



## PSCI-290 TOPICS IN POLITICS: POPULISM AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Fall 2025

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Instructor	Rodd Freitag
E-mail	freitard@uwec.edu
Course Meeting Days and Time	Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30-4:45
Required Experiential Learning Dates	None
Office Hours	Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:00-4:00 or by appointment

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### Catalog Description:

Subjects offered because of unique relevance to events or developments in political science or in the world of politics.

Populism is on the rise in the U.S. and abroad. This course will examine the history of populism in the U.S., the causes for the current wave of populism in the U.S. and elsewhere, and the impact of populism on democracies in the world today.

### Credit Hour Policy Statement:

This class meets the federal credit hour policy of 1 hour of class with an expected 2 hours of additional student work outside of class each week for approximately 15 weeks for each hour of credit, or a total of 45-75 total hours for each credit.

### Course Learning Objectives:

Students who complete this course successfully will be a(n):

- informed citizen who understands the history of populism in the U.S.
- political analyst able to evaluate populism and its impact on democracy.
- political problem solver with ideas to make American elections and governance more effective.

### Methods of Instruction:

This class will be a combination of lectures, discussions, and student presentations.

### Textbooks and Required Reading:

Cas Mudde and Cristobal Kaltwasser (2017). *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*  
Additional readings available online

### Course Schedule:

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
9/1	Introductions	
9/3, 9/8, 9/10	Defining populism	Fukuyama, "The Populist Surge" Mudde and Kaltwasser, Chapter 1
9/15, 9/17, 9/22	Populism in the U.S. and around the world	O'Rourke, "America's Populist Problem" "Populism in the U.S.: A Timeline" Mudde and Kaltwasser, Chapter 2

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9/24	Past Populist Profile Presentations	
9/29, 10/1	Populism and mobilization	Mudde and Kaltwasser, Chapter 3
10/6, 10/8	The populist leader	Mudde and Kaltwasser, Chapter 4
10/13	Current Populist Profile Presentations	
<b>Mid-Term Exam Wednesday, October 15</b>		
10/20, 10/22	Mid-Term Break: Class Will Not Meet	
10/27, 10/29, 11/3, 11/5, 11/10	Causes of populism	Mudde and Kaltwasser, Chapter 6 Berman, "The Causes of Populism in the West"
11/12	Causes of Populism in the U.S. Presentations	
11/17, 11/19, 11/24, 11/26, 12/1	Populism and democracy	Mudde and Kaltwasser, Chapter 5 Diamond, "When Does Populism Become a Threat to Democracy?"
12/3, 12/8, 12/10	Responding to Populism in the U.S. Presentations	
<b>Final Exam Date and Time TBD</b>		

### Grading Criteria:

Course grades are based on the following distribution:

Mid-Term Essay Exam	100 points
Final Essay Exam	100 points
Populist Profiles	100 points
Causes of Populism Essay	50 points
Responding to Populism Essay	50 points
Participation	100 points

#### Mid-Term and Final Essay Exams

The essays will require you to analyze and synthesize the assigned course readings.

#### Past Populist Profile

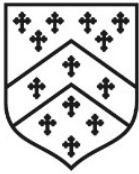
Students will write a profile (minimum 500 words, single-spaced, in .docx or.pdf format) analyzing a populist leader, movement, or party in the world from the past. Refer to at least two sources outside of the class readings. You should include a list of references and incorporate parenthetical source citation into your text. The written profile is due no later than **Wednesday, September 24**. Students will present their profile to the class on September 24.

#### Current Populist Profile

Students will write a profile (minimum 500 words, single-spaced, in .docx or.pdf format) analyzing a current populist leader, movement, or party in the world. Refer to at least two sources outside of the class readings. You should include a list of references and incorporate parenthetical source citation into your text. The written profile is due no later than **Monday, October 13**. Students will present their profile to the class on October 13.

#### Causes of Populism Essay

Students will write an essay (minimum 500 words, single-spaced, in .docx or.pdf format) arguing for the best explanation for the current wave of populism in the United States today. Refer to at least two sources outside of the



class readings. You should include a list of references and incorporate parenthetical source citation into your text. The essay is due no later than **Wednesday, November 12**. Students will present their profile to the class on November 12.

### Responding to Populism Essay

Students will write an essay (minimum 500 words, single-spaced, in .docx or.pdf format) arguing for the best response to address populism in the United States today. Refer to at least two sources outside of the class readings. You should include a list of references and incorporate parenthetical source citation into your text. The paper is due no later than in class on **Wednesday, December 3**. Students will present and discuss their arguments to the class during the last week of classes.

### Class Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to engage fully in the class activities. See the Attendance and Absence policies below. Students will receive a third-letter grade penalty (A- to B+, for example) to their final grade for each unexcused absence beyond two.

All scores earned in the class can be applied to the following **percentage scale**:

A 93.3 - 100	B 83.3 - 86.6	C 73.3 - 76.6	D 60. - 66.6
A- 90.0 - 93.2	B- 80.0 - 83.2	C- 70.0 - 73.2	F 59.9 or less
B+ 86.7 - 89.9	C+ 76.7 - 79.9	D+ 66.7 - 69.9	

### Withdrawal and Attendance policies:

Harlaxton College expects regular class attendance by all students. Students are considered sufficiently mature to appreciate the necessity of regular and punctual attendance, to accept this personal responsibility and to accept the consequences of failure to attend. When absences occur due to emergency or medical reasons, students are expected to notify their instructors of the absence prior to class or to seek the assistance of the College nurse or a member of the Student Experience Team for help in notifying instructors.

Instructors have the authority to grant excused absences for medical, psychological, or personal reasons upon review of appropriate documentation and professional recommendation supporting such a request. In the event of long-term illness, reasonable accommodations will be made to allow a student to complete a course. In these cases, the Dean will need to approve the long-term nature of the accommodation.

The Dean of Harlaxton College has the authority to grant excused absences for medical, psychological, or personal reasons.

Each instructor is expected to maintain an attendance policy in keeping with the nature of the Harlaxton program and may consider it in evaluating performance in their courses.

### Policy Governing Unexcused Absences:

Harlaxton College operates an attendance policy that is binding on all faculty and students. The number of unexcused absences that are allowed before incurring a penalty is related to the number of times a class meets each week. For courses which meet three times a week, students are allowed a maximum of three unexcused absences during the semester without attracting penalty points. For courses meeting twice a week two such absences are permitted, and for courses meeting once a week a single absence is allowed. Additional unexcused absences will attract a grade penalty.

Students will receive a third-letter grade penalty (A- to B+, for example) to their final grade for each unexcused absence beyond two.

### Policy Governing Excused Absences.

- Excused absences are not given to facilitate student travel independent of College-sponsored travel.



- Students may be permitted to miss class because of participation in academic field trips.
- Instructors must co-ordinate and confirm academic fieldtrips with the Dean, prior to the commencement of the Semester to ensure their inclusion in the Semester timetable.
- Where authorization for an academic fieldtrip is requested after the commencement of the semester, the request must be submitted to the Dean.

The following information is required:

- Purpose and brief description of the official Harlaxton event or academic fieldtrip.
- Dates, location, and times (as applicable).
- Alphabetical list of students involved [Last Name/First Name] along with their student identification number.

If approval is granted:

- Instructors affected will be notified at least one week prior to the class period during which absence is anticipated, or as soon as possible.
- Missed class time due to student participation is to be considered an excused absence.
- The grade of a student may not be lowered in any class due to excused absences.
- It is the student's responsibility - to take the initiative by consulting with their instructors before the absence occurs, and - to do what is required by the instructor to make up all missed assignments and/or examinations.
- Instructors are required to assist students in these occasional situations of excused absences.

### **Honor Code:**

All students at the University of Evansville agree to the University honor code: *I will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid, nor will I tolerate an environment that condones the use of unauthorized aid.*

**AI may be used only with prior permission or direction by the instructor.**

- All work submitted in this course must be your own.
- The use of generative AI composition tools, such as those offered by ChatGPT, Google Bard etc. is prohibited in this course except for specific assignments and subject to the instructor's guidelines.
- Work generated by such tools without proper attribution is plagiarism and, thereby, a breach of the University's Plagiarism and Academic Honesty policy.

### **Disability Policy:**

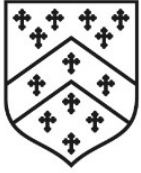
It is the policy and practice of the University of Evansville to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. Students should contact Disability Services within the Office of Counseling Services by calling 812-488-2663 to seek services or accommodations for disabilities. Written notification to faculty from Disability Services is required for academic accommodations.

The University of Evansville Disability Services office will share the request for academic accommodations with the Academic Support team at Harlaxton College. Staff members at Harlaxton will meet individually with students to discuss needs and provide additional information related to examinations or other assessments.

Students from partner institutions should provide the appropriate letter of accommodation from their institution to the Academic Support team at Harlaxton College.

### **Non-Discrimination Statement**

The University of Evansville expects all members of its community to treat each other with respect and civility. Harassing behaviors directed towards any member of our community will not be tolerated. As part of its commitment to non-discrimination, the University specifically prohibits harassment based on any other characteristics set forth in its nondiscrimination statement as follows: including race, color, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, creed or religion, national origin, age, disability, veteran status and all federally



protected groups/classes. Any form of harassment undermines the mission of the University and negatively impacts the University community as a whole.

### **Prohibited Conduct and Confidentiality**

The University of Evansville is committed to fostering an atmosphere free from harassment and discrimination. This commitment includes identifying problems that may lead to sexual harassment and misconduct, as well as other forms of harassment and discrimination, by creating an atmosphere in which the entire University community is sensitive to preventing prohibited conduct. Additionally, the University is committed to providing support and resources to individuals who have experienced prohibited conduct. This commitment includes effectively responding when a student, visitor, guest or program participant is the victim of prohibited conduct.

All campus employees, students, and guests are required to abide by the Title IX and Other Sexual Harassment and Misconduct Policy, the Harassment and Discrimination Policy, and the Consensual Sexual or Romantic Relationships Between Employees and Students Policy. Violation of these policies could result in disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion for students and termination for employees.

Faculty members at the University of Evansville are considered “Responsible Employees” under the applicable federal guidelines and the University’s policies. This means that I am unable to offer you confidentiality if you report any incidence of prohibited conduct to me as defined by Title IX statute. If I am made aware of a violation, I am required to report any known information to the Office of Institutional Equity.

You may choose to report the violation yourself the following ways:

- Email: Annie Sills, Assistant Director of Institutional Equity and Title IX Coordinator: [cs175@evansville.edu](mailto:cs175@evansville.edu); Keith Gehlhausen, Executive Director of HR and Institutional Equity: [kg77@evansville.edu](mailto:kg77@evansville.edu); Title IX: [titleix@evansville.edu](mailto:titleix@evansville.edu)
- Phone: 812-288-5261
- Online: <https://www.evansville.edu/safety/report.cfm>

You may also choose to speak with a Confidential Resource. Confidential Resources are required to maintain confidentiality and cannot report violations to the Office of Institutional Equity:

### **University of Evansville**

- Counseling Services: [counselingservices@evansville.edu](mailto:counselingservices@evansville.edu), 812-488-2633
- Health Center Professionals: [healthcenter@evansville.edu](mailto:healthcenter@evansville.edu), 812-488-2033
- University Chaplain: [chaplain@evansville.edu](mailto:chaplain@evansville.edu), 812-488-5262

### **Harlaxton College**

- College Nurse: Lesley Selby, RGN, +44 01476 403027, [lselby@harlaxton.ac.uk](mailto:lselby@harlaxton.ac.uk)
- Counselling Services: [counselling@harlaxton.ac.uk](mailto:counselling@harlaxton.ac.uk)