



The Far-Right Today

Winter 2024

6 ECTS

Moodle Link: <https://dl1.cuni.cz/course/view.php?id=13731>

Class Times: Wednesday 12:30-15:30 B317

Office Hours: Tuesday 14:00 – 15:30, or by request. All appointments can be booked [here](#)

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Guest Lecturer: Catherine Girard- catherine.girard@mail.muni.cz

This course will be exclusively taught by the guest lecturer Catherine Girard for the Summer 2025 Semester.

Course description

The rise of the far-right is reshaping the political and social lives of the world in which we live. From the Trump era of hate politics, Europe's embrace of populist rhetoric, and the subsequent worldwide inspirations ranging from Modi's India to Meloni's Italy, and Netanyahu's Israel, there is an unquestionable growth in the popularity of far-right politics. On the social and violent side, cases of right-wing extremism, terrorism, and online hate activism have been at all-time highs. These figures include perpetrators emulating past atrocities, street violence and protests against COVID measures, growing beliefs in conspiracy theories and misinformation, and increasing hate crimes against minority communities (Muslims, Jewish, LGBTQ, Romani, and more). Fuelling the phenomena is the far-right's avid use of the internet to promote pseudo-societal messages.

This course offers students an exploratory lens into the different mechanisms of the far-right in the political, social, and violent realm. We will start with a broad overview of the term far-right, the ideologies guiding the movement, and the causes, then branch off, covering many topics. These subjects include the adamant use of populism and its inspirations across the globe, the mainstreaming of far-right politicians and discourse, the manipulation of social media to spread

harmful messages and commit virtual hate crimes, the growth of right-wing extremism and the use of the online world to promote terrorism, and the practical challenges and opportunities to stop this growing phenomenon. Most importantly, by the end of the class, students will have a multi-dimensional understanding of the many faces of the far-right.

Aims of the course

After completing the course, students shall understand and be able to critically apply the concepts and differences within the far-right movement. Moreover, students will be able to connect the far-right's online content to their real-world implications and conceptualize the effects of technology for dangerous pseudo-societal sentiments and movements.

Learning outcomes

In addition to learning basic facts on the topic of the course, this seminar-style course is intended to contribute to developing methodological (readings and in-class discussions), practical (policy brief), and analytical (presentation and final essay) skills among the students. Students will also learn to think critically about their political, social, and economic environment and how pseudo-societal narratives develop within this context. At the end of the course, students will be able to apply the interconnected themes between the online and IRL world and understand the importance of the internet for the far-right.

Class Ethics and Respect

This course will cover a variety of topics that can be considered harmful to many demographics (Jews, Muslims, Women, Asians, & Other Minorities). Therefore, it is of utmost importance that discussions remain respectful and academic. Any disruptive behaviour that violates the student code of conduct or jeopardises the safe class environment will be dealt with accordingly. Moreover, with a large portion of the course being presented through fellow students' work, it is paramount that peers are considerate during class presentations and are not distracted by any other material.

Structure of the course

- 1) Introductory seminar
- 2) Introducing the far-right: *The far-right is not a single-body actor but a mix-and-match of different groups, each with a unique identity and ideology. Attention will be given to the broadly defined far-right, the definitional problems of trying to piece the puzzle together, how*

researchers approach studying the far-right, and the predominant movements both online and IRL.

- 3) *Ideologies & Identity: The far-right is bonded by common transnational roots prevalent in the online and IRL discussions popularizing the movement. This week will focus on the connections bringing the far-right together, the tactics used to promote the movement, and how their discourse bridges language, ethnic, and cultural barriers.*

Presentation I: What is the Far-Right's Identity? (Ethno)Nationalism, Belonging, & Home

Presentation II: What is the Far-Right's Identity Cont.: Culture, Music, Clothes, and More

- 4) *Causes: Inherently linked to the far-right's ideologies, we need to understand why people turn towards the radical movement. The lecturer will initially outline the concept of cognitive radicalization and the steps individuals take towards accepting extremist beliefs, parties, and violence. Then the class will explore key concepts such as the in vs out-group, the victimhood narrative, and the effective political, social, and economic framing.*

Presentation III: The in-group vs out-group debate – Islamophobia, Migration, and Globalization

Presentation IV: Playing the victim, and the discourse behind losing one's "privileges"

- 5) *Populism, Mainstreaming, and the Far-Right in Politics: Populism has become an enormously successful tool for far-right politicians to involve themselves in mainstream political discourse and has led to many parties receiving a significant amount of support throughout the world. To understand the how and why, we will examine the concept of populism, the Overton Window, and the evolution of the "New-Right".*

Presentation V: How are populists mobilizing support?

Presentation VI: Populisms use of the internet & mainstreaming

- 6) *Case Studies in a Global Movement: Although the course mainly focuses on the western world, the far-right has had unique manifestations across the globe. Different regions include India under Modi, Italy under Meloni, the parties in our backyard in CZ, and in Israel, which have seen the far-right come to power. The commonality? utilizing different societal insecurities.*

Presentation VII: Students choice on the far-right party in power, must be discussed with lecturer

Presentation VIII: Students choice on the far-right party in power, must be discussed with lecturer

Presentation IX: Students choice on the far-right party in power, must be discussed with lecturer

- 7) Social Media and Conspiracies: *Much of the far-right's success in politics and as a social movement has come from their avid use of the internet for recruitment and dissemination of ideologies. The following two weeks will work to bridge the political side of the far-right with the extremist side through the power of the online world. As will be discussed, one of the primary incubators for the movement is through social media and the manipulatory practices of conspiracies.*

Presentation X: Social media conspiracy theories

Presentation XI: QAnon, #Savethechildren, and #pizzagate

- 8) Alt-Tech and an Expanding Internet: *Session 8 will concentrate more on the alternative practices of the far-right in forming online content ecosystems away from the usual social media sites and how this content spills out into the mainstream.*

Presentation XII: The Alt-Right, and #Gamergate (2.0)

Presentation XIII: The far-right online algorithm, going down the rabbit-hole

- 9) Countering the far-right: *It is time to flip the script and understand tackling the rise of the far-right through government policy and prevention strategies. There are many different online and IRL strategies to combat right-wing ideologies, conspiracy theories, and the movement's growth. This class will be dedicated to the policy-brief assignment. After a small introduction to the simulated problem, teams will be formed, and the rest of class time will be for group work.*

- 10) The Internet and Far-Right Violence: *When political and social means are not enough for far-right participants, some turn to violence to resolve their problems. We will take a specific look at far-right terrorism and violence, with this session concentrating on the internet's use in promoting self-radicalisation and lone-wolf terrorism.*

Presentation XIV: Self-Radicalization, what is the role of the internet in creating terrorists?

Presentation XV: Lone-Wolf Terrorism, a contested concept and its application to real-world examples

- 11) Idolization, Copycat Terrorism and Incels: *We will examine right-wing violence through a different lens into the phenomenon of copycat terrorism, the idolization of far-right terrorists online, and the related Involuntary Celibate Movement (Incel).*

Presentation XVI: Copycat Terrorism and Far-Right Idolization

Presentation XVII: The Involuntary Celibate Movement and it's connection with the far-right

12) Final Class Summary: *A few concluding remarks will be made to finish the semester, including comments about the policy briefs and final assignment.*

Readings¹

Week 1: Syllabus & Introduction Session

READ THE SYLLABUS

Week 2: Ashe, Stephen, Aaron Winter, Joel Busher, and Graham Macklin. "Introduction." In *Researching the Far Right*, 1st ed., 1–14. London: Routledge, 2020.

Carter, Elisabeth. "Right-Wing Extremism/Radicalism: Reconstructing the Concept." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 23, no. 2 (May 2018): 157–182.

Rydgren, Jens. "The Radical Right: An Introduction." In *Oxford Handbook on the Radical Right*, 1st ed., 23–39. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Recommended Podcast: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/what-exactly-is-the-radical-right/id1530027387?i=1000491384376>

Week 3: Ganesh, Bharath, and Caterina Froio. "A 'Europe Des Nations': Far Right Imaginative Geographies and the Politicization of Cultural Crisis on Twitter in Western Europe." *Journal of European Integration* 42, no. 5 (2020): 715–32.

Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2020) 'Space, Place, and the Power of Homelands', in *Hate in the Homeland*. 1st edn. New York: Princeton University Press, pp. 29–44.

Recommended Reading: Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2020) 'Selling Extremism Food, Fashion, and Far-Right Markets' in *Hate in the Homeland*. 1st edn. New York: Princeton University Press, pp. 61-92.

Recommended Reading: Elgenius, G. and Rydgren, J. (2019) 'Frames of nostalgia and belonging: the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in Sweden', *European Societies*, 21(4), pp. 583–602.

Week 4: Kallis, Aristotle. "The Radical Right and Islamophobia." *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, 2018, 76–100.

Marcks, Holger, and Janina Pawelz. "From Myths of Victimhood to Fantasies of Violence: How Far-Right Narratives of Imperilment Work." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2020, 1–18.

¹ All readings are mandatory unless explicitly stated otherwise (recommended readings)

Agius, C., Rosamond, A. B. and Kinnvall, C. (2020) 'Populism, Ontological Insecurity and Gendered Nationalism: Masculinity, Climate Denial and Covid-19', *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, 21(4), pp. 432–450.

Recommended Reading: Hogg, M. A. (2020) 'Uncertain Self in a Changing World: A Foundation for Radicalization, Populism, and Autocratic Leadership', *European Review of Social Psychology*, pp. 1–34.

Week 5: Mudde, Cas. "What Is Populism?" In *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd ed., 1–20. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, 'Populism and mobilization', *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (New York, 2017; online edn, Oxford Academic, 23 Feb. 2017).

Krämer, Benjamin. "Populist Online Practices: The Function of the Internet in Right-Wing Populism." *Information Communication and Society* 20, no. 9 (2017): 1293–1309.

Recommended Podcast: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/understanding-populism-during-covid-19/id1530027387?i=1000492956226>

Week 6: Rogenhofer, Julius Maximilian, and Ayala Panievsky. "Antidemocratic Populism in Power: Comparing Erdoğan's Turkey with Modi's India and Netanyahu's Israel." *Democratization*, 2020, 1394–1412.

Sá Guimarães, Feliciano De, and Irma Dutra De Oliveira E Silva. "Far-Right Populism and Foreign Policy Identity: Jair Bolsonaro's Ultra-Conservatism and the New Politics of Alignment." *International Affairs* 97, no. 2 (2021): 345–63.

Zhang, Chenchen. "Right-Wing Populism with Chinese Characteristics? Identity, Otherness and Global Imaginaries in Debating World Politics Online." *European Journal of International Relations* 26, no. 1 (2020): 88–115.

Week 7: Thomas, Elise, and Albert Zhang. "ID2020, Bill Gates and the Mark of the Beast: How Covid-19 Catalyses Existing Online Conspiracy Movements." Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25082>.

McSwiney, Jordan, Michael Vaughan, Annett Heft, and Matthias Hoffmann. "Sharing the Hate? Memes and Transnationality in the Far Right's Digital Visual Culture." *Information Communication and Society*, (2021): 1–20.

Hannah, Matthew N. "A Conspiracy of Data: QAnon, Social Media, and Information Visualization." *Social Media and Society* 7, no. 3 (2021).

Recommended Podcast: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/memes-and-culture/id1530027387?i=1000515138007>

Recommended Podcast: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-qanon-conspiracy-and-momfluencers/id1530027387?i=1000496223970>

Week 8: Patrik Hermansson, David Lawrence, Joe Mulhall, Simon Murdoch. "Co-Opting and Creating Digital Spaces." In *The International Alt-Right Fascism for the 21st Century?* Routledge, 2018.

O'Callaghan, Derek, Derek Greene, Maura Conway, Joe Carthy, and Pádraig Cunningham. "Down the (White) Rabbit Hole: The Extreme Right and Online Recommender Systems." *Social Science Computer Review* 33, no. 4 (2015): 459–78.

Patrik Hermansson, David Lawrence, Joe Mulhall, Simon Murdoch. "Gaming the System." In *The International Alt-Right Fascism for the 21st Century?* 153–60.

Patrik Hermansson, David Lawrence, Joe Mulhall, Simon Murdoch. "The Role of the Troll." In *The International Alt-Right Fascism for the 21st Century?* 123–38.

Recommended Reading: Koster, W. De and Houtman, D. (2008) "STORMFRONT IS LIKE A SECOND HOME TO ME" On virtual community formation by right-wing extremists', *Information, Communication and Society*, 11(8), pp. 1155–1176.

Recommended Reading: Greene, V. S. (2019) "'Deplorable' satire: Alt-right memes, white genocide tweets, and redpilling normies", *Studies in American Humor*, 5(1), pp. 31–69.

Recommended Podcast: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/alt-tech-and-the-far-right/id1530027387?i=1000541321060>

Week 9: Recommended for Assignment & Policy Examples:

Voogt, Stevie. "Countering Far-Right Recruitment Online: CAPE's Practitioner Experience." *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 12, no. 1 (2017): 34–46.

"It's Not Funny Anymore. Far- Right Extremists' Use of Humour," European Commission RAN. 2020.

Fisher-smith, Amy, Charles R Sullivan, John D Macready, and Geoffrey Manzi. "Identity Reconfiguration and the Core Needs Framework: Exit Narratives among Former Far-Right Extremists." *Journal for Deradicalization*, no. 22 (2020): 1–37.

Recommended Podcast: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-prevent-duty-and-the-united-kingdoms/id1530027387?i=1000507458402>

Week 10: Scrivens, Ryan & Gaudette, Tiana & Conway, Maura & Holt, Thomas. (2022). Right-Wing Extremists' Use of the Internet: Emerging Trends in the Empirical Literature.

Mølmen, Guri Nordtorp, and Jacob Aasland Ravndal. "Mechanisms of Online Radicalisation: How the Internet Affects the Radicalisation of Extreme-Right Lone Actor Terrorists." *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*(2021): 1–25.

Koehler, Daniel. "The Radical Online: Individual Radicalization Processes and the Role of the Internet." *Journal for Deradicalization*, no. 1 (2014): 116–34.

Week 11: Am, Ari Ben, and Gabriel Weimann. "Fabricated Martyrs: The Warrior-Saint Icons of Far-Right Terrorism." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 14, no. 5 (2020): 130–47.

Witt, Taisto. "'If I Cannot Have It, I Will Do Everything I Can to Destroy It.'" the Canonization of Elliot Rodger: "Incel" Masculinities, Secular Sainthood, and Justifications of Ideological Violence." *Social Identities* 26, no. 5 (2020): 675–89.

Langman, Peter. "Different Types of Role Model Influence and Fame Seeking Among Mass Killers and Copycat Offenders." *American Behavioural Scientist* 62, no. 2 (2018): 210–28.

Week 12: No Readings This Week – Work on the policy-brief due before the beginning of class

Course requirements

Students are expected to attend classes, read the required literature *before* each class, and actively participate in discussions. This course has around 50-60 pages of readings each week with some extra recommended podcasts/readings (for anyone interested in the topic or enjoys a different learning style), which makes a weekly working routine a necessity. Also, students are encouraged to stay up-to-date with far-right news, with any recent developments providing potential discussion points during the seminars.

The students' performance in the course will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- **One 15-minute highly analytical presentation (25%)** (+ approx. 10-minute discussion) on a chosen topic based on the weekly material. PowerPoints are not formally required but are welcomed and should be emailed to the lecturer and/or fellow students before class. Formally structured (introduction-argument-core-conclusion-bibliography + three topic-related questions for class discussion. *Note that presentations are to be delivered in due time; they cannot be rescheduled. Failure to deliver an assigned presentation in due time or to provide a good reason for absence from the day of presentation may result in one's disqualification from the course. Should the students have any doubts about the structure or scope of their presentation, they are encouraged to consult the issues with the lecturer beforehand to ensure they score well on the presentation.*
- **Policy Brief (25%):** Students will be divided into groups and provided a scenario (either a current real-world development or a future possibility). This assignment

aims to simulate the work of experts in the field and should be a concise 1000-word policy brief with the following sections: introduction/summary to the problem, potential solutions to the problem, and recommendation(s) of which solutions to apply and why. Important to note, in a 1000-word assignment every word becomes important, so students must ensure concise well-crafted language and avoid needless fluff. Groups will be given the full class session during Week 10 to formulate their work and have till the next week of class to submit the assignment with a late penalty of 10% per day after the submission date. Further information on the scenario will be provided closer to the assignment date.

- **Research papers (40%):** of around 3000 words (the +/- 10% rule to the paper length applies, references included), in Word files, to be uploaded into Moodle), due June 2nd Midnight Central European Time. A late penalty of 10% per day will be applied after the submission date. The lecturer reserves the right to change this policy based on extraordinary circumstances properly evidenced. Research papers must be *original pieces of investigation*, based on the knowledge of the related scholarly literature and centered on innovative research questions. Students are encouraged to contact the lecturer with all questions regarding the paper. Office hours will be given, and students may wish to submit a draft of their work for advice on their research.

In general, the research papers must be in-depth and preferably innovative and argumentative, rather than superficial and descriptive. They should contain references (in any style they wish as long as it is consistent throughout; students should make sure that all references are quoted accurately as the papers are run on Turnitin plagiarism software), be formally organized, and have both general (conceptual and theoretical) and empirical parts. Particular attention should be paid to the interconnectedness of the theoretical and empirical sections, with empirical sections illustrating the theoretical argument. **Research papers shall have the following structure:** *Introduction*, *Conceptualizing* (a brief definition of the studied concept or phenomenon), *General* (sorting out related theories/literature review/presenting one's research questions), *Empirical* (providing empirical evidence), *Conclusion*. The lecturer may assign topics as well if requested on a general topic. Note that the research papers cannot be written on the same topic as your presentation.

- **Active class participation (10%)** based primarily on the discussion of the weekly readings and peer-presentations. Points are assigned by the lecturer and are not up for discussion. Other opportunities for participation grades will be discussed in the introductory session.

Evaluation

A - Excellent 91%-100%

B - Very good 81%-90%

C - Fairly good 71%-80%

D – Poor 61%-70%

E – Very poor 51%-60%

F - Fail 0-50%

<u>Participation (10%)</u>	Excellent	Good	Mixed	Poor	Unsatisfactory
Evidence of preparation					
Understanding of key arguments/texts					
Argumentation					

<u>Presentation (25%)</u>	Excellent	Good	Mixed	Poor	Unsatisfactory
Delivery: speed, eye contact, clarity, audibility, tone					
Content: sets out relevant issues, explains key terms, confident with material, aids understanding					
Structure: logical, easy to follow, provides headings, each section relates to overall purpose					
Use of visual aids: handout or other visual aids, relevant to content					
Questions: Critical questions, willing to answer questions,					

promotes debates/talking points					
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<u>Research paper (40%)</u>	Excellent	Good	Mixed	Poor	Unsatisfactory
Theoretical Justification + Research Question					
Contribution to knowledge + strong argument					
Empirical Findings					
Research (wide base of relevant sources?) + Referencing					
Expression (written clearly in good English?)					
Organisation (well-structured and easy to follow?)					

<u>Policy Brief (25%)</u>	Excellent	Good	Mixed	Poor	Unsatisfactory
Concise Language + Well-Written					
Introduction					
Potential Policies					
Policy Selection and Implications					
Well-researched with proper referencing					

Note that the acquired scores for the presentations, policy-brief, participation, and research papers are not negotiable, either individually or as a total. Nor may they be improved through additional performance unless specifically suggested by the lecturer. Elements of the rubric are weighted according to their importance. Students who showcase their knowledge of the assigned content and produce solid textual and verbal analysis will do very well in the course.

Revise and resubmit policy – like in the world of academia, it is important for authors to understand that writing is a process not designed to be perfect at first go. Thus, any office hours leading up to the submission of the final essay can be used for discussion on the student’s work.

This is not to receive a grade so you can rework it into a better one, but rather to help stimulate your proposed arguments and give advice about the general nature of the paper. Moreover, office hours are there to help you in any academic difficulties relevant to the course or the program. Use them if needed.

Course rules

Any written assignment composed by the student shall be an original piece. The practices of plagiarism, defined by the Dean's Provision no. 18/2015, are seen as "a major violation of the rules of academic ethics" and "will be penalized in accordance with Disciplinary Regulations of the faculty."