



## Transformation and the Rise of the Illiberal Right - Lessons from Berlin and Germany

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Spring Term 2023: 8 February – 19 May 2023

### CATEGORY

History and Politics

### COURSE STRUCTURE

3 contact hours à 45 min per week (14 weeks)

### WEEKLY SCHEDULE

#### Time

Wednesday, 9:00 am - 11:30 am

#### Place

t.b.a.

### COURSE LANGUAGE

English

**Language requirements** (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)  
English B2

### TARGET GROUP

This course is designed for undergraduate students with a strong interest in German and European politics, recent history and political sociology. Basic knowledge of political theory and history is an advantage, though not necessarily required. Master students may participate if their home university agrees. Regular degree-seeking students can select the course within the elective part of their study program (überfachlicher Wahlpflichtbereich üWP).

### CREDITS = 6 ECTS

All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In 2017 for the first time since World War II, a right-wing populist party entered the German Bundestag. What came as a massive shock to many political observers in Germany, was merely the expression of a trend stretching across industrialised countries for a couple of decades now: the return of the illiberal right.

The AfD, Trump, Orbán and the fight over the rule of law in Poland are phenomena that – at least from a German perspective – are hard to explain. Germany has had its experience with extreme Illiberalism under the Nazi regime and for a long time thought itself immune against a return of the illiberal right.

This course tries to find explanations for the success of the AfD and other right-wing movements or parties, with a specific focus on Germany and the East-West divide that less than 35 years ago still cut Europe and Germany in two halves. In this course we look for answers to questions such as: Why do people vote for right-wing populist parties? What lesson can the history of right-wing extremism offer for contemporary politics? Can the experience of forceful and rapid change among citizens of formerly Communist states explain the prominence of Illiberalism in Eastern Germany and, potentially, beyond?

Studying in Berlin, students will gather first-hand experience of the city's tumultuous history in the recent past. Being the capital to five different German states in the last 150 years, Berlin offers deep insights into the history of Illiberalism in Germany. Through various excursions, students will be able to directly experience the effects of Illiberalism in contemporary German society and politics.

The course is divided into three parts, which deal with the past, present and future of Illiberalism respectively. For each part, we will undertake an excursion within Berlin and discuss a Berlin-based movie to demonstrate how the traces of Illiberalism can be found throughout the city. The first part introduces key developments of 20th century German history. We will explore the role of Liberalism and the post-1989 transformation in Eastern Germany and Central and Eastern Europe to find explanations for strong illiberal tenets in this region. In the second part, we proceed to analyse the effects of Illiberalism in key fields of contestation in contemporary German politics such as economic globalization, gender equality or migration policy. With this knowledge at hand, the final part provides the space for an outlook on the role of Illiberalism in the 21st century.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES**

This Bachelor level course will explore the role and the rise of the illiberal right in Germany and beyond. It will pay specific attention to the link between the transformation and the rise of Illiberalism. In doing so, it provides students with an introduction to recent German history and different explanations for the resurgence of Illiberalism. It further analyses the main tenets of liberal political theory and explores how these tenets are challenged in contemporary societies. Students will learn about the history of transformation in Germany and its impact on contemporary politics. By the end of the course, students will be able to

- reflect critically on German history and the degree to which lessons can be drawn from it for today
- identify the central tenets of liberal theory and the way they are contested by right-wing movements,
- critically assess different explanations of right-wing Illiberalism,

- reflect on the link between transformation experiences and support for illiberal movements in Eastern Germany and beyond,
- carefully link historical experience to contemporary politics,
- reflect on the implications of the class content for their own national context,
- read most recent theoretical and empirical research on populism and Illiberalism,
- debate relevant theories and contentious issues with peers,
- detect tokens of East-West division in the their daily lives in Berlin.

## READINGS

The exact reading list will be announced a month prior to the start of the class. To give you an indication of the kind of texts that will be read, here are some candidates are likely to feature the final syllabus:

- Buzogány, A., Varga, M. (2018). The ideational foundations of the illiberal backlash in Central and Eastern Europe: the case of Hungary, *Review of International Political Economy*, 25(6), 811-828.
- Dawson, J., & Hanley, S. (2016). What's Wrong with East-Central Europe?: The Fading Mirage of the "Liberal Consensus". *Journal of Democracy* 27(1), 20-34.
- Eatwell, G., Goodwin, M. (2018). *National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy*
- Gallinat, A. (2018). *Narratives in the Making – Writing the East German Past in the Democratic Present*. Oxford University Press
- Galston, W. A. (2018). The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 29(2)
- Hobsbawm, E. (1995). *The Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991*. Abacus
- Krastev, I., & Holmes, S. (2019). *The Light that Failed: A Reckoning* (1st Edition). Allen Lane.
- Kubik, J. (2020). *Against the Imitation Thesis. Critical Reading of Light that Failed*, Concilium Civitas, [Link](#).
- Korolczuk, E. & Graff, A. (2020). *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Poland and Beyond: Questioning the Symbiosis between Neoliberalism and Right-Wing Politics*, Concilium Civitas, [Link](#).
- Mann, M. (2012). *The Sources of Social Power*. Vol. 3 (CUP, 2012-3), Cambridge University Press
- Norris, P., & Inglehart, R. (2019). *Cultural backlash: Trump, Brexit, and authoritarian populism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Orenstein, M. A., & Bugarič, B. (2020). Work, family, Fatherland: the political economy of populism in central and Eastern Europe. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 1-20.
- Ost, D. (2006). *The Defeat of Solidarity. Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe*, Cornell University Press
- Rawłuszko, M. (2019). And If the Opponents of Gender Ideology Are Right? Gender Politics, *Europeanization*, and the Democratic Deficit. *Politics & Gender*, 1–23.
- Rupnik, J. (2018). The Crisis of Liberalism. *Journal of Democracy*, 29(3), 24-38.
- Scheiring, G., & Szombati, K. (2020). From neoliberal disembedding to authoritarian re-embedding: The making of illiberal hegemony in Hungary. *International Sociology*, 35(6), 721-738.
- Vaizey, H. (2017). *Born in the GDR: Living in the Shadow of the Wall*. Oxford University Press

## ASSIGNMENT INFO

### Workload and assignments

In order to be granted 6 ECTS, participants will be asked to

- actively attend all sessions (a minimum of 80% attendance is required for classroom and online sessions)
- prepare and revise the classroom/online sessions
- read the assigned literature and participate in the discussion thereof
- moderate a discussion in class together with a group of peers (30 minutes)
- hand in the following **assignments**: take-home exam (max. 10 pages)

Failure to fulfil one of the mentioned components results in failure of the class.

### Assessment Components

The final grade will be composed of

- Oral participation (1/3)
- A discussion moderation in class (1/3)
- A take-home exam (1/3)

## YOUR INSTRUCTORS

**Dorian Alt** is a postdoctoral researcher at Charles University Prague where he investigates the role of constitutional identities in East Central Europe. He holds a PhD from Freie Universität Berlin, having written on the impact of national discourses on citizens' understanding of EU politics. Dorian has been a visiting scholar at the Center of European Studies at Sciences Po, Paris (2017/2018). He holds an MSc (2016) in Philosophy from LSE and a BA (2015) in European Studies from Maastricht University.

**David Nonhoff** is Research Associate at the Institut für Europäische Politik Berlin (IEP) where he conducts research on Illiberalism in Central and Eastern Europe and the rule of law and is the editor of the Yearbook of European Integration. He has taught several seminars on EU politics at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and at Europa Universität Viadrina and worked at the German Bundestag as Policy Advisor. David studied Philosophy of the Social Sciences at LSE (MSc) and European Studies at Maastricht University (BA).

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# COURSE SCHEDULE

## Week 1: Introduction

### Week 2: Political, economic and cultural Liberalism

What distinguishes Liberalism in the political, economic and cultural domain? Are democracy and Liberalism opposites or complements? Why can populism be considered the mirror of democracy?

- Required readings
  - Schmitt, C. (1996). *The concept of the political*. University of Chicago Press. **pp. 75–83 (Section 8)**.
  - Galston, W. A. (2018). The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 29(2), **pp. 5–13**.
  - Kendall, G. (2003). From Liberalism to Neoliberalism. In L. Buys, J. Lyddon, & R. Bradley (Eds.), *Social Change in the 21st Century 2003. Conference Refereed Proceedings* (Centre for Social Change Research, School of Humanities and Human Services QUT, **pp. 1–15**).

## PART I (HISTORY). NAZISM AND GERMAN SEPERATION

### Week 3: The fall of Liberalism and the rise of Fascism

Why were the Nazis able to grab power in an industrialised and civilized country such as Germany? What explains the fall of Liberalism in the interwar period? How is the rise of Nazism depicted in German literature and film (in particular “Fabian”?)

- Required readings
  - Mann, M. (2012). *The Sources of Social Power*. Vol. 3 (CUP, 2012-3), Chapter 10: *The Fascist alternative, 1918-1945*, **pp. 326–336**.
  - Hobsbawm, E. (1995). *The Age of Extremes*. The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991, Chapter 4: *The Fall of Liberalism*, **pp. 109–114, 117–131, 136–141**.
- Suggested movie
  - Fabian (2021)

### Week 4 (Excursion): Capital of memories. Visit to Humboldt forum and/or GDR museum

How is the GDR remembered? Is there a memory divide between Eastern and Western Germans? How does memory culture shape architecture in Berlin?

### Week 5: German separation and the “End of History”

How did life differ between East and West Germany during the separation? Are German East-West differences representative of the cleavage between Eastern and Western Europe? To what extent can the transformation period after the end of the Cold War be understood as a transformation towards Liberalism?

- Required readings
  - Vaizey, H. (2017). *Born in the GDR: Living in the Shadow of the Wall*. Oxford University Press, **Introduction pp. 1–18, 23–25, Conclusion pp. 161–175, optional: Chapter 6: Robert.**
  - Gallinat, A. (2018). *Narratives in the Making – Writing the East German Past in the Democratic Present*. Oxford University Press, **pp. 26–39.**
- Suggested movies
  - Good Bye, Lenin! (2003)
  - The Lives of Others (2006)

## **PART II (PRESENT): ILLIBERALISM IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICS**

### **Week 6: The Politics of Imitation**

Why do imitation imperatives create resentment? Can the theory of the 'Age of Imitation' be applied to Eastern Germany as well? How is imitation depicted in contemporary film, in particular in Kieślowski's "Three colours: White"?

- Required readings
  - Krastev, I., & Holmes, S. (2019). *The Light that Failed: A Reckoning* (1. Edition). Allen Lane. **pp. 20–27 & 36–46 (in the pdf on moodle).**
  - Kubik, J. (2020). Against the Imitation Thesis: A Critical Reading of The Light That Failed by Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes. *Concilium Civitas*
- Suggested movie
  - Three colours: White (1994)
  - Article with good interpretation:
    - Skrodzka-Bates, A. (2011). Clandestine human and cinematic passages in the United Europe: The Polish Plumber and Kieślowski's hairdresser. *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, 2(1), 75–90.

### **Week 7 (Excursion): Capital of politics. Visit to German Bundestag and conversation with an MP with an eastern constituency**

Do parties cater different groups in East and West? How has the rise of the AfD changed campaigning strategies? What are successful strategies against the illiberal right?

### **Week 8: Economic liberalisation and European integration**

Do experiences of liberal shock-therapy lead to a rejection of economic globalization? Is precarity a driver of extremism? Is the EU viewed as a liberal agent and can it be blamed for the rise of right-wing populism? In this week we discuss the potential economic roots of populism with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe.

- Required readings
  - Ost, D. (2006). *The Defeat of Solidarity. Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe*, Cornell University Press, **pp. 1–13.**
  - Orenstein, M. A., & Bugarič, B. (2020). Work, family, Fatherland: the political economy of populism in central and Eastern Europe. *Journal of European Public Policy*.

## Week 9: Clashing Values?

Is a vote for right-wing populist parties a mere expression of conservative values? What role do education, age and other personal indicators play for voting behaviour regarding right-wing populist parties? Is the rise of Illiberalism a reaction to the triumph of liberal values? In this week we discuss the potential cultural explanations for populism.

- Required readings
  - Norris, P., Inglehart, T. (2019). *Cultural Backlash. Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*, Cambridge University Press, **pp. 4–5, 6–8, 11, 13–14, 15–18, 32–46.**
  - Eatwell, G., Goodwin, M. (2018). *National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy*, Penguin Books, **Chapter 3: Distrust.**

## Week 10: Migration Policy

Does the fear of migration have economic roots? What was the impact of the 2015 migration crisis on the course and success of the AfD? In this week we will discuss the impact of migration on the success of populist parties.

- Required readings
  - Lochoki, T. (2018). *The Rise of Populism in Western Europe. A Media Analysis on Failed Political Messaging*, Springer International Publishing AG, **pp. 1–3 , 6-9, 11–12, 21-25, 137–144.**
  - Otto, A. H., Steinhardt, M. F. (2017). *The Relationship between Immigration and the Success of Far-Right Political Parties in Germany*, ifo DICE Report 4/2017.
  - Coman, R., Leconte, C. (2019). Contesting EU authority in the name of European identity: the new clothes of the sovereignty discourse in Central Europe, *Journal of European Integration* 41(7), **pp. 855–859, 862–867.**

## Week 11: Gender Equality

To what extent was gender equality more advanced in Eastern than in Western Europe? How is “gender ideology” depicted as an unwanted imposition? Did women really have better sex during communism?

- Required readings
  - Ghodsee, K. (2018). *Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism: And Other Arguments for Economic Independence*. Random House, **pp. 14–23.**
  - Rawłuszko, M. (2019). And If the Opponents of Gender Ideology Are Right? Gender Politics, Europeanization, and the Democratic Deficit. *Politics & Gender*, **pp. 1–5, 15–19.**
  - Korolczuk, E., & Graff, A. (2020). Anti-Gender Campaigns in Poland and Beyond: Questioning the Symbiosis between Neoliberalism and Right-Wing Politics. *Concilium Civitas*.

## **PART III (OUTLOOK). ILLIBERALISM AS A DEFINING TREND OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY?**

### **Week 12 (Excursion): Capital of research. Visit to SCRIPTS cluster, DPZ or IEP**

How do Berlin-based social scientists and/or activists explain the rise of Illiberalism? Are these explanations specific to German academia/civil society?

### **Week 13: Illiberalism beyond here and now**

Why does Illiberalism thrive in countries without a socialist past? Will Illiberalism remain an important political force in the years to come? Which factors sustain it and which strategies are there to dismantle it?

- Required readings
  - Krastev, I., & Holmes, S. (2019). *The Light that Failed: A Reckoning* (1. Edition). Allen Lane. **pp. 129–138 & 146–151 (in the pdf on moodle).**
  - Mouffe, C. (2018, September 13). Demonising populism won't work – Europe needs a progressive populist alternative. *EUROPP*.
  - Smith, B. (n.d.). Why Jürgen Habermas Disappeared. *Foreign Policy*.

### **Week 14: Conclusion**

[Excursions will take in between sessions, but exact times will depend on availability in the institutions to be visited]

## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Registration on Moodle (HU's e-learning platform)

### in case of online sessions

- Fully functional device (laptop, tablet, PC)
- Stable internet connection
- Software: Zoom (video/audio)
- *Recommended* hardware: external headset for better sound quality

## EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

**Preparation for lively discussions:** be on time, have at least the required readings completed, and points in mind for discussion or clarification.

**Assignments:** complete all assignments according to the specified requirements on the schedule including handing them over to the lecturer.

**Commitment:** pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions (classmates', lecturers).

**Academic guidelines:** Comply with academic integrity policies (such as no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical) especially the academic honor code and the student code of conduct.

**Attendance policy:** Students must contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the lecturer.

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The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 31 May 2022