Syllabus

Right-wing Populism and Democracy in Austria - 54600

Last update 11-10-2018

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 2nd degree (Master)

Responsible Department: European Studies

Academic year: 0

Semester: 1st Semester

Teaching Languages: English

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Dr. Marion Loeffler

Coordinator Email: marion.loeffler@univie.ac.at

Coordinator Office Hours: By prior arrangement

Teaching Staff:
   Dr. Marion Loeffler
Course/Module description:  
The rise of right-wing populist movements and parties in most European member states has made populism a major topic of political science research. Although scholars agree that populism relates to democracy, they disagree on its impact on liberal democracy and its institutions. Populism seems to be both, a normal feature of democratic life as well as a threat to democracy. The aim of this course is to discuss these contradictory findings taking Austria as an example. The Austrian Freedom Party (FP) was one of the first right-wing populist parties in Europe with some connections to far-right and neo-Nazi movements. In contrast to other right-wing populist parties, the FP participated in governments (1983-1986, 2000-2006, since 2017). Being in government is supposed to deprive populist parties of their radical rhetoric and anti-establishment attitude. On the other hand, they have the power to reconstruct the political system or harm democratic institutions. Moreover, since the beginning of the decade some populist strategies and issues (e.g. migration, Islam, gender equality) have been taken over by mainstream political parties and changed the political discourse in Austria and Europe.

Course/Module aims:  
The aim of the course is a critical examination of the impact of right-wing populism on representative democracy. Students will gain knowledge about the Austrian political system and current developments in the European context. They will practice and improve their skills in theory and methods based argumentation and scientific writing.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:  
- understand and distinguish different concepts of populism  
- know the democratic institutions of liberal, representative democracy and their relevance for a democratic society  
- assess recent developments in Austria and their impact on liberal democracy  
- criticize right-wing populist discursive strategies and policies  
- know and apply some language related social-science research methods

Attendance requirements(%):  
80%

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: After an introductory lecture, each session will deal with a different aspect of the topic. The discussions will be based on a text (a thematic or methodological article or book chapter) which forms part of the compulsory reading. Students will contact further research and will
present their (individual or collaborative) research and preliminary findings.

**Course/Module Content:**
- What is populism? (definitions, controversies)
- Populism as a threat to democracy?
- Liberal democracy and the role of populist actors in Europe
- Austria’s political system and EU-Integration
- Politics of the past Waldheim and Haider
- The Freedom Party (FP) as populist actor in opposition
- The FP in government 2000 and sanctions of EU member states
- From Haider to Strache
- Transformation of the topics of populist discourse (from anti-Semitism to anti-Islam propaganda, from German to Austrian nationalism)
- Recent developments in Austria
- Research methods: frame analysis of populist discourse; rhetorical strategies
- Political masculinities and populism
- Mainstreaming right-wing populism

**Required Reading:**
- Müller, Jan-Werner (2016). *What is Populism?* (selected chapters)
- Bossetta, Michael (2017). Fighting fire with fire: Mainstream adoption of the populist political style in the 2014 Europe debates between Nick Clegg and Nigel Farage, in:
The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, 19, pp. 715-734.


Additional Reading Material:
further individual research

Course/Module evaluation:
End of year written/oral examination 0 %
Presentation 30 %
Participation in Tutorials 0 %
Project work 50 %
Assignments 20 %
Reports 0 %
Research project 0 %
Quizzes 0 %
Other 0 %

Additional information: