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Résumé des cours et travaux



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THE FEAR OF SHRINKING NUMBERS. DEMOCRACY, DEMOGRAPHY AND THE EAST-WEST DIVIDE IN EUROPE / L'ANGOISSE DU DÉCLIN. DÉMOCRATIE, DÉMOGRAPHIE ET CLIVAGE EST-OUEST EN EUROPE

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Cycle de quatre conférences prononcées entre le 6 et le 14 octobre 2021, dans le cadre du cycle Europe dont le thème général de l'année universitaire était « The two Europes/Les deux Europes » (sur invitation des professeurs Samantha Besson, Edith Heard, Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge et Thomas Römer) disponibles en audio et vidéo sur le site internet du Collège de France : <https://www.college-de-france.fr/fr/agenda/conferencier-invite/the-fear-of-shrinking-numbers-democracy-demography-and-the-east-west-divide-in-europe>.

Electing a government is what people do in a democracy, but governments also tend to choose the people who will elect them. They do it by designing citizenship laws and electoral laws, by crafting immigration regimes and by employing practices like gerrymandering and voters' suppression.

The suggested lectures series discuss the ways in which the shrinking ethnocultural majorities in the EU member states try to preserve their power and identity in the face of population decline and increasing migration.

It argues that the clash between liberalism and illiberalism in Europe today is a contest between two contrasting ideals of the “people” that various governments want to elect. Liberalism is a vote for an inclusive body politic representing the diverse nature of modern societies. Illiberalism is an exercise in democratic majoritarianism for the purpose of preserving the ethnic character of national democracies.

**LECTURE 1 – HOW IMPORTANT IS THE EAST-WEST DIVIDE
IN EUROPE?**

The 6th october 2021

Europe is a complicated maze with many fault lines and internal divisions.

This introductory lecture focuses on several of the fault lines in today's Europe: the *North-South Divide*; the *Density Divide* (gap in cultural values and electoral preferences between people living in Europe's metropolitan areas and the rural areas); the *Generation Divide*. It argues that while bridging all those divides is critically important for the future of the European Union, it is the *East-West divide* that will have most importance for the preservation of the European Union as a liberal-democratic space.

LECTURE 2 – DEMOCRATIZATION AND ETHNIC (DE)HOMOGENIZATION

The 7th October 2021

The second lecture focuses on the centrality of the demographic factor in explaining the transformation of European liberal democracies and European welfare states. It argues that while until recently, the relationship between democracy and demography was usually thought of in Malthusian terms (too many people and not enough resources), the demographic shock voiced in parts of Europe today is radically different. It is caused by political fears of demographic decline, depopulation, and a widening gap in opportunities and social attitudes between metropolitan centers and outlying areas. The picture is especially bleak in Central and Eastern Europe, where fertility is low and outmigration is high. The UN estimates that since the 1990s, the nations of this region have lost about 6 percent of their collective population, or about eighteen-million persons. If these people formed a country, it would be nearly as populous as the Czech Republic and Hungary combined.

The lecture discusses the diverging paths of ethnic homogenization and ethnic diversity in the West of Europe and the East of Europe since World War I and its significance in explaining the nature of Central European populism of today.

LECTURE 3 – LIBERAL AND ILLIBERAL PROJECTS IN TODAY'S EUROPE

The 13th October 2021

This lecture defines liberalism and illiberalism as two distinct responses to the changing demographic structure of European societies.

In a democracy, the most existential collective right is the right to exclude. Democracy is preconditioned on the right of the democratic political community to decide who can and who cannot be a member. How you define the right to exclude is what distinguishes liberal from illiberal democracies.

European liberal project focus on the protection of the rights of minorities as the way to manage diversity at a time when a growing number of migrants are coming from outside Europe.

The illiberal project in Europe, associated with the current governments of Hungary and Poland, is about preserving the ethnic state in rapidly diversifying societies. The European illiberalism of the twenty-first century is not the second coming of nineteenth- or twentieth-century European nationalism. It is not about gathering all Bulgarians, Hungarians, or Poles into their own respective territorial political entities. It is about preserving the ethnic homogeneity of the electoral body while accepting the need to open its labor market to foreigners.

LECTURE 4 - DIVERGENCE OR CONVERGENCE?

The 14th october 2021

The concluding lecture examines the future of the East-West Divide. It tries to analyze the conditions under which Central European societies will adopt the values and norms that are more common to the Western societies and under what kind of conditions Central European style illiberalism could get support in the West. The lecture argues that the ways in which the shrinking ethnocultural majorities in the EU member states try to preserve their power and identity in the face of population decline and increasing migration will be defining factor in shaping both the future of the European Union and the nature of European democracies.
