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Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?

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Although 'populism' has become something of a buzzword in discussions about politics, it tends to be studied by country or region. This is the first book to offer a genuine cross-regional perspective on populism and its impact on democracy. By analyzing current experiences of populism in Europe and the Americas, this edited volume convincingly demonstrates that populism can be both a threat and a corrective to democracy. The contributors also demonstrate the interesting similarities between right-wing and left-wing populism: both types of populism are prone to defend a political model that is not against democracy per se, but rather at odds with liberal democracy. Populism in Europe and the Americas offers new insights into the current state of democracy from both a theoretical and an empirical point of view.



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Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy? From Cambridge University Press Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #5194397 in Books
- Published on: 2012-05-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.98" h x .79" w x 5.98" l, 1.10 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 270 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser's volume makes conceptual and empirical headway on what is difficult terrain. They sensibly define populism as a "thin-centered" ideology, more akin to a political style that finds highly diverse empirical expressions in conjunction with varying specific circumstances and "thick" beliefs about the correct social and political order. The editors have done a great job assembling a set of case studies with just the right variance to speak to the theoretical question they put front and center, namely the differential consequences of populism for democratic participation and contestation."

Herbert Kitschelt, George V. Allen Professor of International Relations, Duke University

"Does populism do more damage to democracy by undermining pluralism and competition, or more good by boosting participation and inclusion? With its bold cross-regional comparisons, this interesting book establishes the conditions under which each effect prevails and thus provides a new and nuanced answer to this important question."

Kurt Weyland, Department of Government, University of Texas, Austin

"This timely volume helps answer one of the most important questions in the study of populism, namely, how populism and democracy interrelate. Readers will be pleased not only with the book's answer, but with its empirical focus: it tests and refines its theories through case studies that cross several regions. Such an extraordinary comparative perspective not only offers powerful insights into the relationship between populist discourse, incumbency, and democratic consolidation but also demonstrates the carrying capacity of an ideational definition of populism. It shows just how far the study of populism has come in the past decade."

Kirk Hawkins, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Brigham Young University

"Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser lead a team of researchers in an examination of contemporary populism ... This brief summary cannot do justice to the richness of this book. This unusually coherent edited volume is essential reading on the dynamics of democracy."

C. H. Blake, James Madison University, Choice

"Populism in Europe and the Americas is a valuable contribution to the increasingly crowded field of populism studies ... it is unique and ambitious in its aim to test empirically and systematically the effects of populism on democracy in multiple cases ... The case studies are rich in insights and provide substantiation for the conclusion that populism can be a corrective as well as a threat to democracy."

Stijn van Kessel, Journal of Contemporary European Studies

About the Author

Cas Mudde holds a PhD from Leiden University and is currently the Hampton and Esther Boswell Distinguished University Professor of Political Science at DePauw University. His most recent book, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), won the Stein Rokkan Prize and was named a Choice Outstanding Academic Title in 2008.

Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser holds a PhD from the Humboldt University of Berlin, has worked for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB). He is the recipient of the Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowship for a two-year

research project on populism in Europe and Latin America, which he is currently undertaking at the University of Sussex. His research interests include populism, democracy and Latin American politics and his work has been published in Democratization and the Latin American Research Review, among others.

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