
CALL FOR PAPERS

**Interdisciplinary Conference at the University of Landau
(Germany), 1st to 3rd December, 2017**

Organisers

Kathleen Starck, University of Koblenz-Landau, Landau, Germany
Russell Luyt, University of Greenwich, London, UK

This conference is the latest in a series dedicated toward the topic of political masculinities having first taken place in 2012. It focusses on the theme of “**Political Masculinities and Populism**”. We anticipate that the series will continue with a conference hosted by the University of Greenwich, London, in 2018.

Call for Papers

The conference aims to encourage and develop diverse understanding concerning the relationship between the concepts of political masculinities and populism. In the current political and social climate where media debates are often heated and analysis is in danger of taking second place to (political) opinion, we hope to provide an arena in which to consider the gendered functioning of populist politics and politicians – both past and present – and thereby contribute toward understanding the rise of populism globally in the 21st century.

Populism, which is a modern phenomenon that can be traced back to Russia and the United States of the late 19th century, is a contested political concept, in which some even question its analytic utility (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017: 2). Whilst the term is most often linked with the political right, it has also been associated with left-wing politics. Moreover, scholars from different backgrounds use the term to describe different phenomena. For example, there is a tradition of “liberal populism” in the United States, whereas in Europe this expression would be “a blatant contradiction” (Müller 2016: 9). An understanding of populism as “genuine *egalitarian* left-wing politics” (ibid: 8, original emphasis) is an anathema in much of Europe given liberalism’s alternative association with pluralism.

It is possible, though, to identify some of the concept’s key characteristics. Jan-Werner Müller usefully argues that populists are mostly critical of elites, antipluralist and lay exclusive claim to represent an imagined “people” (4). In short, Müller defines populism as “a particular *moralistic imagination of politics*, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully united – but [...] ultimately fictional – people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior” (19-20, original emphasis).

We define the concept of ‘political masculinities’ broadly. This can relate to any potential actor in the political sphere, including for example, individuals such as activists, insurgents, politicians, political journalists and voters; groups such as political parties, lobbyists, think tanks, trade unions, and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs); and the state, its institutions as well as representatives. We also emphasise ‘hidden’ political

masculinities, such as those associated with global businessmen, as well as political processes and structures and their relation to masculinities.

The most overt link between the concepts of populism and political masculinities lies in the figure of the populist leader. This leader is associated with the “charismatic strongman”, ruling on the basis of “a cult of a leader” and is usually portrayed as masculine and potentially violent (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 63). Thus, there is an emphasis on action and the courage to take difficult decisions, which relies on anti-intellectualism and urgency and is often completed by highlighting the leader’s virility, the use of simple and vulgar language, and, of course, the leader’s charisma (ibid: 64-68). And yet there are also female populist leaders such as Eva Peron (Argentina), Marine LePen (France), Sarah Palin (United States) or Frauke Petri (Germany). Questions therefore arise as to the masculine qualities of populist leaders and populism. How is it possible that women can also embody a populist “strongman”? In addition, there are many studies claiming that particularly the populist right draws its electorate from men (e.g. Harteveld et al. 2015). But, we have just witnessed a large proportion of women voting for the 45th President of the United States, and there are also studies claiming that the gender gap in voting for right-wing populists is often overemphasised (Spierings & Zaslove 2015). How do we begin reconciling such seeming contradictions? This conference aims to explore some of the following questions:

- To what extent are the concepts of populism and masculinities co-constructed and mutually reinforcing?
- Does masculine populism also exist outside party and/or national politics?
- Does populist charisma differ in its masculinity from other forms of charisma?
- What role do masculine identities play for supporters of populism?
- Is populism more masculine in some (national/historical) contexts than others?
- How is populist masculinity/masculine populism performed?
- Where does populist masculinity originate historically?
- In what way do different national populisms produce similar or diverging forms of political masculinities?
- What (political) masculinities are excluded by populism and how is this achieved?
- In how far is populist governance masculine?

This list is not exhaustive. We aim to stimulate debate within and between disciplines and welcome the submission of empirical and theoretical papers from across the full spectrum of gender studies. This may include, but is not limited to, work in the arts, humanities, social sciences and sciences.

Proposals

Please send proposals of no more than 250 words, including your name and affiliation to: starck@uni-landau.de or r.luyt@greenwich.ac.uk by **31 March, 2017**.

For further details concerning the conference including the registration process see:

[www.uni-koblenz-landau.de/de/landau/fb6/philologien/anglistik/Page/Research/PolMascCon/Polmasc 2017](http://www.uni-koblenz-landau.de/de/landau/fb6/philologien/anglistik/Page/Research/PolMascCon/Polmasc%202017)