



## COURSE UNIT (MODULE) DESCRIPTION

Course unit (module) title	Code
<b>The Challenge of Populism in Contemporary Democracy</b>	

Academic staff	Core academic unit(s)
<b>Coordinating:</b> Jogilė Ulinskaitė <b>Other:</b> Gintas Karalius	Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University, Vokiečių str. 10, LT-01130, Vilnius, tel. +370 52514130, e-mail: tspmi@tspmi.vu.lt

Study cycle	Type of the course unit
Second	Elective

Mode of delivery	Semester or period when it is delivered	Language of instruction
Face-to-face	3 (Autumn) semester	English

Requisites	
<b>Prerequisites:</b> Proficiency in English at B2 level	<b>Co-requisites (if relevant):</b>

Number of ECTS credits allocated	Student's workload (total)	Contact hours	Individual work
5	132	32	100

Purpose of the course unit		
<p>Populism is one of the most contested concepts in the social sciences. It emerges prominently in discussions of contemporary political processes, from radical right-wing parties in Europe to left-wing presidents in Latin America. The rise of populist radical right parties in recent decades has sparked intense debates about the challenges they pose to liberal democracies. The conceptual compatibility between populism and modern democracy has received equal attention in political theory.</p> <p>This course provides a theoretical and empirical framework for understanding populism as a contemporary political phenomenon and its consequences for liberal democracy, drawing on recent research on the tensions between populist movements and liberal democratic institutions.</p> <p>We begin by analyzing different conceptual approaches to populism. Should we understand populism as an ideology, a strategy for gaining political power, a pathological form of democracy, or a particular style of communication? We will explore the significance of contested concepts such as "the people," "the nation," and "the elite" in populist discourse. The course will examine factors explaining the emergence and success of populism in European and American societies, as well as its relationship with conspiracy theories. Finally, we will address the complex relationship between populism and democracy: Does populism fundamentally threaten democratic governance, or can it potentially revitalize democratic institutions that have become detached from citizens?</p>		
Learning outcomes of the course unit	Teaching and learning methods	Assessment methods
Students will be able to understand the main conceptualisations of the populism phenomenon, the concepts used in the theories of populism and the tensions between populism and democratic theory. They will be able to critically analyse the relationship between concepts identified	Problem-centred lectures and seminars (text analysis, comparative assessment and systematic analysis of practical questions, group discussions, group exercises on the relationship between populism and democracy), individual case study on populism and	Participation in seminar discussions, group discussions, individual case studies

in the theoretical literature and concepts used in public discourse.	conspiracy theory, individual work (critical analysis of assigned literature).	
Students will be able to critically evaluate empirical research and theoretical literature related to political representation, political discourse, public attitudes and the use of emotions in democracy		
Students will be able to independently analyse public and political discourse using the theoretical concepts and theories analysed in the course and to provide a reasoned systematic analysis of empirical data.	Individual case study on populism and conspiracy theory in the context of democratic theories	Individual case study
Students will be able to communicate professionally in oral and written form, to communicate clearly and argumentatively well-founded ideas, arguments and conclusions based on theoretical and practical knowledge, and to initiate debate with professionals and non-professionals, presenting their insights in an international context.	Problem- centred lectures and seminars (text analysis, comparative assessment and systematic analysis of practical questions, group discussions, group exercises on the relationship between populism and democracy), individual case study on populism and conspiracy theory, individual work (critical analysis of assigned literature).	Participation in seminar discussions, group discussions, individual case studies

Content	Contact hours							Individual work: time and assignments	
	Lectures	Tutorials	Seminars	Workshops	Laboratory work	Internship	Contact hours, total	Individual work	Tasks for individual work
1. Introduction, presentation of the course. Introduction to the theme of populism and its internal problems in contemporary political theory.	2						2		
2. Challenges of defining populism. The relationship between the concepts of populism and the modern nation. The problem of defining the nation in political theory			2				2	5	Manent, Pierre, "Populist Demagoguery and the Fanaticism of the Center". <i>American Affairs</i> , Volume 1. No. 2, Summer 2017. <a href="https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/05/populist-demagoguery-and-the-fanaticism-of-the-center/">https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/05/populist-demagoguery-and-the-fanaticism-of-the-center/</a> Mény, Yves; Surel, Yves, <i>Democracies and the Populist Challenge</i> . New York: Palgrave, 2002. P. 1-21
3. Challenges of defining populism: Populism as ideology			2				2	5	Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. <i>Government and opposition</i> , 39(4), 541-563. Canovan, M. (1999). Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of

								Democracy. <i>Political Studies</i> , 47(1), 2–16.
4. Challenges of Defining Populism. The challenge of defining democracy: sovereignty, central government powers, biopolitics.		2				2	5	Benjamin Arditi, Politics on the Edges of Liberalism. Edinburgh University Press, 2007, p. 54-87.
5. Challenges of defining populism. Populism as discourse		2				2	5	Hawkins, K. A. (2009). Is Chávez Populist?: Measuring Populist Discourse in Comparative Perspective. <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> , 42(8), 1040–1067. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009331721">https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009331721</a>
6. Challenges in defining populism. Populism as a style		2				2	5	Moffitt, B., & Tormey, S. (2014). Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatization and Political Style. <i>Political Studies</i> , 62(2), 381–397. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12032">https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12032</a>
7. The relationship between populism and democracy: the problem of political representation		2				2	5	Michael Saward „The Representative Claim“. <i>Contemporary Political Theory</i> , 2006, 5, (297–318)
8. The relationship between populism and democracy. Emotions in the rise of populism: elite discourse and citizen attitudes		2				2	5	Homolar, A., & Löffmann, G. (2021). Populism and the Affective Politics of Humiliation Narratives. <i>Global Studies Quarterly</i> , 1(ksab002). <a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksab002">https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksab002</a> Kinnvall, C., & Svensson, T. (2022). Exploring the populist ‘mind’: Anxiety, fantasy, and everyday populism. <i>The British Journal of Politics and International Relations</i> , 24(3), 526–542. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481221075925">https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481221075925</a>
9. The relationship between populism and democracy: Post-politics and the expectation of rationality in democracy. The problem of conspiracy theories		2				2	5	Jean Baudrillard, Simuliakrai ir simuliacija. Baltos lankos, 2009. P. 7-44
10. The relationship between populism and democracy: Post-politics and the expectation of rationality in democracy. The problem of conspiracy theories.		2				2	5	Castanho Silva, Bruno, Federico Vegetti, and Levente Littvay. "The elite is up to something: Exploring the relation between populism and belief in conspiracy theories." <i>Swiss Political Science Review</i> 23.4 (2017): 423-443. Moore, Alfred. "Conspiracies, conspiracy theories and democracy." <i>Political Studies Review</i> 16.1 (2018): 2-12.
11. Individual case study			2				20	
12. The consequences of populism for democracy: the crisis of liberalism/republicanism		2				2	5	Jacques, Rancière, „The Crisis of Democracy“ (2020 February 24) <a href="https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4576-jacques-ranciere-the-crisis-of-democracy">https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4576-jacques-ranciere-the-crisis-of-democracy</a> - P.Manent, „The Tragedy of the Republic“. <i>First Things</i> , May 2017 <a href="https://www.firstthings.com/article/2017/05/the-tragedy-of-the-republic">https://www.firstthings.com/article/2017/05/the-tragedy-of-the-republic</a>

13. The consequences of populism for democracy: populism destroying democracy			2				2	5	Mudde, C. (2013). Three decades of populist radical right parties in Western Europe: So what?. <i>European Journal of Political Research</i> , 52(1), 1-19. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/j.14756765.2012.02065.x">https://doi.org/10.1111/j.14756765.2012.02065.x</a> Vachudova, M. A. (2021). Populism, Democracy, and Party System Change in Europe. <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i> , 24(1), 471–498. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-041719-102711">https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-041719-102711</a>
14. The consequences of populism for democracy: correcting democracy?			2				2	5	Weisskircher, M. (2020). The Strength of Far-Right AfD in Eastern Germany: The East-West Divide and the Multiple Causes behind ‘Populism.’ <i>The Political Quarterly</i> , 91(3), 614–622. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12859">https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12859</a> Weyland, K. (2021). How Populism Corrodes Latin American Parties. <i>Journal of Democracy</i> , 32(4), 42–55. <a href="https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/815936">https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/815936</a>
15. The consequences of populism for democracy: the revival of democracy			2				2	5	Mouffe, Chantal, “The Affects of Democracy” 2018 November 23, <a href="https://www.eurozine.com/the-affects-of-democracy/?fbclid=IwAR3D1B-KbRe-Dla_oNif0R6DdSN3HjNyJEcZUpZWgq_gnlwGOWsIDFu-kmFo">https://www.eurozine.com/the-affects-of-democracy/?fbclid=IwAR3D1B-KbRe-Dla_oNif0R6DdSN3HjNyJEcZUpZWgq_gnlwGOWsIDFu-kmFo</a> Dallmayr, Fred, <i>Democracy to Come. Politics as Relational Praxis</i> . New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. P. 22-41.
16. Review of the course.			2				2	1	Manent, Pierre, “Populist Demagoguery and the Fanaticism of the Center”. <i>American Affairs</i> , Volume 1. No. 2, Summer 2017. <a href="https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/05/p-opulist-demagoguery-and-the-fanaticism-of-the-center/">https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/05/p-opulist-demagoguery-and-the-fanaticism-of-the-center/</a>
Preparation for the examination								14	
<b>Total</b>	2		28	2			32	100	

Assessment strategy	Weight %	Deadline	Assessment criteria
Participation in seminars	30%	During semester	Students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts of analyzing the concepts used in the theories of populism and the tensions between populism and democratic theory, as well as the ability to apply them to contemporary political processes. The assessment of participation in the workshops will include: - Participation in discussions (ability to draw on key concepts and approaches used in the theories of populism, to provide correct answers to questions related to a range of issues concerning the tensions between populism and democratic theory, to provide thoughtful, critical comments on the uses of populist discourse by different political actors, to identify common trends, to contribute to the ideas of other participants, etc).
Individual case study: presentation and essay	30%	During semester	A case study of the conspiracy theory and its relation to the challenge of populism to democracy (students will be able to choose their own case, with the prior agreement of the lecturer). (3,000 - 4,000 words)

			<p>The case study will be assessed on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Content (comprehensive definition of the concepts used, systematic selection of data for analysis, original insights, appropriate use of sources, critical analytical thinking, formulation of conclusions);</li> <li>- Structure and style (clear structural elements, scientific language style, precise wording, references to sources, appropriate and ethical use of citations);</li> </ul> <p>20% of the assessment will be based on the content of the case study in the form of an essay. 10 % of the assessment will be based on the presentation of the case study</p>
Written exam	40%	During semester	<p>The final exam will consist of open-ended questions. The questions will require the application of the theoretical and empirical knowledge acquired during the course. The ability to systematically analyse empirical data, to relate it to theoretical concepts and to present constructive and well-developed arguments will be assessed.</p>

Author (-s)	Publishing year	Title	Issue of a periodical or volume of a publication	Publishing house or web link
<b>Required reading</b>				
Manent, Pierre,	2017	“Populist Demagoguery and the Fanaticism of the Center”. <i>American Affairs</i> ,	Volume 1. No. 2, Summer.	<a href="https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/05/populist-demagoguery-and-the-fanaticism-of-the-center/">https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/05/populist-demagoguery-and-the-fanaticism-of-the-center/</a>
Mény, Yves; Surel, Yves	2002	<i>Democracies and the Populist Challenge</i> .	2002.	New York: Palgrave,
Canovan, M.	1999	Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy.	<i>Political Studies</i> , 47(1), 2–16.	
Mudde, C..	2004	The populist zeitgeist	<i>Government and opposition</i> , 39(4), 541-563.	
Benjamin Arditi.,	2007	Politics on the Edges of Liberalism		Edinburgh University Press
Hawkins, K. A.	2009	Is Chávez Populist?: Measuring Populist Discourse in Comparative Perspective.	<i>Comparative Political Studies</i> , 42(8), 1040–1067.	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009331721">https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009331721</a>
Moffitt, B., & Tormey, S.	2014	Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatization and Political Style.	<i>Political Studies</i> , 62(2), 381–397.	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12032">https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12032</a>
Michael Saward <i>Contemporary</i>	2006	„The Representative Claim“.	<i>Political Theory</i> , , 5, (297–318)	
Homolar, A., & Löffmann, G.	2021	Populism and the Affective Politics of Humiliation Narratives.	<i>Global Studies Quarterly</i> , 1(ksab002).	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsg/ksab002">https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsg/ksab002</a>
Kinnvall, C., & Svensson, T.	2022	Exploring the populist ‘mind’: Anxiety, fantasy, and everyday populism.	<i>The British Journal of Politics and International Relations</i> , 24(3), 526–542.	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481221075925">https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481221075925</a>
Slavoj Žižek	2020	Pandemic! COVID-19 Shakes the World.	Or Books	
Castanho Silva, Bruno, Federico	2017	"The elite is up to something: Exploring the relation between	<i>Swiss Political Science Review</i> , 23.4: 423-443.	

Vegetti, and Levente Littvay.		populism and belief in conspiracy theories."		
Moore, Alfred.	2018	"Conspiracies, conspiracy theories and democracy."	Political Studies Review 16.1 (2018): 2-12.	
A. Pirro, P.Taggart, S. van Kessel	2018	„The populist politics of Euroscepticism in times of crisis: Comparative conclusions“.	Political Studies Association,	
Jacques, Rancière	2020	„The Crisis of Democracy“	February 24	<a href="https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4576-jacques-ranciere-the-crisis-of-democracy">https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4576-jacques-ranciere-the-crisis-of-democracy</a>
P.Manent,	2017	„The Tragedy of the Republic“.	First Things,	<a href="https://www.firstthings.com/article/2017/05/the-tragedy-of-the-republic">https://www.firstthings.com/article/2017/05/the-tragedy-of-the-republic</a>
Mudde, C.	2013	Three decades of populist radical right parties in Western Europe: So what?	European Journal of Political Research, 52(1), 1-19.	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/j.14756765.2012.02065.x">https://doi.org/10.1111/j.14756765.2012.02065.x</a>
Vachudova, M. A.	2021	Populism, Democracy, and Party System Change in Europe	Annual Review of Political Science, 24(1), 471–498.	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-041719-102711">https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-041719-102711</a>
Weisskircher, M.	2020	The Strength of Far-Right AfD in Eastern Germany: The East-West Divide and the Multiple Causes behind ‘Populism.’	<i>The Political Quarterly</i> , 91(3), 614–622.	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12859">https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12859</a>
Weyland, K.	2021	How Populism Corrodes Latin American Parties	<i>Journal of Democracy</i> , 32(4), 42–55.	<a href="https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/815936">https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/815936</a>
Mouffe, Chantal, Dallmayr, Fred, <i>Praxis</i>	2018 November 23,	“The Affects of Democracy”	<i>Democracy to Come. Politics as Relational</i>	New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. P. 22-41. <a href="https://www.eurozine.com/the-affects-of-democracy/?fbclid=IwAR3D1B-KbRe-Dla_oNif0R6DdSN3HjNyJEcZUpZWgqgnlwGOWsIDFu-kmFo">https://www.eurozine.com/the-affects-of-democracy/?fbclid=IwAR3D1B-KbRe-Dla_oNif0R6DdSN3HjNyJEcZUpZWgqgnlwGOWsIDFu-kmFo</a>
<b>Recommended reading</b>				
The European Center for Populism Studies (ECPS)		ECPS panels		<a href="https://www.populismstudies.org/">https://www.populismstudies.org/</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/@ecpsbrussels561">https://www.youtube.com/@ecpsbrussels561</a>
Aleks Szczerbiak, Paul Taggart	2008	Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism		Oxford: Oxford University Press
Jean Baudrillard	1981	<i>For a Critique of a Political Economy of Sign</i>		Telos Press
John Street	2013	<i>Celebrity Politicians: Popular Culture and Political Representation</i>	6	The British Journal of Politics & International Relations

Jan-Werner Muller	2016	<i>What is Populism?</i>		University of Pennsylvania Press
Pierre Manent		<i>On the European Union</i>		<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERRJyd5doXc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERRJyd5doXc</a>
Kirk Hawkins, Ryan E. Carlin, Levente Littvay, Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser	2019	<i>The Ideational Approach to Populism</i>		Routledge
Steven Wolinetz, Andrej Zaslove	2018	<i>Absorbing the Blow Populist Parties and their Impact on Parties and Party Systems</i>		ECPR
Kirk A. Hawkins	2010	<i>Venezuela's chavismo and populism in comparative perspective</i>		Cambridge University Press
Carlos de la Torre	2018	<i>Routledge Handbook of Global Populism</i>		Routledge

**NOTE:** Including Open Educational Resources in the reading list is recommended