

4. European populism and immigration

KEY TERMS

Brexit: an abbreviation for “Britain” and “exit”, which refers to the 2016 referendum vote in which a majority decided that the UK will leave the European Union, pending negotiations due in March of 2019.

elite: in political and sociological terms, the elite are small groups of people who exercise disproportionate power and influence, often indicating more privilege in education, wealth, and/or social status.

economic migrant: a person who travels from one country or area to another to improve their standard of living because living conditions or job opportunities in his or her own region are insufficient.

liberal world order: established in the aftermath of World War II and led by the U.S., it is based on the rule of law and respect for countries’ sovereignty to promote international free-trade and protect human rights.

nativism: a policy of favoring native inhabitants as opposed to immigrants.

neo-Nazi movement: post-World War II political movement seeking to revive values established by the Nazi party, promote hatred, attack minorities, and in some cases to create a fascist political state.

populism: a political movement that champions the common person, usually by favorable contrast with an elite

pluralism: the view that in liberal democracies power should be dispersed among a variety of a variety of economic and ideological pressure groups, not held by a single elite group and assumed that diversity is beneficial to society.

refugee: a person who has been forced to leave their country to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

xenophobia: fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign

The following lessons were written by Leah Graham McFarlane, M.Ed in English and social studies. She is a teacher in Arlington County Public Schools, VA.

LESSON ONE

Student Objectives

Upon completion, students will be able to:

- Compare approaches to populist politics in two or more countries in Europe
- Interpret statistics to determine future of the populist movement

Materials

- *Great Decisions* article: “European populism and immigration”
- Classroom set of Handout #4-A: Populism in Europe”
- Access to online sources if additional research is required

Time

One 45-minute class period

Lesson Development

1. Warm-up: Before assigning the article, ask students to share assumptions they make about the term populism. Present the basic definition—support or concern for the ordinary people—with the modern political movement that includes distrust of the Establishment.
2. Instruct students to read the article and annotate details related to specific populist movements in EU countries.
3. Then ask students to collect information about the populist movements of two countries of their choice.
4. Closing/Assessment: Invite students to share their opinions in a discussion or in writing about conclusions they drew regarding Ivan Krastev’s warning: “In democratic politics, perceptions are the only reality that matters” (p. 53).

Additional Suggestions:

- Consider requiring students to compare Sweden, presented in greatest detail in the article, with one other country. In addition, consider inviting representatives to incorporate the United States as an example to compare with the movement in the EU.
- Encourage students to incorporate news reports about political rallies to enhance their understanding of the tools of persuasion used to build support.
- Additional research options might include: comparison of refugee vs. economic migrant numbers, integration plans, employment opportunities by region.

LESSON TWO

Student Objectives

Upon completion, students will be able to:

- Identify the principles of a democratic society
- Support a plan that reconciles goals of the liberal world order with populist ideals

Materials

- *Great Decisions* article: “Populism in Europe”
- Classroom set of Handout #4-B: Populism vs. Liberal World Order”
- Online access to European Union Goals and Values
https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief_en news sources
- Online access to major news outlets

Time

Two 45-minute class periods

Lesson Development

1. Warm-up: Pass out “Handout 4-B: Populism vs. Liberal World Order” and ask students to share responses to the following claim, “To save liberal democracy from its illiberal antagonists, they will need to decouple the highly charged subject of immigration from its suite of metrics...” (Kirchick, 57).
2. Next, assign students to work in groups of three to four and divide steps of Handout 4-B between them by exploring the content of the article, the European Union website, and major news sources.
3. Once groups have collected sufficient supporting evidence, they should compose a political message that aims to address democratic principles with recent concerns constituents. Depending on time, students can complete this in writing, oral presentation, or a multi-media message.
4. Assessment: Provide an arena in class for each group to share products. Allow time for students to reflect, comment, and critique the messages for adherence to democratic values. Ask them to predict success among a wide range of voters.

Additional Suggestions

- To condense presentation time, require groups to share their media messages online before the in-class discussion and critique.
- Make connections to the current political climate in the United States, especially in the analysis of ways in which populism will affect international affairs.

Handout #4-A

Populism in Europe

Using the article “*Populism in Europe*” and additional research, compare the rise of populism in two countries to gain a stronger sense of reality verses perception.

	EU Country #1:	EU Country #2
Elections and populist leaders		
Immigration statistics since 2016		
Impact on employment and human services, crime, etc.		
Voter opinions		
Campaign promises		

Conclusion: Discuss ways in which your examination of the populist movement in Europe supports or opposes this statement: “In democratic politics, perceptions are the only reality that matters” (p. 53).

Handout #4-B

Populism vs. Liberal World Order

“To save liberal democracy from its illiberal antagonists, they will need to decouple the highly charged subject of immigration from its suite of metrics...” (p. 57)

1. Summarize what the author of “Populism in Europe”, James Kirchick, describes as a liberal democracy.	2. Record relevant items from the list of European Union Goals and Values.
3. Collect statements made by President of the European Council Donald Tusk as he addresses challenges made by right-wing populist candidates.	4. Predict global outcomes if populism continues to rise in the years to come.

Assessment: Compose a letter, speech, or media message that aims to instill faith in the far-right movements while maintaining the values set forth by the European Union.