship between the "liberal democratic regime" as we know in contemporary politics, and populism as its shadowy "other". Articles by Stahl (2019), De Cleen & Stavrakakis (2017), and Papadopoulos (2002) will be the basis of our lecture. So please try to have a look at them beforehand. Mudde & Kaltwasser (2017) is also there to offer you an introductory guideline into the challenging phenomenon that is the relationship between liberalism and democracy.

 [Stahl \(2019\)](#)

\* Required reading for the day.

 [De Cleen & Stavrakakis \(2017\)](#)


\* Required reading for the day.

 [Papadopoulos \(2002\) - Populism, Democracy and Governance](#)

\* Required reading for the day.

 [Mudde & Kaltwasser \(2017\)](#)

Optional

 Session 2 Course Slides

Restricted Available from **16 September 2022, 11:45 AM**

## [SESSION 3 - POPULISM AS DEMOCRATIC IDEOLOGY](#)

During this session, we will continue our theme on the relationship between democracy and populism, but from the "ideological" perspective this time. Some questions we will ask and search the answers for through Canovan's texts (1999 and 2002) are:

Is there something ingrained in democratic "ideology" that makes it prone to populism?

When other regimes such as fascism, liberalism or socialism have ideologies, is it likely that democracy has none?

Are we really living in post-ideological times, as we are constantly told?


If not, what is the ideology of democracy?

 [Canovan \(1999\) - Trust the People](#)

\*Required reading for the day.

 [Canovan \(2002\) - Taking Politics to the People](#)

\*Required reading for the day.

 Session 3 Course Slides

Restricted Available from **20 September 2022, 3:45 PM**

## [SESSION 4 - POPULISM AS POLITICS](#)

In this session we will tackle a radical approach to populism by Ernesto Laclau (2005) that elevates the concept to the core of the political. Taking its queue from the post-structuralist school in political thought, today's lecture pays special attention to the concept of the "people" of "people-ism" as it is constructed discursively in everyday politics and introduces several key terms such as:

Discourse & Discursivity

Articulation & Nodal Points

Empty Signifier

Antagonism

Hegemony

 [Stavrakakis \(2017\) - Populism & Hegemony](#)

\*Required reading for the day.

 [Laclau \(2005\) - Populism; What's in a Name](#)

Optional

 [Stavrakakis \(2014\) - Populism vs. Anti-Populism](#)

Optional

 [Jäger \(2018\) - Review of Mouffe's Left Populism](#)

This review could be useful for those of you interested in a compact summary of what a Laclauian approach to populism would look like in today's political atmosphere.

 [Podcast Episode on Populism](#)

Some food for thought in this episode of New Economics on progressive populism, with a guest appearance by Chantal Mouffe.

 Session 4 Course Slides

Restricted Available from **23 September 2022, 11:45 AM**

## GROUP ASSIGNMENT

Groups of 3-4 students present a deconstructive reading of statements from political actors, offering their takes on the 'populist message'. The aim is to generate a common theme after all group presentations, with distinctive features of what makes a discourse 'populist' or 'non-populist'.

Please note that the subjects of your assignment do not necessarily have to be most well-known political leaders such as Donald Trump, Rodrigo Duterte, Angela Merkel, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Emmanuel Macron, Barack Obama etc. (though they can very well be). You are most welcome to pick statements revolving around seemingly non-political names and issues such Greta Thunberg, Bill Gates, Pope Francis, #MeToo movement, NY Times columnists etc. or more institutional/collective entities like declarations from the EU commissioners, "Qanon" advocates, World Health Organisation, IMF, Black Lives Matter, Indignados, DM25 etc.

Emphasis here is on the ways in which the core category of "the people" is utilized or not in a given case. What are the main points of reference that are used in order to derive legitimacy for the position upheld by actors in question? The nation, working people, democrats, whites, Americans, Europeans, women, Christians, human race...? And what are those categories pitted against them as hindrances? Elites, immigrants, socialists, white supremacists, establishment, terrorists, populists, capitalists, racists, toxic masculinity, authoritarians...? Or is there even such an antagonistic and/or polarizing framework at work at all? To what extent we can consider them as "populist" or should we perhaps other terms to identify them more accurately?

Though you are required to examine at least one particular piece of text or speech, feel free to include as many as you would like if you think they make your overall conclusion clearer. But please remember that **you have 15 minutes to present your work** regardless. *Not all members of the group has to present*, for the entire group will get the same grade anyways. So feel free to arrange your presentation whichever way you see fit but **don't forget to submit your group work (notes, presentations etc.) to Moodle by the end of week**. Finally, please note that in order to avoid several groups picking up the same subject, assignment will be distributed on *first-come-first-serve basis*. Therefore you are encouraged to begin thinking about their subject once the groups are formed and **inform the teacher asap**.

 [Dissecting the Populist Message](#)

Please submit the files related to your group assignments here.

Do not forget to include the *name of your group* and *all its members*. It is enough that only one member of each group makes the submission. *Final grade is the same for all members*.

## SESSION 7 - NEW POPULISM IN EUROPE

In this session, we will go through the infamous phenomenon that is "neo-populism" in Europe. Since the end of the Cold War, the continent has had more than their share of "populists", mostly from right of the ideological spectrum with a distinctly nationalist, exclusionary and more often than not xenophobic, homophobic and even racist undertones. But does this mean that it is an intrinsically right-wing and/or exclusionary phenomenon? How about the resurgence of a distinctively leftist form of populism in the aftermath of 2008 financial crisis? With the enlightening assistance of Mudde (2004), Mouffe (2005), Damiani (2017), Ruzza (2017) and Stavrakakis et.al (2017) we will try to dive into the "why's" and "how's" of contemporary populism in Europe.

 [Mudde \(2004\) - Populist Zeitgeist](#)

Required reading for the day.

 [Mouffe \(2005\) - Haider & The End of Politics](#)

Optional

 [Damiani \(2017\) - Radical Left Populism in Europe](#)

Optional

 [Stavrakakis et.al. \(2017\) - Exteme Right & Populism Revisited](#)

Optional

 [Ruzza \(2017\) - Populism & Xenophobia in Europe](#)

Optional

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## [SESSION 8 - AMERICAN POPULISM](#)

This is a bonus session for those interested specifically in American populism, its versions and historical roots. Though it is not to be covered as a stand alone topic in our lectures, these readings and slides are brought together here as an attempt to guide students in their quest for answers to the questions such as: Is Trump an unprecedented phenomenon? If not, which tradition of American populism he belongs? What are the differences between right and left-wing populism in American case? Please feel free to have a look at the texts and lecture slides below.


 [Azari & Hetherington \(2016\) - Back to the Future](#)

 [Kazin \(2016\) - Trump American Populism](#)

 [Rehmann \(2016\) - Sanders & Neoliberalist Crisis](#)

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## [SESSION 9 - POPULISM ALLA TURCA](#)

 [Aytac & Elci \(2019\) - Populism in Turkey](#)

\* Required

 [Gürhanli \(2018\) - Populism on Steroids](#)

\* Required

 [Eksi & Wood \(2019\) - RWP as Gendered Performance in Putin & Erdogan](#)

\* Optional

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## [SESSION 10 - POPULISM AND MEDIA](#)

In this session we will have a look at the particular relationship between the media and populism/populists. In today's 24-hours news cycle, commercial success and ratings (or clicks, followers & site visits) are the life-blood of world's major news outlets on TV, print and online media. So it is hardly surprising that this has an effect on the ways in which they cover politics, politicians, political parties and, of course, populists! With the help of Mazzoleni's text (2014), we will tackle some key concepts such as "infotainment" and "soft videocracy", as well as trying to wrap our heads around the difference between mainstream and tabloid news. Are they "using" politics and politicians for popularity or is it the other way around? Doubtlessly, we will have to deal also with the Trump phenomenon, so Jutel's piece (2017) is a good way to open up that discussion as well. There are also two additional texts that deal with the case of European media (Moffitt, 2017) and populism's relationship with social media (Engesser et.al. 2017).

 [Mazzoleni \(2014\) - Mediatization & Political Populism](#)

\*Required reading for the day.

 [Engesser et.al. \(2017\) - Populist Online Communication](#)

\*Required reading for the day.

 [Engesser et.al. \(2017\) - Populism & Social Media](#)

Optional

 [Jutel \(2017\) - Trump & Affective Media](#)

Optional

 [Moffitt \(2017\) - Populism & Media in Western Europe](#)

Optional

 [Donald Trump - Argument for America \(TV Ad\)](#)

 [Hillary Clinton - Tomorrow \(TV Ad\)](#)

 [Joe Biden - Keep Up \(TV Ad\)](#)

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## ABSENTEES' EXAM

Not available

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