

Authoritarian National Populism and the Crisis of Democracy

Professor Wolin

Fall 2018 – Monday, 6:30-8:30, GC 5382

History 72400 (cross-list w. Pol Sci & Comp Lit)

With communism's unexpected demise in 1989, optimistic forecasts concerning the worldwide triumph of democracy proliferated. During the 1980s and 1990s, authoritarian regimes unraveled not only in Europe, but also in Asia, Latin America, and South Africa, spurring hopes that a long overdue "Third Wave" of democratization was underway.

Recently, it has become painfully evident just how premature and naïve these prognoses were. Over the last ten years, instead of the triumph of liberal democracy, we have witnessed the global ascendancy of *authoritarian national populism*.

In part, these developments signify a defensive response to the depredations of globalization and neoliberalism. But they also represent a rejoinder to problems that, historically, have been endemic to modern democracy – problems such as: (1) how to determine who counts as part of the demos (women? those without property? religious and ethnic minorities?); and (2) which institutional mechanisms ensure that that the "will of the people" is adequately reflected by the representatives who purportedly govern in its name.

Today, the disturbing rise of political authoritarianism and ethnic nationalism reflects diminished confidence in the capacity of parliamentary democracy to remedy the acute social disequilibrium – economic, cultural, and political – intrinsic to political liberalism. Our approach to these problems will be threefold: (1) historical, (2) theoretical, and (3) political. Among the noteworthy theorists of political authoritarianism that we will discuss are: Hannah Arendt, Carl Schmitt, and leading representatives of the Frankfurt School (T. W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, etc.)

Weekly Assignments

August 27: Introduction

Sept. 6: (NB: *classes follow a Monday schedule*): From Bonapartism to "Caesarism"

Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* *

Juan Donoso Cortes, "Essay on Dictatorship" (1853) *

Dostoyevsky, "The Grand Inquisitor"

Le Bon, *The Crowd* (selection) *

Sept. 10: no classes scheduled

Sept. 17: The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy

Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*

Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (selections)

Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy* (selection)

Sept. 24: Varieties of Fascism

S. Payne, *Fascism: A History* (Introduction, Part I)

Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism* (Action Française)

Eco, “Generic Fascism” *

Mussolini, “The Doctrine of Fascism” *

October 1: The Mass Psychology of Fascism

E. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (selection)

Fromm, “The Method and Function of Analytic Social Psychology” *

Adorno, “Freudian Theory and The Pattern of Fascist Propaganda”*

Adorno, et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (Introduction) *

L. Lowenthal & N. Guterman, *Prophets of Deceit* (selection) *

Recommended: Adorno, *The Radio Addresses of Martin Luther Thomas*

October 8: Columbus Day: class will not meet

October 15: Populism

J. Muller, *What is Populism?*

J. Judis, *The Populist Explosion*

October 22: Neo-Liberalism, Inequality, and Ungovernability

Habermas, “The Post-National Constellation and the Future of Democracy,” *

R. Kuttner, *Can Democracy Survive Capitalism?*

October 29: Ideological Prophets of “White America”

S. Huntington, *Who Are We?* (selection)

Buchanan, *Death of the West* (selection)

S. Francis, *Leviathan and Its Enemies* (selection)

November 5: The Rise of the Alt-Right

T. Main, *The Rise of the Alt-Right*

November 12: The “New Right” (Nouvelle Droite)

De Benoist, *Manifesto for a New Europe* *

Bar-On, *The Nouvelle Droite* (selection)

P-A Taguieff, “The New Cultural Racism in France” *

Recommended: J-Y Camus, *The European New Right*

November 19: Neo-Fascism or Authoritarian Democracy?

Beirich, “White Identity World-Wide”

Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory* (selection)

Wolin, “Words that Kill: on the French National front”

Various articles on European Extreme Right Politics

November 26: Trump and Authoritarian Democracy

- I. Chotiner, “Is Donald Trump a fascist” (28 June 2016: <http://www.slate.com>)
- Fedja Buric, “Trump’s not Hitler, He’s Mussolini: How GOP anti-intellectualism created a modern fascist movement in America,” (11 March 2016), <http://www.salon.com>
- Robert Kagan, “This is how fascism came to American,” Washington Post, 18 May 2016, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions>
- David Remnick, “American Demagogue,” The New Yorker (14 March 2016),
- Anne Applebaum, “Is this the end of the West as we Know it?,” Washington Post, 4 March 2016.
- D. Frum, *Trumpocracy*

December 3: Conclusion

Written Assignment: Final papers are due on December 10. You are to choose a syllabus-related topic (in consultation with yours truly) and write a 12-15-page essay. The assignment is meant to be an “interpretive essay” rather than a full-blown “research paper.” By the same token, the essay should demonstrate *extensive familiarity with the relevant secondary literature* as well as the relevant conflict of interpretations. What matters is your capacity to discern and reconstruct the major interpretive standpoints, to evaluate the stronger and weaker arguments and positions, and to arrive at fresh conclusions that, ideally, will advance our understanding of the material.