



CIEE Global Institute – Berlin

Course name:	Threats and Challenges to European Democracy
Course number:	POLI 4101 BRGE
Programs offering course:	Berlin Open Campus, Berlin Global Architecture and Design
Open Campus Track:	International Relations and Political Science Track
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. semester credits:	3
Contact hours:	45
Term:	Fall 2019

Course Description

This course examines ongoing threats to the political order in Europe. In recent years there has been a profound loss of voter confidence in traditional political parties across the ideological spectrum. At the same time, populist movements and parties that are in most cases radical right-wing, nationalistic, and anti-European are increasingly perceived as an oppositional force with an appealing alternative political vision. To contextualize and better understand these developments, the course will review selected topics of democratic theory and present critical analyses of the threats posed by European right and left-wing extremist movements. Comparative case studies of prominent West and East European democracies will help students assess the deeper causes of these transformations and address whether they are indicative of an unprecedented crisis or simply part of the regular pendulum swings in a democratic society.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will be able to:

- Apply democratic theory to understand the rise of extremist political actors and forces.
- Evaluate the wider historical and social contexts of European democracies and their specific challenges.
- Apply current scholarly techniques to define and distinguish radicalism, extremism and populism.
- Differentiate levels of sociological and political science analysis and hone the ability to examine issues from multiple disciplinary perspectives.
- Develop independent analytical skills through interaction with legislators, activists,



and political scientists, while also improving interrogative techniques and interview skills.

Course Prerequisites

Students should have completed a course in political science or international relations prior to enrolling in this course.

Methods of Instruction

This course is highly interactive and combines discussions based on assigned readings with group work sessions and short lectures on selected topics. The course emphasizes critical analysis, frequently requiring students to prepare for in-class panel discussions or draft opinion statements to improve presentation and debate skills. The learning process will also be enhanced by discussions with representatives of different players in the public sphere, including NGOs, political scientists, and professional politicians.

Assessment and Final Grade

Students will be assessed according to the following criteria:

1. Final Exam:	20%
2. Research Paper:	25%
3. Short Assignments:	15%
4. Presentation:	20%
5. Participation:	20%
 TOTAL:	 100%

Course Requirements

Final Exam



The exam will give students a chance to summarize and synthesize what they have learned during this course by answering 3-4 short essay questions (of approximately 400 words each) that refer to the assigned readings as well as to class debates and excursion topics.

Research Paper

Each student is required to write a 2,000-word research paper. Topics may be historical, theoretical, or empirical in nature. Materials prepared in connection with the interviews and debate meetings (see under Participation) may be expanded into a research paper. The instructor will offer suggestions, advice, and monitoring if desired. Paper will be assessed on how well it articulates the student's own analytical interpretation, along with supporting evidence, of the selected topic.

Short Assignments

Throughout the course, there will be short individual assignments that pose an essential question requiring critical analysis by applying concepts, techniques and approaches shaping the academic discourse related to democracies. Each assignment will be graded by how comprehensively and critically it covers the question. Students will be assigned three questions throughout the course, each worth 5% with 450 words per submission.

Presentation

The in-class presentation will be delivered in groups of no more than three students. Each will choose a topic from a set of options which the instructor will give to the students on the first day of class. The presentation should be in PowerPoint format and all group members should be familiar with the whole topic; it should be no longer than 15 minutes and will be followed by a Q&A session.

Participation

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.



Students will be asked to prepare the various interview and debate meetings that are part of the course, by researching the backgrounds of the experts and their organizations/institutions, planning interview strategies, and developing a catalogue of questions.

Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all unexcused absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, unexcused absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to Internship, Service Learning, or required field placement. Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent and unexcused. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Unexcused absences will lead to the following penalties:

<i>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</i>	<i>Equivalent Number of Open Campus Semester classes</i>	<i>Minimum Penalty</i>
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Up to 10%	1 content classes, or up to 2 language classes	Participation graded as per class requirements
10 – 20%	2 content classes, or 3-4 language classes	Participation graded as per class requirements; written warning
More than 20%	3 content classes, or 5 language classes	Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion

Weekly Schedule

NOTE: this schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to take advantage of current experiential learning opportunities.

Week 1 Introduction

Class 1:1 An introductory lecture will provide an overview of recent trends in the European political arena, explaining crucial historical and geopolitical factors as well as pointing to significant regional differences between Western, Eastern and Southern Europe. The lecture is supplemented by a selection of clips of topical news analyses and concludes with an explanation of the course structure and course requirements.

Week 2 Collapse of the European Left?

Class 2:1 History of socialism and social democracy in Europe

The first of three sessions dealing with the long-running crisis of the European left is devoted to a review of the ideological tradition of socialism and social democracy. Questions to be addressed include: What are its defining elements and its internal tensions? What is its theory of political change? What vision of future society does it propose?

Tony Wright, *Socialisms: Old and New* (1996), Ch. 1: "Traditions", Ch. 2: "Arguments"

Ashley Lavelle, *The Death of Social Democracy*, Ch. 1: "Social Democracy and Neoliberalism" (2008)

Caroline De Gruyter, "How the Story of the Left Disappeared" (2015)

Class 2:2 Case studies: Social Democracy in Germany and France

In this session, we will have a close look at the decline of the Social Democratic Party in Germany and the French Socialist and Communist parties, focusing on political, economic and cultural causes.

Ashley Lavelle, *The Death of Social Democracy*, Ch. 9: "Rescuing Standort Deutschland" (2008)

Mark Bergfeld, "Germany – In the Eye of the Storm" (2016)

Robert Zaretsky, "It's the End of French Socialism as We Know It" (2015)

Samuel Earle, "The Fall of the French Left" (2017)

Site visit to the headquarters of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) in Kreuzberg and conversation with a party functionary.

Short Assignment I Due

Class 2:3 Case Study: The Disappearance of the Left in Eastern Europe

The situation of left parties in Eastern Europe, whether successor to a former communist state-party or newly formed after the collapse of communism, is different from those in Western Europe. In this session, we will explore the political consequences of the legacy of communism by looking at individual countries (e.g. Hungary and Poland) as well as the region as a whole.

Ivan Krastev, “Deepening Dissatisfaction” (2010)

Vera Molnár, “How Communism Still Haunts Hungary” (2014)

Political Symposium, “Is Poland a Failing Democracy” (2016)

Week 3 Populism and Radical Politics

Class 3:1 Extremism and Populism: Approaches in Sociology and Political Science

This session approaches the multifaceted phenomena of extremism and populism from a general sociological and political science perspective. The assigned readings will help us define the phenomena, recognize ideological characteristics of radical politics, and introduce us to different attempts to explain them.

Uwe Backes, “Meaning and Forms of Political Extremism in Past and Present” (2007)

Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (2016), 75–100

William M. Downs, *Political Extremism in Democracies* (2012), Ch. 1: “Pariahs in the Midst: Organized Extremism and the Problem of Tolerance in Contemporary Democracies”

Class 3:2 From definitions and causes we will move to an analysis of the consequences of the emergence of extremist and populist parties and attempt to answer the urgent question of how democracies can respond to them.

Robert A. Huber and Christian H. Schimpf, "A Drunken Guest in Europe? The Influence of Populist Radical Right Parties on Democratic Quality" (2016)

Matthijs Rooduijn et al., "A populist Zeitgeist? Programmatic contagion by populist parties in Western Europe" (2014)

Slavoj Žižek, "Against the Populist Temptation" (2006)

Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism and the Question of How to Respond to It" (2017)

Short Assignment II Due

Class 3:3

Case Study: The Rapid Rise of the German AfD Party

We will use this section for a detailed study of one right-wing populist party in Europe, the Alternative for Germany (AfD). Founded in 2013, it won 12.6 % of the votes at the 2017 national parliamentary elections, becoming the third-largest party in the *Bundestag*.

Rachel Epstein and Donald Abenheim, "Understanding the 'Alternative for Germany': Origins, Aims and Consequences" (2016)

Daniel Hough, "Germany's AfD: how to understand the rise of the right-wing populists" (2017)

Seongcheol Kim, "The Populism of the Alternative for Germany (AfD): an extended Essex School perspective" (2017)

Week 4

Challenges to Democracy

The following four sessions set out to analyze the widespread discontent with the way democracy works and the results it produces, despite the fact that democratic principles in the abstract continue to enjoy strong support. In order not to lose ourselves in the multiplicity and complexity of the issues involved, the task will be to establish an overview of relevant research questions rather than providing answers. Our starting point will be selected analyses and data from several European democracies.



Class 4:1 Political Decay

This session looks at aspects of the declining public faith in democratic rule that are related to the political system, such as the hollowing-out of democratic institutions through the “weaponizing” of law, “overdemocratization”, clientelism and systemic corruption.

Francis Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay*, Ch. 31: “Political Decay” (2014)

Peter Mair, *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy*, “Introduction” (2013)

Christopher M. Kelty, “Too Much Democracy in All the Wrong Places: Toward a Grammar of Participation” (2015)

Class 4:2 Economic Disparity

A persistent and increasing inequality of income and wealth counts among the primary sources of democratic discontent. In this session, we will discuss such issues as the difference between political and social equality, the exclusion of significant parts of the population from economic participation, and the foundations of welfarism.

Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, Ch. 11: “Economic Development and Democracy” (1960)

Alexander Pacek and Benjamin Radcliff, “Assessing the Welfare State: The Politics of Happiness” (2008) (Welfare State Reader)

Daron Acemoglu et al., “Democracy, Redistribution and Inequality” (2013)

Thomas B. Edsall, “Why Is It So Hard for Democracy to Deal with Inequality?” (2018)

Short Assignment III Due

Week 5 Technological Change



Class 5:1

Technological Change I

In two sessions, we will study the effects of the digital revolution on democratic practice and the public sphere. The first part deals with phenomena that destabilize and undermine democracy such as the fabrication of knowledge and opinion in the Internet, new forms of manipulation, surveillance and censorship, and the increasing fragmentation of electorates.

Manuel Castells, "The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks and Global Governance" (2008)

Jeanette Hofmann, "Digitisation and Democracy: The Challenges of Shaping the Digital Society" (2014)

Ben Whitford, "How the Digital Age is Reshaping Politics" (2016)

Site visit to Berlin Social Science Center, debate meeting with an expert on politics in the digital society

Class 5:2

Technological Change II

The second session explores the progressive, democratizing potential that digitization holds and how this potential could be used for systemic reforms. What new forms of political participation are the new media creating? How do social media transform and widen the possibilities and influence of social movements?

Peter Ferdinand, "The Internet, Democracy and Democratization" (2000)

Birgitta Jónsdóttir, "Democracy in the Digital Era" (2015)

Anastasia Kavada, "Social Movements and Political Agency in the Digital Age: A Communication Approach" (2016)

Due Date for Submission of Research Paper

Week 6

Wrap-up and Final Exam

Class 6:1

How Do Democracies Survive Existential Challenges? This will be our question for a structured wrap-up debate.



Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (2017)

Class 6:2 Final Exam and Concluding Discussion
Final Exam

Readings

Acemoglu, Daron et al. "Democracy, Redistribution and Inequality." NBER Working Paper No. 19746, December 2013. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w19746.pdf>.

Bergfeld, Mark. "Germany: In the Eye of the Storm". In: Catarina Príncipe and Bashkar Sunkara, *Europe in Revolt: Mapping the New European Left*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016.

Castells, Manuel. "The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks and Global Governance," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616:1 (2008): 78–93.

Corfe, Robert. *The Future of Politics: With the Demise of the Left / Right Confrontational System*. Bury St. Edmunds, UK: Arena Books, 2010.

Decker, Frank, "The 'Alternative for Germany:' Factors Behind its Emergence and Profile of a New Right-wing Populist Party." *German Politics and Society* 36:4 (2018): 1–16.

De Gruyter, Caroline. "How the Story of the Left Disappeared", transl. Deborah Myulle, *NRC Handelsblad*, 11 May 2015.

Downs, William M. *Extremism in Democracy: Combating Intolerance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Earle, Samuel. "The Fall of the French Left", *The Atlantic*, 24 April 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/04/france-socialist-hamon-macron-le-pen-melenchon-election/524085/>

- Edsall, Thomas B. "Why Is It So Hard for Democracy to Deal With Inequality?" *New York Times*, 15 February 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/15/opinion/democracy-inequality-thomas-piketty.html>
- Epstein, Rachel and Donald Abenheim, "Understanding the 'Alternative for Germany': Origins, Aims and Consequences", *Denver Dialogues*, Political Violence @ A Glance, 22 November 2016, <http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2016/11/22/understanding-the-alternative-for-germany-origins-aims-and-consequences/>
- Peter Ferdinand, "The Internet, Democracy and Democratization", *Democratization* 7:1 (2000): 1–17
- Fukuyama, Francis. *Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalisation of Democracy*. London: Profile Books, 2014.
- Hancock, Donald M. *Politics in Europe*. 6th ed. Thousand Oaks: CQ Press, 2015.
- Hofmann, Jeanette. "Digitisation and Democracy: The challenges of shaping the Digital Society," In: Siobhan Bright/Paul Hofheinz (Eds.): *Digital Minds for a New Europe. Leading Thinkers Look at the Challenges ahead – and the Solutions Digital Technology Will Provide*. Brussels: The Lisbon Council for Economic Competitiveness and Social Renewal, 2014. 52–54.
- Hough, Daniel. "Germany's AfD: how to understand the rise of the right-wing populists" *The Conversation*, 24 September 2017, <https://theconversation.com/germanys-afd-how-to-understand-the-rise-of-the-right-wing-populists-84541>
- Huber, Robert A. and Schimpf, Christian H. "A Drunken Guest in Europe? The Influence of Populist Radical Right Parties on Democratic Quality." *Comparative Governance and Politics* 10 (2016): 103–129.
- Jónsdóttir, Birgitta. "Democracy in the Digital Era", *New Internationalist*, 1 January 2015, <https://newint.org/features/2015/01/01/democracy-digital-era-keynote>
- Kavada, Anastasia. "Social Movements and Political Agency in the Digital Age: A Communication Approach." *Media and Communication* 4:4 (2016): 8–12.

- Kim, Seongcheol. “The Populism of the Alternative for Germany (AfD): an extended Essex School perspective” *Palgrave Communications* 3, 24 October 2017
- Krastev, Ivan. “Deepening Satisfaction”, *Journal of Democracy* 21:1 (2010), 113–119.
- Lavelle, Ashley. *The Death of Social Democracy: Political Consequences in the 21st Century*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2008.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin. *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*. New York: Doubleday, 1960.
- Magone, José M. *Contemporary European Politics: A Comparative Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Mair, Peter. *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy*. London: Verso, 2013.
- Melgaço, Lucas and Jeffrey Monaghan, eds. *Protests in the Information Age: Social Movements, Digital Practices and Surveillance*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2018.
- Molnár, Vera. “How Communism Still Haunts Hungary”, *Paprika Politik*, 28 February 2014, <http://www.paprikapolitik.com/2014/02/how-communism-still-haunts-hungary/>
- Mudde, Cas. ed. *Political Extremism*. 4 Vol. London: Sage Publications, 2014.
- Müller, Jan-Werner, *What Is Populism?* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.
- Politico Symposium, “Is Poland a Failing Democracy”, January 2016. <https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-democracy-failing-pis-law-and-justice-media-rule-of-law/>
- Pierson, Christopher, Castels, Francis G., and Ingela K. Naumann, *The Welfare State Reader*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.
- Rovira Kaltwasser, Cristóbal. “Populism and the Question of How to Respond to It”, in Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul A. Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo and Pierre Ostiguy (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017: 489–507.
- Rooduijn, Matthijs, de Lange, Sarah L., and van der Brug, Wouter. “A populist Zeitgeist? Programmatic contagion by populist parties in Western Europe.” *Party Politics*, 20:4 (2014): 563–575.
- Van Reybrouck. *Against Elections: The Case for Democracy*. London: Random House UK, 2016.



Whitford, Ben. "How the Digital Age is Reshaping Politics" Positive. News. 22 March 2016.

<https://www.positive.news/2016/society/democracy/20697/democracy-2-how-digital-age-reshaping-politics/>

Wright, Tony. *Socialisms: Old and New*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Žižek, Slavoj. "Against the Populist Temptation." *Critical Inquiry* 32: 3 (Spring 2006), 551–574.

Žižek, Slavoj. "How Much Democracy is Too Much." *In These Times*, 19 May 2013.

http://inthesetimes.com/article/73/how_much_democracy_is_too_much

Online Resources:

Journal of Democracy

<http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/>

Open Democracy

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/>

European Consortium for Political Research; Standing Group on Extremism and Democracy

<http://www.extremism-and-democracy.com/ead/>

Eurozine (a web-based magazine that publishes outstanding articles from more than 80 associated journals partnered in the network by the same name):

<http://www.eurozine.com/>