

**CIVICA HONOUR SEMINAR – WINTER 2025 @ IE UNIVERSITY  
JANUARY 27<sup>TH</sup> – 30<sup>TH</sup> , 2025**

**“DEMOCRACY AND MISINFORMATION”**

**COURSE INSTRUCTORS**

**D.J. Flynn** <https://www.ie.edu/university/about/faculty/d-j-flynn/>

D.J. Flynn is Assistant Professor of Political Science in the School of Politics, Economics, and Global Affairs at IE. His research examines the causes and consequences of misinformation about politics and public health. This research has been published in academic journals such as Science Advances, Advances in Political Psychology, and the British Journal of Political Science and funded by the Caixa Foundation (Spain), National Science Foundation (USA), and National Academy of Sciences (USA). He teaches courses on public opinion, political behavior, and quantitative methods.

**Nina Wiesehomeier** <https://www.ie.edu/university/about/faculty/nina-wiesehomeier/>

Nina Wiesehomeier is Associate Professor of Comparative Politics in the School of Politics, Economics, and Global Affairs at IE. Her research interests fall into the area of comparative politics and evolve around political parties, political institutions, women representation, ideology and issues of political representation, political preferences, and political behavior. She is also part of Team Populism, a network studying the causes and consequences of populism, where she leads the team on expert surveys. Her research has been published in academic journals such as Public Opinion Quarterly, the Journal of Politics, or the American Journal of Political Science.

**BRIEF OVERVIEW/DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTENT**

Populism and misinformation are among the most widely recognized social and political challenges for democracy in our era. Misinformation can distort public opinion, complicate policy efforts to address pressing crises like climate change and infectious disease, and decrease trust in democratic institutions. Populist actors have been found to use misinformation and to undermine democratic processes. When do these potential threats occur and how can we address them? In this seminar, we will discuss the causes and consequences of populism, misinformation, and the effectiveness of policy responses. In an effort to maximize discussion and engagement, we have selected a limited number of readings that speak to real world challenges.

**REQUIRED BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE/PREREQUISITES FOR STUDENTS' SELECTION**

Foundational understanding of social science methods, especially experiments (also known as randomized controlled trials). Students unfamiliar with experiments should read the following before our first session:

Druckman. 2011. “Experiments: An introduction to core concepts.” In Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science.

Students are required to complete all assigned readings. This is critical to the success of this seminar, which seeks to maximize discussion rather than lecture.

Students are required to present in the final policy challenge.

It is mandatory to obtain approval from their respective Program Management Team to participate.

Willingness to participate in group discussions and debates, ensuring active involvement and contribution to the learning environment.

## SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

\*Agenda may be subject to changes

IE CIVICA Honour Seminar - Winter 2025 Agenda January 27 - 30 2025 - Classroom TBC					
	Monday 27-01-25	Tuesday 28-01-25	Wednesday 29-01-25	Thursday 30-01-25	
Building	C/ María de Molina 31		C/ María de Molina 31	C/ María de Molina 31	C/ María de Molina 31 / IE Tower
9:00					9:00
9:30	Opening & Introduction Session	Lecture 3	Lecture 6	Presentations Policy Challenge	9:30
10:00					10:00
10:30	Coffee Break	30 min Break	30 min Break	30 min Break	10:30
11:00					11:00
11:30	Lecture 1	Lecture 4	Lecture 7	Presentations Policy Challenge	11:30
12:00					12:00
12:30					12:30
13:00	TIME FOR TEAMWORK & LUNCH				13:00
13:30				Wrap-Up and Takeaways	13:30
14:00					14:00
14:30	Lecture 2	Lecture 5	Time for preparation for Policy Challenge (optional)	Networking Cocktail	14:30
15:00					15:00
15:30					15:30
16:00		Move to visit			16:00
16:30					16:30
17:00		Seminar/Institutional Visit	Time for preparation for Policy Challenge (optional)		17:00
17:30	Move to meeting point				
18:00					18:00
18:30	Cultural Activity				18:30
19:00					19:00
19:30		Time for preparation for Policy Challenge (optional)			19:30
20:00					20:00
20:30					20:30
21:00					21:00
21:30					21:30

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## DETAILED SESSIONS OUTLINE

Lecture	Content	Instructor
1.	Preliminaries (introduction to misinformation, populism, & experiments)	D.J. Flynn, Nina Wiesehomeier
2.	Populism and democracy	Nina Wiesehomeier
3.	Populist voters	Nina Wiesehomeier
4.	Populism and misinformation	Nina Wiesehomeier
5.	Misinformation and support for democracy	D.J. Flynn
6.	Fake news	D.J. Flynn
7.	Policy responses: digital literacy	D.J. Flynn
8-9	Final presentations	D.J. Flynn, Nina Wiesehomeier

## MANDATORY READINGS

**Note:** It is essential that students complete the assigned readings before each session. Please complete readings in the order listed below.

### Lecture 1 (preliminaries)

- Flynn et al. (2017). "The nature and origins of misperceptions: Understanding false and unsupported beliefs about politics." *Advances in Political Psychology*.
- Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou (2024). "Conceptualizations of populism." In: Robert A. Huber and Michael Jankowski. *Populism: An Introduction*. Sage.

### Lecture 2 (populism and democracy)

- Ruth-Lovell & Grahn (2023). "Threat or corrective to democracy? The relationship between populism and different models of democracy." *European Journal of Political Research*.
- Canovan (1999). "Trust the people! Populism and the two faces of democracy." *Political Studies*.

### Lecture 3 (populist voters)

- Wiesehomeier et al. (forthcoming). "Conditional populist party support: The role of dissatisfaction and incumbency." *Latin American Research Review*
- Wiesehomeier and Singer (2024). "Populism and understandings of democracy." In: Chrysosgelos et al. *The Ideational Approach to Populism, Volume II. Consequences and Mitigation*.

### Lecture 4 (populism and misinformation)

- van Kessel et al. 2020. "Informed, uninformed or misinformed? A cross-national analysis of populist party supporters across European democracies." *West European Politics*.
- Castanho Silva et al (2017). "The Elite Is Up to Something: Exploring the Relation Between Populism and Belief in Conspiracy Theories." *Swiss Political Science Review*.

### Lecture 5 (misinformation and support for democracy)

- Acemoglu et al. 2024. "Misperceptions and demand for democracy under authoritarianism." Unpublished paper. Available at <https://www.nber.org/papers/w33018>.
- Voelkel et al. 2024. "Megastudy testing 25 treatments to reduce antidemocratic attitudes and partisan animosity." *Science*.

### Lecture 6 (fake news)

- Baribi-Bartov et al. 2024. "Super sharers of fake news on Twitter." *Science*.
- Guess et al. 2020. "'Fake news' may have limited effects beyond increasing beliefs in false claims." *HKS Misinformation Review*.

### Lecture 7 (policy responses: digital literacy)

- Guess et al. 2019. "A digital media literacy intervention increases discernment between mainstream and false news in the United States and India." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.
- Ali and Qazi. 2023. "Countering misinformation on social media through educational interventions: Evidence from a randomized experiment in Pakistan." *Journal of Development Economics*.