

# Government 312L: Populism in the United States and Texas

**Course Number:** 37787

**Classroom:** UTC 4.104

**Meeting times:** Tu Th, 9:30 – 11:00 AM

**Instructor:** Dr. Matthew Rhodes-Purdy

**Office hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 – 2:00 PM

**Office location:** MEZ 3.228

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**Course Description:** The Tea Party; Occupy Wall Street; Bernie Sanders; Donald Trump; Elizabeth Warren. These movements and politicians have bitter disputes over economic policy, immigration, race relations, personal style, and numerous other topics. And yet all have frequently shared a label: populist. Populism is nearly constant phenomenon in US political history; its influence has had a dramatic impact on US political culture and institutions. And yet it is a term which is poorly understood and often applied with little thought to its meaning.

This course will examine the development of populism, understood as the assertion that “the people” (however defined) have had their rightful sovereignty stolen by “the elite”; and its impact on US political development. This course embraces a social scientific approach to the study of political phenomena. Therefore we will not merely be reviewing a large number of facts and figures about populist movements. Instead we will ask and review potential answers to questions regarding the causes and effects of populism throughout US political history. The narrative which raises these questions will focus on the tension between two features of US political thought: classical liberalism (a belief in limited government and a suspicion of mass democracy) and civic republicanism (the belief in the capacity of the virtuous people to govern themselves).

Questions that will be raised include:

- What is populism? Is it an ideology, a worldview, a form of discourse, or a political strategy? Which groups should be included and excluded from the label?
- Who are “the people”? How do populists make their appeals to unity in a diverse society? How does this process impact the political fortunes of populist movements?
- Why is populism such a constant feature of US politics?
- How have populist movements reshaped the political institutions of the US?
- Why did populism split into left-wing and right-wing variants in the 1930s? What distinguishes left-wing and right-wing populism?
- Why don't populists win power in the US?

**Prerequisites:** Twelve semester hours of college coursework and a passing score on the reading section of the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) test, or an appropriate assessment test. It is strongly recommended that you take GOV310 prior to this course, but not required.

**Readings:** The course will involve a combination of textbook readings, primary source readings and analytical articles. There are three required texts for the course:

- Kazin, Michael. *The Populist Persuasion: An American History (Revised Ed)*. ISBN: 0-8014-8558-4
- Richard Hofstadter. *The Age of Reform*. ISBN: 978-0394700953
- Ronald Formisano. *For the People: American Populist Movements from the Revolution to the 1850s*. ISBN: 0-8078-3172-7.
- An online course packet.

All required texts are available at the bookstore. All are also available in eBook format on Amazon.com (usually at a considerable discount from the print versions). The online course packet is posted on Canvas.

Reading for this class is absolutely essential. Lectures will deal with course material that is separate from that contained in the readings. You must come to class each day with the assigned reading completed to get the most out of lecture and to succeed in the course.

**Course Requirements and Grading:** Grades for this course will be based on a combination of exams and participation. There will be three exams, which will cover the material between that exam and the one preceding it (exams are not comprehensive). That said, the course is designed in such a way that ideas from earlier sections are vital to understanding later material. Exams may include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions, depending on class size.

There will also be an optional research paper. The paper counts as an additional exam grade, and will only be counted if your paper grade is higher than your lowest exam grade; in other words, the paper can only help you, although it is not purely “extra credit”. The paper should be 5-10 pages double-spaced, and must concern a movement or politician which may be considered populist. Your paper must cite at least 5 sources, 3 of which must be scholarly.

**Lecture Slides & Participation:** Slides from lecture will not be available on Canvas. The slides are merely an outline of the lecture, and relying on them without actually attending will not be sufficient to succeed in this course. However if you do miss class, if you come to office hours (either my own or the TA’s) and discuss the material for the day you missed, we will make the slides for that day available to you.

In addition to the exams, 10 percent of your grade will be based on your participation. The participation grade will include in-class discussion, small-group activities, and periodic quizzes which will focus on the readings. Please keep in mind that simply showing up to class will not be sufficient to guarantee full participation points; you must actively engage in discussion.

That said, I am aware that some students feel uncomfortable engaging in discussion in front of large groups. Therefore students may also attend office hours to discuss the course material to gain participation points. You may contact me at any time to discuss your participation grade, and ways you might improve it.

Final grades will be course will be calculated as follows:

Assignment	Weight
Exam 1	30%
Exam 2	30%
Final Exam	30%
Participation	10%

Grades will be assigned on the scale listed below:

93-100	A	90-92	A-		
88-89	B+	83-87	B	80-82	B-
78-79	C+	73-77	C	70-72	C-
68-69	D+	63-67	D	60-62	D-
<60	F				

All final percentages will be rounded to the nearest percentage point. No exceptions will be made to the scale listed here.

If you feel your grade on an assignment is incorrect, you may explain, in writing, why you feel you have been graded incorrectly or unfairly and submit it to me **no later than one week** from the day the assignment was returned; late appeals will **not be accepted or considered**.

**Office hours and contact policy:** If at any point in the semester you worry about your grade or your understanding of the course, **please come and see me as soon as possible**. I cannot emphasize enough that I want you all to succeed in this course, but in order for that to happen, you must **ask for help when you need it**. This is a difficult course with a great deal of material. Timely requests for help and use of university resources provide the best chance of success. Any students who wish to discuss any aspect of the course are more than welcome to come to office hours.

Except in extreme circumstances, I will answer e-mails within 24 hours of receipt during the week, or within 48 hours over a weekend or holiday. I encourage you to contact me with any questions or concerns as soon as possible, as there is no guarantee any issue you may have can be resolved in one e-mail communication. If your issue requires more extensive communication, I will probably ask you to come to office hours to discuss it face to face.

**Make-ups:** Exams can be made up, provided that:

- A. You have a reasonable excuse for missing the exam. These include a university-sponsored athletic event, serious illness or accident, or a death in the family. You will be required to submit documentation of your excuse.
- B. You provide as much notification as possible. I reserve the right to refuse make-up exams to students who fail to provide timely notification. If an absence is foreseeable, "timely" means as before the assignment, preferably as soon as you know you will be absent.

There will be a single make-up exam period for each exam. All students with approved excuses must make up the exam they missed during the make-up period corresponding to that exam (i.e. you cannot make up the first exam during the make-up period for the second exam).

**Technology in class:** Students will be allowed to use laptops to take notes. Mobile phones are not allowed; please keep them stowed away during class time. Also, please make sure laptops and stowed phones, as well as any other electronic devices, **are silenced prior to the start of class.** I also ask that you limit use of your laptops to class-related activities; individuals who use technology in a manner that interrupts lecture or distracts other students will be asked to leave their laptops at home permanently.

**Academic Dishonesty:** The University defines scholastic dishonesty in the following way:

“According to the Institutional Rules, scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and falsifying academic records.” For a detailed explanation of the University’s honor code and definition of plagiarism please refer to the following website:

<http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html>

In the event that a student violates the University policy on scholastic dishonesty, he or she will be subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced.

**Students with Disabilities** Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

**Religious Holy Day Observance:** By UT Austin policy, you must notify your instructor of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Emergency Evacuation Policy:** In the event of a fire or other emergency, it may be necessary to evacuate a building rapidly. Upon the activation of a fire alarm or the announcement of an emergency in a university building, all occupants of the building are required to evacuate and assemble outside. Once evacuated, no one may re-enter the building without instruction to do so from the Austin Fire Department, University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Students should familiarize themselves with all the exit doors of each room and building they occupy at the university, and should remember that the nearest exit routes may not be the same as the way they typically enter buildings.

Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructors in writing during the first week of class. Faculty members must then provide this information to the Fire Prevention Services office by fax (512-232-2759), with "Attn. Mr. Roosevelt Easley" written in the subject line.

Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>

## Course Plan

Readings listed are to be completed by the first day of the week to which they pertain (except for Week 1). Readings with an asterisk (\*) are available in the online course packet.

### **Section 1: The origins of populism in the US**

This section introduces the course. In the first weeks we discuss competing definitions of populism, and the underlying conflict between liberalism and civic republicanism that animates populist sentiments throughout US history. We then discuss early movements with populist leanings, up to and including the People's Party (the movement for which the term "populism" was coined). In particular we emphasize two intertwined ideas which animate early populists: an egalitarian economic philosophy, and a moral/religious belief in the virtue of the "common people". The latter term which is far less egalitarian than it at first appears, as who is included in "the people" is an enduring problem for populist groups.

Week 1 (Jan 19-21): Introduction to the course and definitions of populism.

- Kazin., Introduction
- Weyland, "A contested concept"\*
- Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective* (selection 1)\*

Week 2 (Jan 26-28): Introduction Continued (Tuesday); Civic republicanism, Jeffersonian Democracy, and liberalism (Thursday)

- Kazin, Ch. 1
- Riker, *Liberalism against Populism*\*
- Formisano, *For the People* (Ch. 1-2)

Week 3 (Feb 2-4): Jacksonian Democracy

- Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion*\*
- Holt, *Political Parties and American Political Development*\*
- Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*\*

Week 4 (Feb 9-11): The People's Party

- Kazin, Ch. 2
- Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (Ch. 1-2)
- Hicks, "The Persistence of Populism"\*
- The Omaha Platform Preamble\*

Week 5 (Feb 16-18): The progressive movement, labor, and the New Deal

- Kazin, Ch. 3
- Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (Ch. 4-5)

**Feb 18: EXAM 1**

## Section 2: The populist split: left-wing and right-wing populism

In the previous section, we covered the development of US populism through the People's Party, which demanded government action in the name of economic egalitarianism and exalted the civic morality of "the people". In the 20<sup>th</sup> century these two branches of populism separate: those on the left continue to adopt populist language when addressing economic issues, while the moral/religious dimension embraced by the prohibition movement eventually inspires new, right-wing forms of populism. In this section we examine the faltering use of populist rhetoric by the left, and the rise of the populist right. We identify and analyze two strains of right-wing populism: the anti-communist right, which sees the elite as a conspiracy of traitors at the highest levels of the state, and the xenophobic right, which is concerned primarily with othering ethnic and racial minorities from the ranks of "the people". We will also analyze the use of populist rhetoric by the New Left of the 1960s, against which later right-wing figures such as Wallace, Reagan and Nixon react.

Week 6 (Feb 23-25): The antecedents of right-wing populism: The prohibitionist movement, Anti-Masonry & the know-nothings

- Kazin, Ch. 4
- Blocker, "The Politics of Reform"\*
- Formisano, *For the People* (Ch. 5-6, 9)

Week 7 (March 1): The know-nothings and the xenophobic right

- Kazin, Ch. 5

NOTE: Class will be cancelled on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, as I will be out of town.

Week 8 (March 8-10): The paranoid style of populism: Anti-masonry and the Cold War right

- Kazin, Ch. 7-8
- Hofstadter, "The paranoid style in American Politics"\*

## SPRING BREAK

Week 9 (March 22-24): The new left and the return of the xenophobic right: George Wallace

- Kazin, Ch. 8-9

Week 10 (March 29-31): Populism in the mainstream right: Nixon, Reagan and Gingrich

- Kazin Ch. 10

**March 31: EXAM 2**

**Section 3:** At the end of the previous section, left-wing populism has largely been eclipsed by the decline of the new left, while right-wing populism had been assimilated by mainstream politicians. The housing crisis of 2008, like the mortgage crisis that drove the original People's party, convinced many citizens that government no longer served their interests (if it ever had). The result was a new wave of populist rhetoric, leaders and movements. However unlike the People's party, which synthesized the economic egalitarian and moral/religious dimensions, the modern manifestation of populism maintained and deepened the split between the two which began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In this section, we compare modern populist movements and leaders in the US, as well as populist movements in other countries, to those of the past.

**A NOTE ABOUT READINGS FOR THIS SECTION:** Much of the material for the next four weeks concerns current events; as such there is limited scholarly literature available. In addition to the listed readings, there will be a selection of current news coverage for weeks 11-14. Please check Canvas *after Oct 23<sup>rd</sup> but prior to Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>* for additional required readings.

Week 11 (April 5-7): Occupy Wall Street, Elizabeth Warren, and Bernie Sanders

- Hart & Negri, "The Fight for 'Real Democracy' at the Heart of Occupy Wall Street"\*
- DeLuca, Lawson and Sun, "Occupy Wall Street on the Public Screens of Social Media"\*
- Additional readings for this week posted on Canvas

Week 12 (April 12-14): The Tea Party

- Williamson, Skocpol & Coggin, "The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism"\*
- Additional readings for this week posted on Canvas

Week 13 (April 19-21): Populism in Europe: The European Far Right

- Altemeyer, "The other authoritarian personality"\*
- Cas Mudde, "A pathological normalcy"\*
- Additional readings for this week posted on Canvas

### **OPTIONAL PAPER APRIL 26 BEFORE CLASS**

Week 14 (April 26-28): Populism in Europe: The Anti-Austerity Left

- Additional readings for this week posted on Canvas under "news selections"

Week 15 (May 3-5): Populism in Latin America: Against the Oligarchy

- Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective* (Selection 2)\*
- Germani, *Authoritarianism, Facism, And National Populism*\*
- Weyland, *Neopopulism and Neoliberalism in Latin America*\*

**Final Exam: Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, in class**