

POPULISM & CRISIS

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Course Description

Recent years have witnessed the rise of the word “populism” to the centre of political discussions across the globe. Yet, the longstanding and diversified body of scholarly work on this topic may seem unwieldy, making first encounters with it particularly challenging. What is populism? How does it affect political dynamics and electoral competition? And why parties and political entrepreneurs that we understand as populists regularly succeed in moments of crisis?

The mission of this course is to accompany students in trying to answer these questions by presenting state of the art research on populism’s origins, workings, and consequences. We adopt a multidisciplinary approach, considering research conducted in political science, sociology, and economics, and discussing the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative approaches. We consider how populism gets declined in its variants from the left to the right of the political spectrum and in different historical and geographical context in the Global North and South.

The course is also intended to train students to manage a research project through all the phases from conception to publication. Presentations of cutting-edge research on the subject from Bocconi scholars will complement lectures from the course’s instructors and students’ presentations.

Course Objectives

Knowledge & Understanding

During this course successful students will acquire knowledge and understanding of:

1. The key theories trying to understand and explain the role of populism in politics;
2. The historical details of and the scholarly debate on exemplary cases of populist successes and failures around the world;
3. The state-of-the-art empirical research on the causes, workings, and consequences of populism.

Transferable Skills

After successful completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Use the theoretical and empirical insights presented during the course to conduct independent research on the behaviour of citizens, politicians and other political actors in the emergence of populist movements and parties, in particular, in the event of economic crises;
2. Use the multi-disciplinary and multi-method research tools presented during the course to conduct independent research on political dynamics;
3. Use the skills developed in the hands-on part of the project to navigate the complexities inherent in conducting and publishing independent research.

Course Structure

The course is structured in five blocks. The first block focuses on defining populism and introduces key cases from different world areas and historical moments. The second block introduces different research approaches to the study of populism and trains students to design and independent research project (workshop week I). The third, fourth and fifth block present and discuss state-of-the-art empirical research on populism integrating presentations from Bocconi researchers working on this subject. The last week of the course is dedicated to students' own research design presentations (workshop week II).

Block 1: Conceptualization

Block 2: Workshop Week I on Research Design

Block 3: Causes

Block 4: Workings

Block 5: Consequences

Block 6: Workshop Week II & Wrap Up

Required Materials

In each class, we will be discussing a number of readings, including peer-reviewed papers and book chapters. All peer-reviewed journal articles should be readily available online through the library. Any readings not readily accessible online, such as most book chapters, will be available on Blackboard via the Blackboard course page. We provide the full reading list below.

All the required reading should be read before the class, but we do not expect students to read all the material with the same depth. In some classes, we classify some required readings as “read”. These readings will usually be review articles, book chapters, or more generally pieces that offer more structured theoretical contributions. In this case, we expect students to go into the piece's details covering the whole text. For readings that we classify as “skim”, we expect students to be able to summarize the following information about the paper:

1. Research puzzle/question
2. Argument
3. Key concepts and operationalization of dependent and main explanatory variables
4. Empirical strategy (e.g., identification)
5. Core contribution(s)

Most of this information should be readily available in the paper's introduction. However, we recommend you to skim the paper and glance over the main figures and tables to verify first hand that what the authors claim to have done corresponds to what they include in the paper.

Before the class starts, we would advise every student to acquire and read: Mudde, Cas and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) [Populism: A Very Short Introduction](#). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Attendance

Before attending class, all students are required to have read the required reading. Please come to each class with discussion pertinent comments and questions.

Assessments

With the purpose of measuring the acquisition of the learning outcomes, the student assessment is based on three main components, 1) a reading material presentation, 2) a research design presentation and 3) a written assignment. The reading material presentation accounts for 10% of the grade, the research design presentation for 30% and the final assignment for 60% of the final grade.

1) Reading material presentation (10%): The reading material presentation is designed to briefly summarize the main readings in light of the topic of the session. Each student must give one reading material presentation. In the presentation students can use the week's required readings and develop a graphical presentation about how the arguments and/or findings of the readings relate to each other. Presentation slots will be available within the six classes from the three blocks "Causes", "Workings", and "Consequences". Students can sign up for presentations at the beginning of the course via a sign-up sheet on Blackboard.

2) Research design preparation (30%): During the workshop weeks of the class, students are expected to apply the class materials to their own research interests. In this presentation, they are asked to develop a research puzzle, research question, core hypothesis, operational definitions of key terms and research design that can help tackle the research question. The research question can be on any topic discussed in class and should form the basis for the final assignment. Students can sign up for presentations at the week before the workshop weeks of class via a sign-up sheet on Blackboard.

3) Final assignment (60%): Students will end the class by handing in a final assignment in which they discuss research puzzle, research question, core hypothesis, operational definitions of key terms and research design that can help tackle the research question. It will pretty much serve as a Pre-Analysis Plan (PAP) for a paper. The instructions about how to write a PAP and other formatting details will be discussed during the workshop weeks of class.

Instructions for presentations:

Students can present during the class using LaTeX/Power Point. The presentations should be approx. 5 minutes long using a maximum of 3 slides. The sign-up sheet circulated after the first course meeting for all groups to sign up for a presentation.

Ideally, the presentations should be intellectually stimulating – don't be boring! LaTeX/Power Point are good software for preparing your slides; you do not need anything fancier. Your font size should be big enough to read and your slides must look professional and be readable.

Follow these rules when preparing your slides:

1. Use the “slide master” feature to create a consistent and simple design template. It is fine to vary the content presentation (bulleted list, two-column text, text and image, etc.), but be consistent with other elements such as font, colours and background.
2. Empty space on the slide will enhance readability.
3. Simplify and limit the number of words on each screen. Use key phrases and include only essential information. Do not add long quotes or blocks of text.
4. Avoid the use of flashy transitions (such as text fly-ins) and special effects (like animation or sounds). These features seem impressive or cute at first but get old quickly.
5. Use good-quality images that reinforce and complement your message. Ensure that your image maintains its impact and resolution when projected on a larger screen.

Course Policies

During Class

All required readings should be completed prior to attending the classes. During class it is important to be fully present, so phones are prohibited as they are not useful for anything in the course. Laptops are allowed but only for taking notes, not for any other use.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Students are required to comply with the university policy on academic integrity found in the Code of Academic Integrity for Bocconi Students found here: [Code of Conduct for the Bocconi Students](#). We urge you all to not cheat, it affects everyone in class and at the university.

Accommodations for Diversity

Being part of the Bocconi community, means sharing its values: independence, ethics, transparency, freedom of expression, equality, solidarity, promotion of diversity, attention to merit and development of individual abilities, professionalism and standards, social responsibility. Please acquaint yourself with the Honor Code for the Bocconi Community using the following link: [Honor Code for the Bocconi Community](#). We are committed to maintain an academic environment for all students that is free from all forms of discrimination based on race, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability or sexual orientation. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during class, please feel free to get in touch with either Prof Cremaschi or Prof De Vries. In addition, any person who feels that they have been the subject of prohibited discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should contact the Student Ombudsman at garante.studenti@unibocconi.it.

Course Schedule

1. Tuesday, March 7, 14.45-16.15: Conceptualization: Why Populism?
2. Thursday, March 9, 12.00-13.30: Conceptualization: What Is Populism?
3. Tuesday, March 13, 12.00-13.30: Workshop Week I: Moving from Puzzle to a Research Design
4. Thursday, March 16, 14.45-16.15: Causes: Cultural Explanations
5. Tuesday, March 21, 12.00-13.30: Workshop Week I: Research Example
6. Thursday, March 23, 14.45-16.15: Causes: Economic Explanations

7. Tuesday, March 28, 16.30-18.00: Workings: Elite Behavior & Rhetoric
8. Thursday, March 30, 14.45-16.15: Workings: Populist Networks
9. Tuesday, April 4, 16.30-18.00: Consequences: Economy & Pandemics
10. Thursday, April 5, 12.00-13.30: Workshop Week II
11. Thursday, April 5, 14.30-16.00: Workshop Week II
12. Thursday, April 6, 14.45-16.15: Consequences: Government & Bureaucracy

Reading List

Session 1: Why Populism?

Required Readings

- Art, David (2022) “The Myth of Global Populism.” *Perspectives on Politics* 20 (3): 999–1011.
- Pirro, Andrea (2022) “Far Right: The Significance of an Umbrella Concept.” *Nations and Nationalism*.
- Caramani, Daniele (2017) “Will vs. reason: The Populist and Technocratic Forms of Political Representation and Their Critique to Party Government” *American Political Science Review*, 111 (1): 54-67.
- Hunger, Sophia, and Fred Paxton (2022) “What’s in a Buzzword? A Systematic Review of the State of Populism Research in Political Science.” *Political Science Research and Methods* 10 (3): 617–33.

Additional Readings

- Mudde, Cas. 2019. “Chapter 1. History” in *The Far Right Today*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Levitsky S and Loxton J (2013) “Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism in the Andes,” *Democratization* 20, 107–136.
- Laclau, Ernesto (2018) “Chapter 4. The People and the Discursive Production of Emptiness” in *On Populist Reason*. Verso.

Session 2: What Is Populism?

Required Readings

- Isaiah Berlin 1967 *To Define Populism*. [from par. 136 (page 5)] [\[Link\]](#)
- Canovan, Margaret. 1981. “Introduction” and “Conclusion” In *Populism*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Mudde C (2004) The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition* 39: 541–563.
- Müller, Jan-Werner. 2016. “Chapter 1. What Populists Say?” In *What Is Populism?* University of Pennsylvania Press.

Additional Readings

- Sartori, G. (1970), ‘Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics’, *American Political Science Review*, 64 (4): 1033–53.

Rovira Kaltwasser C, Taggart P, Ochoa Espejo P and Ostiguy P (2017) “Populism: an overview of the concept and the state of the art.” In Rovira Kaltwasser C, Taggart P, Ochoa Espejo P and Ostiguy P (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–24.

Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2013) “Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America.” *Government and Opposition* 48 (2): 147–74.

Puleo, Leonardo, and Gianluca Piccolino. 2022. “Back to the Post-Fascist Past or Landing in the Populist Radical Right? The Brothers of Italy Between Continuity and Change.” *South European Society and Politics*.

Wuttke, A., Schimpf, C., & Schoen H. (2020). When the Whole Is Greater than the Sum of Its Parts: On the Conceptualization and Measurement of Populist Attitudes and Other Multidimensional Constructs. *American Political Science Review*, 114(2), 356-374.

Session 3: Moving from Puzzle to a Research Design

Freedman, David A. (1991) “Statistical Models and Shoe Leather.” *Sociological Methodology*, 21:291-313.

Blattman, Christopher (2012) Children and War: How “Soft” Research Can Answer the Hard Questions in Political Science. *Perspectives on Politics* 10.2: 403-413.

King, Gary (2006). Publication, Publication. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 39(1), 119-125.

Stimson, James A. *Professional Writing in Political Science: A Highly opinionated Essay* [especially the part on “problem”] [[Link](#)]

Zinnes, Dina A. (1980) Three Puzzles in Search of a Researcher: Presidential Address. *International Studies Quarterly* 24 (3): 315-342.

Pepinsky, Thomas B. 2019. “The Return of the Single-Country Study.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 22: 187–203.

Session 4: Cultural Explanations

Required Readings (Read)

Margalit, Yotam, Shir Raviv, and Omer Solodoch. 2022. “The Cultural Origins of Populism.” Working Paper.

Required Readings (Skim)

Anduiza, Eva, and Guillem Rico. 2023 “Sexism and the Far-Right Vote: The Individual Dynamics of Gender Backlash.” *American Journal of Political Science*.

Cramer Walsh, Katherine. 2012. “Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective.” *American Political Science Review* 106 (3): 517–32.

Marco Tabellini (2020) “Gifts of the Immigrants, Woes of the Natives: Lessons from the Age of Mass Migration,” *The Review of Economic Studies*, Volume 87 (1): 454–486

Caramani, Daniele & Manucci, Luca (2019) “National Past and Populism: The Re-Elaboration of Fascism and its Impact on Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe,” *West European Politics* 42 (6).

Patana, P. (2022) “Residential Constraints and the Political Geography of the Populist Radical Right: Evidence from France,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 20 (3): 842-859.

Kurer, T., & Van Staaldouin, B. (2022) “Disappointed Expectations: Downward Mobility and Electoral Change,” *American Political Science Review*.

Additional Readings

Gidron, Noam, and Peter A. Hall (2017) “The Politics of Social Status: Economic and Cultural Roots of the Populist Right,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 68 (S1): S57–84.

Hangartner, Dominik, Elias Dinas, Moritz Marbach, Konstantinos Matakos, and Dimitrios Xefteris. 2019. “Does Exposure to the Refugee Crisis Make Natives More Hostile?” *American Political Science Review* 113 (2): 442–55.

Inglehart, Ronald, and Pippa Norris (2019) “Chapter 2: The Cultural Backlash Theory” in *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Margalit, Yotam. 2019. “Economic Insecurity and the Causes of Populism, Reconsidered.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 33 (4): 152–70.

Session 5: Research Example

Cremaschi, Simone, Paula Rettl, Marco Cappelluti, and Catherine E. De Vries (2022) *Geographies of Discontent: How Public Service Deprivation Increased Far-right Support in Italy*. Working Paper.

Session 6: Economic Explanations

Required Readings (Read)

Rodrik, Dani (2021) “Why Does Globalization Fuel Populism? Economics, Culture, and the Rise of Right-Wing Populism,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 13: 133-170.

Berman, Sheri (2022) “The Causes of Populism in the West,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 24:71-88.

Required Readings (Skim)

Funke, Manuel, Moritz Schularick, Christoph Trebesch (2016) “Going to Extremes: Politics After Financial Crises,” 1870–2014, *European Economic Review* 88: 227-260.

Cavaille, Charlotte, Ferwerda, Jeremy 2022. “How Distributional Conflict over In-Kind Benefits Generates Support for Far-Right Parties,” *Journal of Politics*.

Ansell, Ben, Frederik Hjorth, Jacob Nyrup, and Martin Vinæs Larsen. 2022. “Sheltering Populists? House Prices and the Support for Populist Parties.” *The Journal of Politics* 84 (3): 1420–36.

Suryanarayan, Pavithra (2019) “When Do the Poor Vote for the Right Wing and Why: Status Hierarchy and Vote Choice in the Indian States.” *Comparative Political Studies* 52 (2): 209–45.

Additional Readings

Scheve, Kenneth, and Theo Serlin (2022) “The German Trade Shock and the Rise of the Neo-Welfare State in Early Twentieth-Century Britain,” *American Political Science Review*.

Doerr, Sebastian, Stefan Gissler, José-Luis Peydró, and Hans-Joachim Voth. 2022. “Financial Crises and Political Radicalization: How Failing Banks Paved Hitler’s Path to Power.” *The Journal of Finance* 77 (6): 3339–72.

Gennaro, Gloria. 2022. “Immigration, Public Housing and Welfare Chauvinism.” Working Paper.

Colantone, Italo, and Piero Stanig. 2019. "The Surge of Economic Nationalism in Western Europe." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 33 (4): 128–51.

Anelli, Colantone, Stanig (2021) "Individual Vulnerability to Industrial Robot Adoption Increases Support for the Radical Right." *PNAS*

Fetzer, Thiemo (2019) "Did Austerity Cause Brexit?" *American Economic Review* 109 (11): 102.

Session 7: Elite Behavior & Rethoric

Required Readings (Read)

De Vries, Catherine E., and Sara B. Hobolt. *Political Entrepreneurs*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

Garrido, Marco. 2017. "Why the Poor Support Populism: The Politics of Sincerity in Metro Manila." *American Journal of Sociology* 123 (3): 647–85.

Required Readings (Skim)

McDonnell, D., & Ondelli, S. (2022) "The Language of Right-Wing Populist Leaders: Not So Simple" *Perspectives on Politics*, 20(3): 828-841.

Schumacher, Gijs, Matthijs Rooduijn, and Bert N. Bakker. 2022. "Hot Populism? Affective Responses to Antiestablishment Rhetoric." *Political Psychology* 43 (5): 851–71

Additional Readings

Lamont, Michèle, Bo Yun Park, and Elena Ayala-Hurtado. 2017. "Trump's Electoral Speeches and His Appeal to the American White Working Class." *The British Journal of Sociology* 68 (S1): S153–80.

Johannes C Buggle, Stephanos Vlachos (2023) "Populist Persuasion in Electoral Campaigns: Evidence from Bryan's Unique Whistle-Stop Tour," *The Economic Journal* 133 (649): 493–515.

Diani, Mario (1996) "Linking Mobilization Frames and Political Opportunities: Insights from Regional Populism in Italy." *American Sociological Review* 61 (6): 1053-1069

Session 8: Populist Networks

Required Readings (Read)

Colombo, Francesco, and Elias Dinas. 2022. "Networks of Grievances: Social Capital and Mainstream Party Decline." *Comparative Political Studies*.

Bolet, D. (2021) "Drinking Alone: Local Socio-Cultural Degradation and Radical Right Support—The Case of British Pub Closures," *Comparative Political Studies*, 54(9): 1653–1692.

Dancygier, Rafaela, Sirus H. Dehdari, David Laitin, Moritz Marbach, and Kåre Vernby. 2022. "Emigration and Radical Right Populism." Working Paper.

Schaub, Max, and Davide Morisi (2020) "Voter Mobilisation in the Echo Chamber: Broadband Internet and the Rise of Populism in Europe" *European Journal of Political Research* 59 (4): 752-773.

Additional Readings

Satyanath, Shanker, Nico Voigtländer, and Hans-Joachim Voth. 2017. "Bowling for Fascism: Social Capital and the Rise of the Nazi Party." *Journal of Political Economy* 125 (2): 478–526.

Maxwell, Rahsaan. 2019. “Cosmopolitan Immigration Attitudes in Large European Cities: Contextual or Compositional Effects?” *American Political Science Review* 113 (2): 456–74.

Portes, Alejandro, and Erik Vickstrom. 2011. “Diversity, Social Capital, and Cohesion.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 37 (1): 461–79.

Session 9: Economy & Pandemics

Required Readings

Spilimbergo, Antonio. (2021) *Populism and Covid-19*. CEPR-VOX. [\[Link\]](#)

Funke, M, M Schularick and C Trebesch (2020), “Populist Leaders and the Economy”, CEPR Discussion Paper No. 15405.

Kavakli, K C (2020). “Did Populist Leaders Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic More Slowly? Evidence from a Global Sample”, Working Paper.

Additional Readings

Berrios R, Marak A and Morgenstern S (2011) “Explaining hydrocarbon nationalization in Latin America: economics and political ideology” *Review of International Political Economy* 18, 673–697.

Born, B, G J Müller, M Schularick and P Sedlacek (2019), “The Cost of Economic Nationalism: Evidence from the Brexit Experiment”, *Economic Journal* 129 (623): 2722–2744.

Wondreys, J and C Mudde (2020). “Victims of the Pandemic? European Far-Right Parties and COVID-19.” Nationalities papers.

Session 10: Government & Bureaucracy

Required Readings

Bellodi et al. (2022) The Costs of Populism for the Bureaucracy and Government Performance: Evidence from Italian Municipalities, *American Journal of Political Science* forthcoming.

Bauer, Michael W, and Stefan Becker. 2020. “Democratic Backsliding, Populism, and Public Administration.” *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance* 3 (1): 19–31.

De Vries, Catherine E. and Sara B. Hobolt. *Political Entrepreneurs*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 8.

Session 11: Research Design Presentations

Session 12: Research Design Presentations