



PSCI-290 TOPICS IN POLITICS: POPULISM AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Fall 2025

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

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 Outcomes:

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.

Required Materials:

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

Additional readings available online

Methods of Instruction:

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

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

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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.

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. The Attendance and Absence policies are described above. 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		

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.*

Course AI Policy:

In this course, submission of any work that is not entirely your own is considered academic dishonesty. The use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT are prohibited and constitute a violation of academic integrity as examples of unauthorized aid.



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
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	
Mid-Term Exam Wednesday, October 15		
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	
Final Exam Date and Time TBD		

Disability Policy

The University of Evansville is committed to providing an accessible and supportive environment for students with disabilities. 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 at 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.

Institutional Equity and Title IX

UE is committed to fostering an atmosphere free from harassment and creating an inclusive campus for all members of the University community regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion, ethnicity, country of origin, ability, or veteran status. All Faculty members are considered Responsible Employees



and required to report instances of discrimination, harassment, or sexual violence to the Office of Institutional Equity

You may also choose to speak to a Confidential Resource about your experience. Confidential Resources at the University include:

Counseling Services: 812-488-2663, counselingservices@evansville.edu

Crayton E. and Ellen Mann Health Center: 812-488-2033, healthcenter@evansville.edu

Spiritual Formation Coordinator: 812- 488-5265, spiritualformation@evansville.edu

If you or someone you know has been harassed, assaulted, or discriminated against you can find the appropriate resources by contacting the Assistant Director of Institutional Equity and Title IX Coordinator: email titleix@evansville.edu ; phone (812) 488-5261. For more information visit <https://www.evansville.edu/offices/titleix/policy.cfm>.

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. For more information contact the [Center for Inclusive Excellence](#).

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

Campus Safety

All members of the UE community are automatically enrolled in the Ace Alerts Emergency Alert System. When the system is activated, emergency notification information is sent in the following manner: calls to campus IP phones, text messages, emails, campus housing speaker system, active threat sirens (non-weather related), digital signage, and AlertUS desktop on campus-owned computers.

To contact the Office of Public Safety:

Emergencies: 812-488-6911

Non-emergencies: 812-488-2051

Complaints, Grievances, and Appeals

The University of Evansville seeks to resolve all student concerns in a timely and effective manner through policies and processes documented in the University [Course Catalog](#) and [Student Handbook](#).

Student Resources

- College Nurse: Lesley Selby, RGN, +44 01476 403027, lselect@harlaxton.ac.uk
- Counselling Services: counselling@harlaxton.ac.uk