

EU Comparative Politics: Tensions in Representative Democracy

Lecturer: Dr. Emilija Tudzarovska, Ph.D.

Course Description:

The aim of this course is to improve students' understanding of the symptoms, causes, and consequences of the crisis of representative democracies in the EU. The purpose is to understand: a) The key challenges to the EU in the twenty-first century: populism, technocratic governance, anti-system politics, emergency politics and the tensions in representative democracies in the EU politics and policy-making; b) To access the comparative perspectives and critical thinking of the crises in Western and Eastern societies; c) To understand the theoretical approaches for studying the crises of representative democracies in the EU, its implications for democratic representation in the EU and the EU's democratic legitimacy.

Main Objectives:

The course will introduce students to the key approaches to the EU and its key challenges in the contemporary context: the rise of populism in the EU; the origins of technocratic governance and its implications for contemporary politics in the EU; the role of political parties and party democracy in the EU integration process; and normative and empirical perspectives. Preparatory readings will include combined readings on the EU and democratic theories, political science, political economy, etc. This course is designed to help students understand the causes and consequences of the crisis of representative democracies in the EU, the tensions in decision-making and its implications for contemporary politics. (rise of populism, Euroscepticism, democratic backsliding, anti-system politics, conflicts of sovereignty). It will also offer an examination of the comparative perspectives on the crisis of representative democracies in the EU across Western and Eastern societies.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

After completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the causes and consequences of the crisis and tensions of democratic representation in the EU.
- Understand how to apply normative approaches of studying the crises of democratic representation in empirical cases and learn how to analyse the contemporary challenges of the EU (populism, populist leaders and populist parties, technocratic governance, anti-system politics, etc.)
- Learn how to make theoretical observations in studying the key challenges in the EU and how to combine them with empirical data and analysis.
- Engage in critical thinking on contemporary EU affairs, i.e. engagement with contemporary scholarly discussion on the EU/global affairs/testing or building theories.

Course Requirements:

Conditions for passing:

Students shall be admitted to the written examination for this course (in English) if they have been sufficiently graded for their performance in lectures and seminars, and if they have elaborated and submitted a final written assignment on an agreed topic. The course will combine lectures, students' presentations on selected case studies, and group work.

Students will be expected to know the prescribed reading thoroughly when coming to the class. The case studies will trace the theoretical implications on practical examples of EU politics. The normative dimension of EU integration will be analyzed and discussed in class.

Students have the following obligations:

1. **Be present in the class** (presentations; 15-20 minutes) and submit the presentation as a course assignment for the list of presentation topics and teams, see below in the Syllabus;
2. **Submit a final paper** [not less than 12,000 characters and not more than 12,500] on an assigned topic. The topic of the final paper is to be selected from the list of topics (see below in the syllabus). The final exam will take the format of a written essay –

critical review. The essays should be based on the lectures/seminars, and your capacity to demonstrate knowledge of the course material.

- a. Evaluation criteria: **see below in the syllabus and the table**. Deadline: XX at 11 pm (upload the paper in pdf format in Moodle; registration key: “xx”). For every hour past the deadline, one point will be deducted from the final paper score.
3. **Participate in the discussion in the seminar** [group discussions on selected topic].
4. **Attend the seminars**: Students can miss one class without prior justification and one additional class with relevant justification (illness, serious personal reasons, attendance of an extraordinary event related to the study program). A higher number of missed classes can lead to failing the course, a lower grade, or additional coursework.

Grading Policy:

Item	Min	Max
Student's performance in lectures and seminars	10	20
Student's presentation in seminars [individual and group work]	10	30
Written mid/term written assignment	10	15
Written examination [Critical Essay]	20	35
Total	50	100

Evaluation criteria for the final papers (critical essay)

- Introduction
- Theoretical Approach
- Methodological Approach
- Analysis and
- Conclusion

All papers should have a clear research question and answer it in the conclusion. Keep the questions detailed and limited so that you manage to answer them within the short paper you are writing. Demonstrate knowledge of theories and theoretical application on empirical

cases. Illustrate your arguments with concrete data and cases (use academic sources for your paper; newspaper articles can serve as primary sources for politicians' statements or to illustrate timely reaction to an event or initiative, but cannot serve as the source of ideas, concepts, and analytical data.

Please include a list of references. The paper must not be a report, history, or review. It is an analytical piece that should both illuminate a specific problem and draw broader conclusions. Please note that the papers must adhere to proper academic ethics and cite used sources, including ideas and data. Plagiarism, including self-plagiarism, is unacceptable, results in a failing grade in the course, and may lead to disciplinary action and even expulsion, according to the applicable regulations.

Evaluation criteria for the critical essay [max. 35]

- analysis (quality of argument, coherence, clear answer, etc.) 5 points
- evidence (relevance, use of literature, adequacy, how handled, etc.) 10 points
- originality (creativity, novelty, relevance for wider debate etc.) 5 points
- organization (how well structured, flow of argument etc.) 5 points
- style (grammar, clarity, word choice, readability etc.) 5 points
- referencing (citations, coherence, list of references etc.) 5 points

Evaluation criteria for the presentations [in PowerPoint]: 15-20 minutes presentation on an allocated topic relevant to the module themes, delivered by the student [individual presentations], followed by critical evaluation, comments and discussion by a fellow student [opponents]. The student will be assessed on their ability to master the material at hand empirically and analytically and to defend their arguments in discussion. All students should be able to engage in a discussion, provide constructive feedback, and work in groups.

Mandatory Completion Policy

Note that all mandatory assignments and exams must be completed to the best of your ability in order for your final grade to be issued. Failure to complete a mandatory assignment or exam may result in a failing grade.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A+	97-100	Excellent Work
A	93-97	Outstanding Work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

AEP Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the development of knowledge and learning is encouraged at many stages of the learning process. While we value technology for educational purposes, we also value originality and the retainment of knowledge, and thus using AI for assignments and examinations, even if rephrased, is strictly prohibited and considered an academic integrity violation, unless the instructor explicitly allows for it in the context of evaluated work

AEP Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy

The AEP program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristics, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

AEP Diversity Policy

AEP is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming community that values diversity in all its forms. We believe that one of the most meaningful lessons of studying abroad is learning to navigate and appreciate differences with curiosity and an open mind. While engaging across differences can sometimes be challenging or uncomfortable, these moments are essential for growth and learning. We recognize that every member of our community, even with the best intentions, may occasionally make missteps. Our commitment is to provide a supportive environment where respectful and honest dialogue helps us learn from these experiences, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive and broaden their perspective.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

CEE Introductory Lecture Series

AEP Introductory Lecture Series

Week 2

Introduction to the course, lectures and seminars.

Why is the EU? What is Party Democracy? What is Populism?

- Lord, C. ed. (2015). A different kind of democracy? Debates about democracy and the European Union; Open Society Foundations.
- Müller, Jan-Werner (2017). What is Populism? Polity Press

Week 3

Technocracy and crisis of democratic representation in the EU

- Caramani, D. (2017). Will vs. reason: The populist and technocratic forms of political representation and their critique to party government. American Political Science Review. 111(1): 54–67.

Week 4

Crisis of democratic representation in the EU: Conflicts of Sovereignty

- Bickerton, Christopher, Brack, Nathalie, Coman, Ramona & Crespy, Amandine. (2022). Conflicts of sovereignty in contemporary Europe: a framework of analysis.
- Comparative European Politics volume 20, pages 257–274
- Mair, Peter Ruling the Void. (2022). The Hollowing of Western Democracy. Verso

Week 5

Group work: identification of the causes of crises of representative democracies in the EU

- Schmidt, A. V. (2020). Europe's Crisis of Legitimacy, Governing by Rules and Ruling by Numbers in the Eurozone (384 pp)/selected chapters;
- Scharpf, Fritz, W. (2009). Legitimacy in the multilevel European polity European Political Science Review (2009), 1:2, 173–204

Week 6

Crisis of democratic representation in the EU: consequences (populism, technopopulism, populist leaders)

- Tudzarovska, Emilija (2025). [The rise of technocratic politics in the EU: the legacies of neoliberalism | Comparative European Politics](#)
- Tudzarovska, Emilija. "Europe's Historical Legacy of 1989 in the Geopolitical Context." *European Review of International Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2025, pp. 291–316. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27494271>

Week 7

Group work: identification of the consequences of crises of representative democracies in the EU

- Examples: The EU responds to crises (i.e. financial crisis; debt crisis, migration crisis, war in Ukraine).

Week 8

Presentations in the class:

Select a topic on the crisis of party democracy in the EU (causes/consequences)

- Examples: populist leaders and democratic backsliding in different cases in the EU

Week 9

Emergency politics and crisis of representation in the EU?

- White, Jonathan. (2019) *Politics of Last Resort: Governing by Emergency in the European Union*. Oxford University Press
- **Optional:** White, Jonathan. (2024) *On the Long run*. Cambridge University Press (introduction and conclusion)

Week 10

Presentations in the class

Select a topic on the crisis of party democracy in the EU (causes/consequences)

- Examples: populist leaders and democratic backsliding in different cases in the EU

Week 11

Presentations in the class:

- Select a topic on the EU emergency politics, populism, technocratic governance - analysing empirical cases.
- Explain why EU uses emergency politics in times of crisis and how this affects the democratic representation

Week 12

What is Anti-System Politics and what does this theory tell us about the contemporary challenges of the EU?

- Hopkin, Jonathan (2020). *Anti-System Politics: The Crisis of Market Liberalism in Rich Democracies*. Oxford University Press (selected chapters)

Week 13

Wrap-up. Discussion of submitted drafts/preparation for the final written exam.

Readings:

- Bickerton, Christopher, Brack, Nathalie, Coman, Ramona & Crespy, Amandine. (2022). *Conflicts of sovereignty in contemporary Europe: a framework of analysis*.
- Comparative European Politics volume 20, pages 257–274
- Brack, N. (2026). Euroskepticism. In: Stockemer, D., Sawyer, S., Gagnon, A. (eds) *IPSA Companion to Political Science*. Springer, Cham.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-06918-4_70-1
- Caramani, D. (2017). Will vs. reason: *The populist and technocratic forms of political representation and their critique of party government*. *American Political Science Review*. 111(1): 54–67.
- Mair, Peter Ruling the Void. (2022). *The Hollowing of Western Democracy*. Verso
- Müller, Jan-Werner (2017). *What is Populism?* Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania
- Hopkin, Jonathan (2020). *Anti-System Politics: The Crisis of Market Liberalism in Rich Democracies*. Oxford University Press
- Hooghe, Liesbet & Marks, Gary (2019). *Grand theories of European integration in the twenty-first century*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26:8, Link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1569711>
- Schmidt, A. V. (2020). *Europe's Crisis of Legitimacy, Governing by Rules and Ruling by Numbers in the Eurozone* (384 pp)/selected chapters;

- Scharpf, Fritz, W. (2009). Legitimacy in the multilevel European polity *European Political Science Review* (2009), 1:2, 173–204
- Tudzarovska, Emilija (2025). [*The rise of technocratic politics in the EU: the legacies of neoliberalism | Comparative European Politics*](#)
- Tudzarovska, Emilija, and Philippe Perchoc. “Special Issue Re-Thinking 1989 European History in the New Geo-Economic Context *European Review of International Studies*.” *European Review of International Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2025, pp. 279–90. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27494270>
- White, Jonathan. (2019) *Politics of Last Resort: Governing by Emergency in the European Union*. Oxford University Press

Additional literature:

- Bušítková, L. and Guasti. P. (2019). *The State as a Firm: Understanding the Autocratic Roots of Technocratic Populism*. *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 33:2, 302-330.
- Bickerton, C. (2022). After Euroscepticism. *New Left Review*. <https://newleftreview.org/sidecar/posts/after-euroscepticism>
- Lord, C. ed. (2015). *A different kind of democracy? Debates about democracy and the European Union*; Open Society Foundations.
- Hey, Colin. (2007). *Why we hate politics*. Politics
- Raik, Kristi. (2004). *EU Accession of Central and Eastern European Countries: Democracy and Integration as Conflicting Logics*. *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, pages 567–594.
- Rupnik, Jacques. (2007). Is East-Central Europe Backsliding? From Democracy Fatigue to Populist Backlash. *Journal of Democracy* Volume 18, Number 4 October 2007
- Tudzarovska, Emilija. “Europe’s Historical Legacy of 1989 in the Geopolitical Context.” *European Review of International Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2025, pp. 291–316. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27494271>
- Tudzarovska, Emilija (2025). [*How Neoliberalism Reshaped Democracy After 1989*](#)
- Wilkinson, Michael. 2021. *Authoritarian Liberalism and the Transformation of Modern Europe*. Oxford University Press. pp. 352

Notes on reading

Students are expected to follow the media coverage of political problems on an ongoing basis. Further reading list/selection can be submitted during the course.

Internet sources

European Union: <http://www.europa.eu/>

European Council:

https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-council_en

European Commission:

https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-commission_en

European Parliament : <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en>

European Parliament Think Tank : <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en>

CEPS: <https://www.ceps.eu/>

Eurobarometer : <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm>

Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) : <https://www.bti-project.org/en/meta/contact.html>

EU Observer: <https://euobserver.com/>

Politico EU: <https://www.politico.eu/>