The structuring of political conflict in Europe in times of crisis

Hanspeter Kriesi
Seminar Spring 2014

Tuesdays 8:45 AM-10:45 AM, Badia Seminar Room 4

Registration with Maureen Lechleitner (Maureen.Lechleitner@EUI.eu)

Description

This seminar makes an attempt to bring together literature on social movements and on political parties/elections in order to prepare the ground for the understanding of the interaction between protest politics and electoral-party politics in times of crisis. The current economic crisis constitutes the background for this attempt. In several countries, the economic crisis developed into a political crisis and even where it did not do so (yet), it contributed to the erosion of mainstream parties that usually govern. In other words, the Great Recession (or the European debt crisis) not only reinforced economic voting (i.e. the punishment of incumbents), it also serves as the catalyst for the transformation of the established party system in a more fundamental sense.

Searching for tools to understand the current structuration of political conflicts in Europe, the seminar proposes a combination of texts from the two indicated strands of literature. For each one of the two strands, the proposed readings combine (more or less) classic theoretical texts with empirical studies. As far as the latter are concerned, several among them analyze the most recent European developments. Some refer to other parts of the world. Thus, one session in particular tries to bring in the experience of Latin America, where economic crises have given rise to political crises long before the current European experience. In addition, the selection makes an attempt to combine the long-term perspective of the analysis of cleavage and opportunity structures with the short term perspective of the strategies of political actors in the interaction context of an economic and political crisis.

In many respects, this seminar follows up on my previous seminar on ‘the political consequences of the Great Recession’ (Winter 2013), but it is, of course, possible to choose the present seminar without having followed the seminar of the last winter term.

By choosing to take this class you are taking on the obligation to do all the reading. Over the course of the seminar students must submit three 500-word response papers to the readings for a
given session and post that paper on the course website at noon on the day before class. These response papers are fundamental for the holding of a good discussion of the materials, as is a thorough reading of the assigned texts.

Writing a term paper is encouraged. Your term paper should draw on the literature covered in the course but go well beyond it. Those who wish to write a term paper should submit it to me by email and in paper copy, with a cc to Maureen Lechleitner.

Sessions, topics and readings

1. Transformation of cleavage structures (January 7)

2. The mobilization and dynamics of social protest (January 14)

3. Political opportunity structures (January 21)


4. **The expansion of conflict and framing (January 28)**


5. **Party strategies (February 4)**


6. **Economic crises: valence politics and economic voting (February 11)**


7. Political crises: Latin American experience (February 18)

8. Political crises: the European experience (February 25)

9. The rise of the radical right in particular (March 4)
   - Stockemer, Daniel 2013. The Economic Crisis (2009 to 2013) and Electoral Support for the Radical Right – Some new and unexpected findings. *Paper prepared for*
10. Interaction dynamics (March 11)