POLITICAL POPULISM
MA SEMINAR

Rationale: Aim of this seminar is to dissect the phenomenon of political populism based on one of the most glaring and frightening examples – Donald Trump. Even though the ‘inspiration’ for this course is a specific politician, the seminar intends to extrapolate the phenomenon of political populism to other countries that provide similar political platforms. The seminar will consist of three major parts: sources, parts, and themes of political populism. In each part the students will be asked to examine a problematique based on obligatory texts and in case they are presenting the topic to dig deeper into the further reading list. The following syllabus was inspired by ‘Trump 101’ syllabus published on Higher Education, but amended and expanded to include topics of race, gender and others. It also includes crowdsourced suggestions from the Duck of Minerva.

Course requirements (General Studies):

- 30' presentation with a handout OR essay (3 CP)
- oral exam OR seminar paper (6 CP)

Presentation is graded according to the following criteria:

- Presentation of core arguments or facts
- Use of academic sources
- Use of examples and illustrations
- Clarity and organization of handout
- Clarity and structure of presentation
- Length of handout and presentation
- Summary and connection to relevant academic debates
Essay follows the general rules from the Political Science Compendium and is graded according to the following criteria:

- Clear structure with an introduction, main part and conclusions
- Clear research question
- Quality of your argumentation
- Selection of academic sources
- List of references

Oral exam consists of three topics on pre-selected course sessions of your own choosing.

Seminar paper should be approx. 15-20 pages long (without annexes). Students who wish to obtain 6 CP in this seminar can reduce the expected length of the seminar paper to 12-15 pages by volunteering for an oral presentation. Papers may be written in English or German and must be handed in by 1 August 2017 in electronic form to gaufman@uni-bremen.de.

For MA Political Science students in Political Theory Module:

- 30’ presentation with a handout OR essay
- oral exam OR seminar paper

The module is worth 12 CP.
Syllabus and Literature list

Unit 1: Sources

1. DEMAGOGUERY AND DEMOCRACY


Further reading:


The Federalist Papers, 9, 10;
Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Vol. 1, Book 1, chap. 5 (1835).

2. THE AMERICAN DREAM


3. POPULISM


Further reading:

4. AUTHORITARIANISM


5. THE LANGUAGE

Lakoff, George (2016) *Understanding Trump*.

Caldwell, Wilber W.; American Narcissism: The Myth of National Superiority (Introduction)


All the King's Men (2006) film

6. MASS MEDIA


*Further Reading:*


7. THE BRAND


*Optional*: Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

**Unit 3: Themes**

8. **GENDER**


9. **RACE** (thanks to Myron T. Strong, PhD)


David Jacobs and Daniel Tope (2008) Race, crime, and Republican strength: Minority politics in post civil rights era. *Social Science Research, vol 37, issue 4*, p 1116-1129

10. **CONSPIRACY**


Further reading: Eric Oliver, Thomas Wood (2014) Conspiracy Theories and the Paranoid Style(s) of Mass Opinion

11. CONSERVATISM


Further reading:


Ann Coulter (2016) In Trump we trust. E Pluribus Awesome OR Adios America

12. ISOLATIONISM


13. TBA!

14. CONCLUSION: LET’S BUILD A TRUMP

Populism, political program or movement that champions the common person, usually by contrast with the elite. It typically combines elements of the left and the right, opposing large business and financial interests but also frequently being hostile to established socialist and labour parties. Campaign poster from the 1896 U.S. presidential election with the text of William Jennings Bryan's Cross of Gold speech, colour lithograph. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (digital file no. 3g02112u). Read More on This Topic. Populism -- a political communication style. Populism has become popular. Political scientists and political actors frequently refer to populism to characterise certain political phenomena or brand competitors in a political conflict. Since populism holds a very broad concept of politics, all failures and problems are blamed on politics; they are caused by political incompetence, unwillingness, and sabotage. This all-encompassing vision of politics corresponds to an equally broad definition of the elites. In political science, populism is the idea that society is separated into two groups at odds with one another - “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite”, according to Cas Mudde, author of Populism: A Very Short Introduction. The term is often used as a kind of shorthand political insult. Britain's Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, has been accused of populism over his party's slogan “for the many, not the few” - but that's not quite the same thing.