

Call For Proposals for an edited volume

Working Title: Populism and Political Philosophy: Essays in the History of Political Thought
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Although populism entered the public imagination in 2016 with the Brexit referendum and Donald Trump's first presidential victory, it has been a powerful political force for much longer. Despite a resurgence in recent years, it can in fact be thought of as a blend of the old and the new. Modern methods of mass communication have allowed for more direct communication with and mobilization of "the people" themselves outside of traditional institutions. Modern individualism and the desire for autonomy provide a fertile ground for the anti-institutionalism of populist movements that claim to restore the authentic voice of the people. The last century of Latin American politics, for example, has been defined by an enduring tradition of populism from both the left and right.¹ Some of these populist leaders and their successors have proved impossible for powerful states to ignore; as an example, we need look no further than Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and his successor, Nicholas Maduro. Nevertheless, demagogues who whip the people into a frenzy with the clever use of flattery, sophistry, and false promises have been a feature of political life for millennia. See, for example, the central role of the demagogic sophist throughout Plato's corpus. Populism thus speaks to perennial political possibilities while revealing to us something about the character of modernity.² In addition to spanning eras, it is a global phenomenon that merits attention from all traditions of thought.

Perhaps due to its undeniable influence over recent politics, populism has received no shortage of scholarly attention.³ The body of social science literature on populism is varied, leading some to the conclusion that it is an essentially contested concept.⁴ Debates abound regarding whether it should be treated as an ideology, a political style, a critique of elite – or high – culture, or something else. Moreover, since it lends itself to a distrust in political institutions, scholars disagree about its relationship with democracy, dictatorship, and other political possibilities. There has hitherto been little scholarly work explicitly bringing these issues into dialogue with influential thinkers in the history of political thought. This volume seeks to address this gap – without necessarily resolving the social scientific disputes themselves – by bringing together essays that explore themes related to populism in the work of such thinkers.

In light of the aforementioned global nature of the phenomenon, this volume aims to gather essays on thinkers from multiple traditions and continents in addition to major thinkers in the western canon. Each chapter should focus on a particular thinker, drawing out themes, lines of argument, or other elements that are faithful to the original text while illuminating the phenomenon of populism. Of particular interest are chapters that explicitly address the "so what?" question. For example, in what ways does the analysis of populism by thinker X shed new light on populism or related themes? Does turning to a particular thinker point the way to a path out of or beyond our populist moment, or alternatively help us to understand the potential virtues of populism in a way not currently given voice by the existing literature? More generally, how does the engagement with your chosen thinker contribute to, challenge, or compliment existing literature on the topic?

Proposals for chapters that address these and other related themes as treated by major thinkers (broadly defined and representing diverse perspectives and backgrounds) are warmly invited:

- Populism and nationalism

- Populism and democracy
- Populism and tyranny
- Populism's relationship to modernity
- The nature/character of "the people"
- Political institutions
- Demagoguery, sophistry, rhetoric
- Technology, social media and modern communication methods
- The causes and effects of inequality, and its contribution to the appeal of populism
- Religion and populism
- Any other themes that are salient to our understanding of populism

Engagement with scholarship on comparative politics and the reality of populism on the ground is welcomed, but each chapter should be centered around a faithful and critical engagement with a key figure in the history of political thought. In order to give a fulsome account of the global phenomenon of populism, proposals for chapters on non-western political thinkers, or western thinkers that are often ignored, are particularly welcome.

Proposals should be roughly 250-350 words, and must be emailed to Tyler.Chamberlain@twu.ca along with a CV on or before May 1, 2026. Depending on the number of and possible thematic overlap between submissions, decisions will be made on the basis of proposal quality and overall "fit" within the volume, as described above.

Chapters should be between 6,000 and 9,000 words. The due date for chapter drafts will be determined and communicated once the book proposal has been accepted by a publisher. At this point, I am aiming for a draft deadline in September 2026. Final versions will be due at some point after that once I have reviewed the drafts.

[I have received an expression of interest from a reputable scholarly publisher, though a final confirmation will be communicated after the full proposal is submitted, peer-reviewed, and accepted.]

¹ Felipe Burbana de Lara (2019). "Populist Waves in Latin America: Continuities, Twists, and Ruptures." In: De La Torre C., ed., (2019) *Routledge Handbook of Global Populism*. London: Routledge, p. 435-450.

² Haig Patapan (2019). "On populists and demagogues." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 52(4): 743–59.

³ Notable examples include the following: Jan-Werner Müller (2016). *What is Populism?* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; Rovira Kaltwasser C. et al., eds. (2017) *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; De La Torre C., ed., (2019) *Routledge Handbook of Global Populism*. London: Routledge; William Galston (2018). *Anti-Pluralism: The Populist Threat to Liberal Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Pippa Norris and Ronald Ingelhart (2019). *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴ Mudde C. (2017). "Populism: an ideational approach." In: Rovira Kaltwasser C et al., eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 27.