From the Ivory Tower to the Executive: 
Helping the German government build the post-Corona society

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Seminar hours: Wednesday 9am til noon
Office Hours: upon request

Description

The advent and wider consequences of the “Corona virus” have the potential to alter the dynamics of international cooperation and the socio-economic arrangements of liberal democracies. According to one view, the virus calls for more international cooperation and a much stronger role for the welfare state. However, this perspective diverges from the populist neo-nationalism that has recently been electorally successful in the US and the UK. In this setting, the centrist governments of Western Europe – led by France and Germany – must square a circle: They want to win back voters attracted by a neo-nationalist agenda, while at the same time safeguarding a culture of international cooperation crucial to their own interests. They also need to update their wealth redistribution policies in the face of skepticism from some voters about an expansion of the welfare state.

This course will try to develop a possible solution to this paradox, focusing on Germany as a case study. After addressing the influence of populist attitudes on foreign policy and the impact of the Corona virus on liberal democracies, we will try to craft policy recommendations for the German government.

Ideally, students will already have a fundamental knowledge of Germany's history and social structure, and of its financial and political systems.

Assignments

In order for you to receive your credits you need to
• Adhere to the general student guidelines at Bard College Berlin
• Prepare all the readings assigned for each class
• This class is dealing with an ongoing subject; thus, we will not use a large reader; instead, it is key to look for more recent information of our topics e.g. via The Economist, Politico Europe and The New York Times
• Participate actively during the in-class discussions
• Give presentations on German scope conditions and concrete policy issues
• Hand in various smaller papers throughout the seminar
• Hand in your final policy recommendations in a format to be discussed

Grading

Grading will be based on three equally weighted contributions:
• Your in-class participation
• The average of your presentation and smaller papers
• Your final paper
Learning Outcomes

- Widen your understanding of the complex interactions in German politics
- Get a proper grasp how the EU’s interwoven crises affect German politics
- Get an idea of the pivotal role Germany plays in contemporary European politics
- Comprehend the patterns and mechanisms in which democracies' reactions to Globalization are grounded
- Extend your knowledge of the reasons and factors accounting for the delineation between parts of the progressive elites and their more conservative voter base
- Understanding the key factor domestic party politics, right-wing populism and political communication plays in foreign policy making in the 21st century
- Present and convey complex information in a given time frame
- Further develop your analytical thinking in applying Boolean and classic statistical reasoning at the same time
- Find information and apply about contemporary German politics on your own
- Craft hands-on policy recommendations for the German government

Readings

All readings are available online, excluding the following books:

Course-plan

The class is organized in three chapters:

1) The scope conditions of German policy makers that define their capacities and constraints before and during Covid-19 (September 2 – October 7);
2) How the Corona virus has affected Germany in particular, how the German government reacted to it and how this changed the outlined scope conditions (October 15 and October 29)
3) How the German government should react to Covid-19 based on the changed scope conditions (November 18 – December 16)

September 2: Organization of class, no further assignments

September 9: Scope Conditions for Germany policy makers (1/5) – The Strategic Surrounding of the European Union (input presentation 1)

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/germanys-centralrole/2015/02/20/d1119cd4-b8f8-11e4-aa05-1ce812b3fdd2_story.html

Borger, Julian (2012): Germany slowly comes to terms with sending armed forces abroad, The Guardian, 09/18/2012
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/18/germany-military-modernise-foreign-intervention


https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/18832/uploads

Kriesi, Hans Peter et al. (2012): Political Conflict in Western Europe. Cambridge University Press.

Schwarzer, Daniela (2015): Learning on the Job. The EU is battling three major crises – with Germany in the lead in every case. But so far Berlin has not been able to create momentum for building a stronger Europe. Berlin Policy Journal, 11/10/2015
http://berlinpolicyjournal.com/learning-on-the-job/

Simms, B. (2015): Germany’s triumph: from the ruins of war, how a new German empire was built. New Statesman, 07/30/2015
http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/07/germany-s-triumph-ruins-warhow-
new-european-empire-was-built

September 16: Scope Conditions for Germany policy makers (2/5) – Germany’s Party System and political configuration (input presentation 2)


September 23: Scope Conditions for Germany policy makers (3/5) – Germany’s National Self-Perception (input presentation 3)


September 30: Scope Conditions for Germany policy makers (4/5) – The Rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the crucial role of Political Communication (input presentation 4)


October 7: Scope Conditions for German policy makers (5/5) – The New Nexus between Party Politics and Foreign Policy (input presentation 5)


Task: Write a 3-pager about all scope conditions German policy makers are facing
October 15: How Covid-19 has hit the US and Germany and how the US and the German government reacted to it differently (input presentation 6 and 7)

Readings will be assigned

October 21: no class (fall break)

October 28: How the handling of the Corona virus has changed the scope conditions for German policy makers

Readings will be assigned

Additional class to be scheduled to make up for November classes: Researching Germany – Class on Sources and Tools

Task: Write a 3-pager about how the scope conditions for German policy makers have changed due Covid-19

November 4 & 11: no class

Task: Write first bibliography about your assigned policy area

November 18: Detailed presentation and discussion about policy cluster 1/5: State Finances and Fiscal Policies / Monetary Policies and Eurozone

November 25: Detailed presentation and discussion about policy cluster 2/5: Migration and Integration / Demographics and Labour

December 2: Detailed presentation and discussion about policy cluster 3/5: Social Inequality / Welfare and Health System

December 9: Detailed presentation and discussion about policy cluster 4/5: Infrastructure / Digital Innovation / Education

December 16: Detailed presentation and discussion about policy cluster 5/5: Global Strategy: Trade and Security + Wrap up

Task: final paper