

The Crisis of Party Democracy: Concept, Cases & Remedies

Course leader: Chris Bickerton (cb799@cam.ac.uk)

<p><u>Class times:</u> Tuesdays, 9 -11am <u>Venue:</u> Bowett Room, Queens' College</p>

This is a comparative politics course focusing on the crisis of political parties and the problems faced by representative government across advanced democracies. The course begins by studying party democracy as a distinctive political regime rooted in 20th century mass politics. It then considers the pressures and challenges faced by party democracy since the 1970s, culminating in the contemporary “populist explosion”. The course focuses on six national cases: the UK, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Italy. The course ends looking at possible remedies to the crisis, including alternatives to political parties.

PART ONE: PARTY DEMOCRACY IN GENERAL

This part of the course looks at the concept of party democracy in general and its historical development over the course of the late 19th and 20th centuries. The approach taken in this part of the course is broad, integrating various national experiences into a set of general discussions and debates about the origins and recent crisis of party democracy.

1: The concept of party democracy

What are the definitions of party democracy, as a concept? How might this type of representative democracy differ from those that came before? What role does the political party play in party democracy? This section considers these questions from a conceptual point of view, remaining at the level of generality.

Katz, Richard and Mair, Peter (1995) ‘Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party’, *Party Politics*, 1:1, 5-28

Manin, Bernard (1997) *Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge)
Chapter 6

2: A history of party democracy

What does party democracy mean in practice? In other words, what is the concrete form that party democracy has taken in individual states, such as Britain, Germany, Italy and France? Which are the parties that were most important in establishing party democracy as a political regime?

Martin Conway (2004) 'The Rise and Fall of Western Europe's Democratic Age', *Contemporary European History*, 13, 67-88

Bickerton, Christopher and Invernizzi Accetti, Carlo (2020) *Technopopulism: The New Logic of Democratic Politics* (Oxford). Chapter 3, section 'The Era of Ideological Politics'.

Further readings:

Bickerton Christopher, Jan-Werner Muller et al. (2022) 'Book forum on Martin Conway's *Western Europe's Democratic Age* <https://tocqueville21.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/T21-Martin-Conway-Forum-Final.pdf>

Judt, Tony (2005) *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (William Heinemann). Chapter 8.

Rosanvallon, Pierre (1998) *Le Peuple Introuvable: Histoire de la représentation démocratique en France*, Paris: Gallimard.

Martin Conway (2020) *Western Europe's Democratic Age, 1945-1968* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press)

3: On the crisis of party democracy

Party democracy - understood as a distinctive regime or phase in representative government – has been in crisis in recent decades. What are the dimensions of this crisis? And what are its causes? How relevant is globalization, European integration and the role of the media? What about cognitive mobilization and the class dealignment?

Peter Mair (2013) *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing Out of Western Democracy* (Verso) Introduction and Chapter 1
Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti (2020) *Technopopulism*. Chapter 3, Section 'Transitions' through to end of chapter.
Conway (2020) *Western Europe's Democratic Age*, Conclusion

Further Reading:

Papadopoulos, Yannis (2013) *Democracy in Crisis? Politics, Governance and Policy* (Palgrave) Chapter 1-4

PART TWO: PARTY DEMOCRACY & CRISIS IN SPECIFIC CASES

This second part of the courses focuses on specific national cases. It looks at how party democracy emerged in specific national contexts and in the differences between countries and their respective party democracy crises. Students are encouraged to reflect on other cases which they may know well and to draw out differences between those and the ones covered in the course. Work for Part Two will take the form of group presentations on country cases followed up by class discussion. Readings provided for these two sessions are not exhaustive. Groups are expected to undertake their own short literature searches and to identify relevant material.

4: Britain & France

Britain

R. T. McKenzie (1955) *British Political Parties: The Distribution of Power within the Conservative and Labour Parties* (London: William Heinemann)
Peter Mair (2000) 'Partyless Democracy: Solving the Paradox of New Labour?', *New Left Review*, Mar/April, <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii2/articles/peter-mair-partyless-democracy>
Richard Katz and William Crotty (eds.) (2006) *Handbook of Party Politics* (London: Sage) Chapter 2.

France

Emilie Chabal (ed.) (2015) *France Since the 1970s: History, Politics and Memory in an Uncertain Age*. London: Bloomsbury.
Helen Drake et al (eds.) (2021) *Developments in French Politics* 6. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

- Andrew Knapp (2004) *Parties and the Party System in France: A Disconnected Democracy?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave)
- Roger Price (2014) *A Concise History of France, Third Edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 7 & 8.
- Richard Vinen (1996) *France 1934-1970*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jonathan Watson. 2001. *The internal dynamics of Gaullism*. Oxford DPhil thesis. https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:18f0271f-c5da-4486-80e9-8c98a1149511/download_file?file_format=pdf&safe_filename=602323312.pdf&type_of_work=Thesis

5: Netherlands & Italy

- P. Corduener (2020) 'Democracy and the Entanglement of Political Parties and the State', *Comparative Political Studies*, 53:1, 40-70
- R. Andeweg and G. Irwin (2009) *Governance and Politics of the Netherlands, 3rd Edition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave) (especially chapter 3)
- K. Luther and K. Deschouwer (eds.) (1999) *Party Elites in Divided Societies* (London: Routledge) see chapters 5 and 9
- Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy* (1990) and *Italy and Its Discontents* (2003) (London: Penguin)

PART THREE: REMEDIES AND DEBATES

6. Remedies to the Crisis

The crisis of party democracy has generated an extensive discussion around how to overcome the crisis, including solutions to the challenges to party democracy and ideas about how to replace party democracy with new forms of political competition. Movements such as the Five Star Movement in Italy and Podemos in Spain presented themselves as alternatives to party democracy, though they have become governing parties themselves.

- Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti (2021) *Technopopulism*, chapter 5.
- Bickerton, Christopher (2022) 'Preface to the second edition of Ruling the Void', in Mair, Peter (2022) *Ruling the Void, 2nd Edition*, London: Verso
- Streeck, Wolfgang (2022) 'in the Superstate: What is technopopulism?', *London Review of Books*, 27 January, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v44/n02/wolfgang-streeck/in-the-superstate>

White, Jonathan and Ypi, Lea (2010) 'Rethinking the Modern Prince: Partisanship and the Democratic Ethos', *Political Studies*, 58:4, 809-828

7. Debating Party Democracy

This final session aims to summarize the themes and cases discussed over the course of the term. This will take the form of a structured class debate around the motion: "Modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of political parties". The class will be split into two groups and each group will prepare to defend or to criticize the motion. The rules of the debate will be explained in the class.