

# **Political Polarization: Its Causes and its Consequences**

## **Seminar Purpose**

The purpose of this seminar is to shed light on current political events in Western societies under the auspices of most recent research findings. The focal point will be the topic of political polarization. The seminar will examine how and which forms of political communication promote polarization or counteract it. The latest research findings are reflected on the basis of political developments in the USA, Great Britain, France and Germany.

## **Learning goals and structure**

The seminar has four goals: Firstly, to gain a fundamental understanding of the current political developments in our democracies; secondly, to capture political polarization as a driver of this development and its consequences based on the latest research results; third, to recognize which forms of political communication favor polarization and which counteract it; and fourth, to critically reflect on the role of the academic system within contemporary political debates.

## **Student requirements**

The performance in the seminar is evaluated according to three criteria: active participation, a short presentation (max. 15 minutes) and a final seminar paper (10 pages). The form of the final work will be discussed in the seminar.

## **About the lecturer**

Dr. Timo Lochocki studied interdisciplinary social sciences in Würzburg, Leipzig, the University of Washington, the Humboldt University in Berlin and the Universitet i Bergen. His doctoral thesis "Hard Times in the Lands of Plenty" at the Humboldt University in Berlin explains the media and party-political processes of contemporary western democracies. It was rated "summa cum laude"; "The Rise of Populism in Western Europe. A media analysis on failed political messaging" was published by Springer University Press in 2014.

Until 2017 he worked for the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) as a Transatlantic Fellow in political consulting in Berlin and Paris. His research dealt primarily with the nexus of foreign and party politics. In 2018 he wrote "The Trust Formula. This is how our democracy wins back our voters" (Herder) and went to Davidson College in the USA as James Knox Visiting Professor for European Politics and Political Communication.

In 2019, he moved to the management staff of the German Federal Ministry of Health (BMG) with the task of pushing for long-term social reforms. From 2020, these had to step back behind the management of the Covid-19 pandemic of the century. He headed the division "Strategic Planning" department and was responsible for international relations, social reforms and the Corona Policies of the Federal Government of Germany.

Since 2022, he is working for the Mercator and Open Society foundations as a senior fellow on the topic of democratic resilience.

Office hours can be arranged flexibly. Contact via: [lochocki@hu-berlin.de](mailto:lochocki@hu-berlin.de)

## Syllabus

September 4<sup>th</sup>: **SICK LEAVE INSTRUCTOR**

September 11<sup>th</sup>: **Organization + What's happening?**

September 18<sup>th</sup>: **Will Polarization destroy our Democracies?**

Herold, Maik / Joachim, Janine / Otteni, Cyrill / Vorländer, Hans. *Polarization in Europe. An Analysis of Ten European Countries*. Mercator Forum Migration and Democracy (MIDEM), Dresden, 2023.

<https://forum-midem.de/2023/08/24/policy-brief-meloni-und-die-italienische-migrationspolitik-copy/>

Kagan, Robert. *Our Constitutional Crisis is already here*. Washington Post Opinion, September 23, 2021.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/09/23/robert-kagan-constitutional-crisis/>

Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. *How Democracies Die*. Penguin Books, 2019.

<https://www.eui.eu/Documents/DepartmentsCentres/SPS/ResearchAndTeaching/How-Democracies-Die.pdf>

Sewer, Adams. *The Capitol Rioters Won*. The Atlantic, June 3, 2021.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/06/capitol-rioters-won/619075/>

September 25<sup>th</sup>: **Identity Politics – curse or blessing?**

Abrahams, Stacy. *E Pluribus Unum? The Fight over Identity Politics*. Foreign Affairs, March/April 2019

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-02-01/stacey-abrams-response-to-francis-fukuyama-identity-politics-article>

Azari, Julia. *Why is the populism debate so popular?* Mischief of Faction, Oct. 19, 2021.

<https://www.mischiefsoffaction.com/post/why-is-the-popularism-debate-so-popular-because-it-s-about-who-really-controls-the-democratic-party>

Nwanewo, Osita. *Doing popular things won't save the Democratic Party*, The New Republic, October 28, 2021.

<https://newrepublic.com/article/164144/popular-things-wont-save-democratic-party>

*Vergleichen Sie die Twitterfeeds von @GoodwinMJ und @tabouchadi über das letzte Jahr*

October 2<sup>nd</sup>: **Where are all the 'right-wingers' from?**

Azevedo, F., Jost, J. T., Rothmund, T., & Sterling, J. (2019). *Neoliberal ideology and the justification of inequality in capitalist societies: Why social and economic dimensions of ideology are intertwined*. Journal of Social Issues Vol. 75, No. 1, 2019, pp. 1—40.

<https://spssi.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/josi.12310>

Saletan, Williams. *Why won't they listen?* (Review of *The Righteous Mind* by Jonathan Haidt), New York Times, March 23, 2012.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/25/books/review/the-righteous-mind-by-jonathan-haidt.html>

Weiler, Jonathan (2006) Book Review: The Authoritarian Dynamic. *Comparative Political Studies*. 39(7):935-938.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0010414006287614?journalCode=cpsa>

**October 9<sup>th</sup>: no class, instructor on leave**

**October 16<sup>th</sup>: no class, instructor on leave**

**October 23<sup>rd</sup>: no class, fall break**

**October 30<sup>th</sup>: Is there a difference between Conservatives and Far Right-Wingers?**

Heinze, Anna Sophie (2022). Zwischen Etablierung und Mainstreaming: Zum Stand der Forschung zu Populismus und Rechtsradikalismus. *Zeitung für Vergleichende Politische Wissenschaft*. February 17, 2022.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12286-022-00517-9#citeas>

Reinemann, Carsten & Aalberg, Toril & Esser, Frank & Strömbäck, Jesper & de Vreese, Claes. (2016). *Populist Political Communication: Toward a Model of Its Causes, Forms, and Effects*.

<https://claesdevreese.files.wordpress.com/2016/09/chapter2-populist-political-communicationtowards-a-model-of-its-causes-forms-and-effects.pdf>

**November 6<sup>th</sup>: The role of political communication in polarization dynamics**

Lea Heyne & Luca Manucci (2021). A new Iberian exceptionalism? Comparing the populist radical right electorate in Portugal and Spain, *Political Research Exchange*, 3:1.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2474736X.2021.1989985>

Timo Lochocki. (2018). Empirical Results: Why Populists Win or Lose—A Two-Level Theory. In: *The Rise of Populism in Western Europe*. Springer, Cham.

[https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-62855-4\\_5#citeas](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-62855-4_5#citeas)

**November 9<sup>th</sup>, replacement class 5pm – 8pm: the role of social media in polarization dynamics**

Asker, David and Dinas, Elias (2017). Do Online Media Polarize? Evidence from the Comments' Section. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3018223> or

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3018223>

Christopher Bail et al. (2018). Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization. In: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 115 No. 37.

<https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1804840115>

Emily Kubin & Christian von Sikorski (2021). The role of (social) media in political polarization: a systematic review, *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 45:3, pp. 188-206.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23808985.2021.1976070>

### **November 13<sup>th</sup>: The impact of authoritarian regimes**

Kern, Rebecca and Scott, Marc. *Social media platforms on the defensive as Russian-based disinformation about Ukraine spreads*. *Politico*, February 24, 2022.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2022/02/24/social-media-platforms-russia-ukraine-disinformation-00011559>

Spahn, Susanne (2021). *Russische Medien in Deutschland*. Analyse im Auftrag der Friedrich Naumann Stiftung.

[https://shop.freiheit.org/download/P2@1210/564260/Russische-Medien\\_Deutschland\\_final.web.pdf](https://shop.freiheit.org/download/P2@1210/564260/Russische-Medien_Deutschland_final.web.pdf)

US Department of State: *Russia's Top Five Persistent Disinformation Narratives*. January 20, 2022.

<https://www.state.gov/russias-top-five-persistent-disinformation-narratives/>

### **November 16<sup>th</sup>, replacement class 5-8pm: The Covid-19 pandemic as case study for rational communication?**

Richenhagen, Gottfried und Heinemann Stefan. *Corona-Fitness als gesellschaftliche Chance*, in: Heinemann, S. und Matusiewicz, D. (Hrsg.), *Rethink Healthcare - Krise als Chance*, S. 105-154, medhochzwei - Medien für das Gesundheitswesen, Heidelberg.

Hirschi, Caspar. *Expertise in der Krise. Zur Totalisierung der Expertenrolle in der Euro-, Klima- und Coronakrise*, in: Büttner, S. und Laux T. (Hrsg.), *Leviathan Sonderband 38 2021*.

[https://www.alexandria.unisg.ch/265642/1/Hirschi\\_Leviathan\\_Sonderband38\\_UmstritteneExpertise.pdf](https://www.alexandria.unisg.ch/265642/1/Hirschi_Leviathan_Sonderband38_UmstritteneExpertise.pdf)

### **November 20<sup>th</sup>: the nexus between domestic polarization and international politics**

Balfour Rosa (et al.). (2016). Europe's troublemakers. The populist challenge to foreign policy. EPC Policy Paper.

<https://www.epc.eu/en/Publications/EUROPES-TROUBLEMAKERS--The-p~257da8>

Barkin, Noah (2022). Europe's Sleeping Giant Awakens. *The Atlantic*, March 1, 2022.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2022/03/germany-putin-ukraine-invasion/623322/>

Snell, J. (2016) The Trilemma of European Economic and Monetary Integration, and Its Consequences. *European Law Journal*, 22: 157– 179.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/eulj.12165>

### **November 27<sup>th</sup>: the role of the academic system in polarization dynamics**

German, K.T. & Stevens, S.T. (2021). *Scholars under fire: The targeting of scholars for constitutionally protected speech from 2015 to present*. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education.

<https://www.thefire.org/research/publications/miscellaneous-publications/scholars-under-fire/>

Kaufman, Eric (2021). Academic Freedom in Crisis: Punishment, Political Discrimination, and Self-Censorship. CSPI Report No. 2

<https://cspicenter.org/reports/academicfreedom/>

Norris, Pippa (2021). Cancel Culture – Myth or Reality? *Political Studies*. August 2021.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/00323217211037023?journalCode=psxa>

The Economist, The threat from the illiberal left, September 4, 2021.

<https://www.economist.com/leaders/2021/09/04/the-threat-from-the-illiberal-left>

Tesler, Michael. How The Rise Of White Identity Politics Explains The Fight Over Critical Race Theory. *FiveThirtyEight*, August 10, 2021.

<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-the-rise-of-white-identity-politics-explains-the-fight-over-critical-race-theory/>

**December 4<sup>th</sup>: Summary of the seminar**

**December 11<sup>th</sup>: Summary of the seminar**

**December 18<sup>th</sup>: No classes, completion week**