

PS388 Contemporary Political Polarization and How to Address it

Seminar Leader: Dr. Timo Lochocki
Email: lochocki@hu-berlin.de
Office Hours: by appointment

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.

Assessment, Assignments, Requirements, Grade Breakdown

The performance in the seminar is evaluated according to three equally weighed 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.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accessibility

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for longer-term accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Essay Deadlines and Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Deadline for final essay will be discussed in class.

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

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

Schedule

Class meetings take place every Monday 2pm to 5.15pm

September 2nd: No class, instructor on leave

September 9th: Organization + What's happening?

September 16th: 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 23rd: 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.mischiefoffaction.com/post/why-is-the-populism-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

September 30th: 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 7th: 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>

October 14th: 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

October 21st: no class, fall break

October 28th: 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 4th: 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

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 11th, 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

November 18th: 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 25th: the role of the academic system in polarization dynamics and SUMMARY of the class

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 2nd: Spare class/wrap up

December 9th: Final class/wrap up