**Leader Democracy: The Orbán Regime and Beyond**

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**Course description**

In recent years substantial international attention has been paid to the Hungarian political changes that have taken place since 2010. While there is a wide-ranging consensus among scholars that Hungary is not a liberal democracy anymore, to answer the question what it is seems much more difficult. We have witnessed a proliferation of labels in recent years, ranging from more optimistic terms such as „illiberal democracy” or „populist democracy” to harsher labels such as „autocracy” or „operetta dictatorship”.

The course presents the Weberian theory of (plebiscitary) leader democracy as an alternative to the above mentioned interpretations, arguing that this theory – somewhat enhanced and adapted to contemporary circumstances – supplies us with the best conceptual resources to grasp the functioning of the Orbán regime. Additionally, the theory can yield further benefits by helping us to understand phenomena which are present beyond the borders of Hungary, some of them even in Western liberal democracies.

Therefore, the **aim of the course** is twofold: first, to introduce the students to contemporary Hungarian politics; second, to acquaint them with a strand of democratic theory which includes – among others – Max Weber, Joseph Schumpeter, and such contemporary authors as Jeffrey Green and András Körösényi.

Students are **not expected to have previous knowledge** on the topic, but an interest in Hungarian politics and democratic theory comes in handy. They should also be prepared to read weekly mandatory academic readings, which we will discuss in class.

**Course schedule**

(Session 1) *Introduction*: getting to know each other. Weekly readings and course structure may slightly change to fit the expectations and previous knowledge of students.

(Sessions 2–3) *Context*: The Hungarian context (from the 1990 transition to the emergence of the Orbán regime), the dominant interpretations of the Orbán regime (populism and the hybrid regime approach)

(Sessions 4–6) *Theory*: Introduction to the theory of leader democracy

(Sessions 7–10) *Application*: The Orbán regime as leader democracy

(Sessions 11–12) *Comparisons*: The relevance of leader democracy beyond Hungary

**Assessment**

As discussing mandatory readings is an important part of the course, students may **miss maximum 3 classes** during the semester. **Active participation** in the discussions will provide 10% of the grade.

Each student has to deliver a **presentation** about a chosen topic during the semester. The presentation will provide 30% of the grade.

There will be an online, **open book written exam** at the end of semester, consisting of short essays. The exam will provide 60% of the grade.

**Literature**

There is no set textbook, but we will most often read chapters from books or journal articles that cover the topic of leader democracy during the course, such as:

Green, Jeffrey E. (2010): *The Eyes of the People. Democracy in an Age of Spectatorship,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Körösényi, András (2019): “The Theory and Practice of Plebiscitary Leadership: Weber and the Orbán regime.” *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 33 (2): 280–301.

Körösényi, András, Gábor Illés and Attila Gyulai (2020): *The Orbán Regime: Plebiscitary Leader Democracy in the Making*, London: Routledge.

Pakulski, Jan and András Körösényi (2012): *Toward Leader Democracy,* London, New York and Delhi: Anthem Press.

Scott, Alan (2018): “(Plebiscitary) Leader Democracy.” *Thesis Eleven*, 148 (1): 3–20.

Additionally, pieces of the contemporary populism and hybrid regime literature and comparative articles will also be featured during the course, as well as non-academic sources (such as political speeches, interviews, biographies or political commentaries). An illustrative list of possible further readings includes:

Bogaards, Matthijs (2018): “De-democratization in Hungary: diffusely defective democracy.” *Democratization,* 25 (8): 1481-1499. DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2018.1485015

Bozóki, András and Dániel Hegedűs (2018) “An externally constrained hybrid regime: Hungary in the European Union.” *Democratization*, 25 (7): 1173–1189. DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2018.1455664

Casullo, María Esperanza (2020): “Populism and Myth.” in *The Populist Manifesto,* eds. Emmy Eklundh and Andy Knott. Rowman & Littlefield. 25–38.

Enyedi, Zsolt (2016b): “Paternalist populism and illiberal elitism in Central Europe.” *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 21 (1): 9–25.

Janke, Igor (2015): *Forward! – The story of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán*, Budapest: Aeramentum Ltd.

Körösényi, András and Veronika Patkós (2017a): “Variations for Inspirational Leadership: The Incumbency of Berlusconi and Orbán.” *Parliamentary Affairs*, 70 (3): 611–632. [DOI: 10.1093/pa/gsx004](https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsx004)

Moffitt, Benjamin (2016): *The Global Rise of Populism*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Sata, Robert and Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski (2019): “Caesarean politics in Hungary and Poland.” *East European Politics*, DOI: 10.1080/21599165.2019.1703694

Viktor Orbán’s yearly Tusnádfürdő speeches (available in English)