From the syllabus: The research essay will be on a topic of your own choosing and should be approximately 2500-3000 words (10-12 pages double spaced, 12 pt. font). You will be required to submit both a rough and final draft of your essay. I will review the first draft of the essay and give you detailed critique, much like a reviewer would if this were an article submitted to a journal. This might include ways to nuance your argument, change your focus, reorganize the structure or add further literature or theories. You will be asked to take these revisions into consideration in the final draft of the essay. When you submit your essay, you will also need to submit a response to the reviewer that details the changes you made (and the ones that you rejected making) and the ways in which you feel you have addressed their critiques. You will be graded on each of these stages (rough draft, final draft and response to the reviewer). Again, I will provide you with more guidelines and a rubric to help you to understand what I am looking for.

Rubric for the Final Research Essay - POLS 3521

Topic Choice and Introduction	Is the topic clearly stated? Introduce the topic with some general background information (i.e. show why this is an important topic/question). Clear thesis that argues a position.	/10
Outline and Organization	Include a paragraph that shows what you will argue and how (i.e. the steps or sections of the argument). Make sure you follow this outline in the essay. Ideally, refer back to the thesis as you proceed through these steps.	/20
Argument and Evidence	At least three main ideas to support the thesis? Give evidence (academic sources) for each idea. Show how this idea is connected to the overall argument. Comment on the importance/impact of the evidence to your overall argument. The ideas flow logically from one argument to the next.	/30
Conclusion	Use the conclusion to tie the different threads together (i.e. show how these three ideas	/10

	prove your thesis). Restate the thesis (ideally not in the same words). Could also show what questions or related issues are still unanswered/unclear.	
References and Citations	Use in-text citations or footnotes/endnotes using correct citation technique (use SPARK from York library if unclear). Reference list at the end includes only those works cited in the text. Formatted correctly using MLA, Chicago, APA or similar. Adequate number of sources for the argument made (8-10 sources)?	/15
Style and Grammar	Clearly written. No typos, grammar or spelling mistakes (ESL will be taken into consideration). Varied use of language? Good choice of words. Little repetition. Correct length (approx. 2500 words)	/15

* There is no additional rubric for the response to the reviewer. The response should be added to the beginning or end of the final essay. It should address the key points that the reviewer made and show either how you incorporated these ideas, or why you feel that these revisions were not necessary. It will likely be between 1 and 3 pages double spaced.

The Rise of the European Right: Euroscepticism, Neoliberalism, and the Migrant "Crisis"

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Introduction:

The European Union (EU) presently finds itself at a crossroads. Internal polling suggests that, on average, 20% of citizens view the supranational institution in a negative light while 34% are pessimistic over the Union's future (European Union, 2019b, 2019c). Albeit a minority, this aggregate view varies at the national level, manifesting in the election of many right-wing leaders seeking to drum-up or ride the wave of Euroscepticism to power. To do so, they have harnessed general concerns over immigration, security, and the economy and have pinned them on the "failures" of EU policies (Mudde, 2019). The supranational institution has thus proven to be an effective scapegoat for wider national ills and shifts in the global economy. Polling across Europe, at both the domestic and EU levels, reflect this trend. In Italy, the Lega Nord and neo-fascist Brothers of Italy account for 40% of the intended vote; in France, National Front leader Marine Le Pen has enjoyed continued popularity; Germany's AfD has surged by as much as 10% in the 2017 election; and, while Nigel Farage's Brexit Party has faded in relevance, it has succeeded in getting the country out of the European Union (Politico 2021b, 2021c, 2021d). Meanwhile, support for the Eurosceptic Identity and Democracy Party has captured 76 seats in the European Parliament during the 2019 election, up from the 46 positions previously held (Politico, 2021a).

Xenophobic beliefs are more palatable in times of economic crisis, as is the rhetoric of populist leaders (Kuntz, et al., 2017). Polling, moreover, substantiates this trend. In the case of Italy, France, and Germany, concerns over immigration rank alongside financial issues, like unemployment, the cost of living, and the status of the economy (European Union, 2019a). This means that an analysis of the migrant crisis alone is insufficient in understanding the factors that have contributed to the rise of the populist right. While it has proved an effective springboard to power, citizens' appetite for xenophobia is tied directly to how they perceive themselves and their standard of living (Bush, 2007).

The rise of the right, however, is not an anomaly that has risen out of the recent surge of migrant hysteria or discontentment with the EU. Rather, it is a reflection of a broader, more complex relationship. To understand it, this essay will begin by examining the neoliberalization of the EU. Once established, it will look at its implications on economic growth and the rolling-back of the welfare state. A key component of this analysis, and the overall neoliberalization of the Union, is an understanding of the legal and legislative mechanisms used to enforce this mandate. While the rolling back of worker protections, for example, is viewed as a member-state responsibility, the Union wields significant power under the onus of promoting competition and integration. Cumulatively, these policies have eroded the standard of living and have fuelled sentiments of Euroscepticism and xenophobia. These conditions have laid the foundation for the populist right, which seeks to both capitalize and stoke these attitudes. As such, the EU represents an inherently neoliberal institution, whose consensus has enabled the rise of the populist right.

Neoliberalism and EU Policy:

The Washington Consensus marked a shift in economic policy from the welfare state Keynesian model to the austerity-based neoliberal regime. With it, states receded from the market, seeking to liberalize trade and create conditions favourable to the accumulation of capital. While this facilitated the consolidation of wealth in the hands of the elite, it yielded minimal returns to the states and citizens who pursued these policies. EU member-states, on average, witnessed a decline in economic growth and increase in unemployment from the 1960s to 2007 (Rothschild, 2009). On a state-by-state basis, the most significant losses were from Western European countries, which were most open in their embrace of the neoliberal regime (Rothschild, 2009). This increase in economic instability provides the conditions for the far-right to thrive. Before further establishing this relationship, it is important to understand the EU's role in the expansion of neoliberalism across the continent.

The EU was founded with the mandate of promoting economic and political cooperation. While an inherently liberal institution, the framing of policy and the interpretation of treaties has coincided with the dominant economic mantra of the time. During the Keynesian period, for example, the European Economic Community, the predecessor to the EU, was geared towards balancing the interests of labour and capital by allowing state intervention and planning (Wigger & Buch-Hansen, 2014). This stance is reflected in the Articles of the Treaty of Rome (1957). While the goal was to create an economic community, state aid was permitted to cope with market adjustments, with an underlying belief that "...limiting competition would lead to a reduction of the influence of market forces on states…" (Brunet-Jailly et al., 2018, p. 257). This latter point is reflexive of Keynesian logic, where liberalism was embedded and designed to balance class interests.

The economic crisis of the 1970s, however, facilitated the resurgence of neoclassical theory. International pressures stemming from the Washington Consensus of the 1980s, coupled with the "there is no alternative" rhetoric of Margaret Thatcher, signified a pivot in EU policy (Farrand & Rizzi, 2019, pp. 27, 39). Pre-existing European laws were either strengthened or more stringently enforced to achieve this end. As Farrand and Rizzi (2019) argue, the European Court of Justice was paramount to the establishment of a market-based logic through its primacy over national jurisdictions in rulings. At its core was Article 107 of the Treaty of Rome, designed to ensure "...that aid granted by a Member State or through State resources does not distort competition and trade within the EU" (European Commission, 2015). Before delving further, it is important to acknowledge how enforcement of this policy changed through the neoliberal shift. As was noted, the Union has always been a liberal institution designed to create an economic community. While Article 107 was in the original Treaty of Rome, it was seldom used during the Keynesian period, where state aid and intervention were viewed as essential to the functionality of capitalism (Wigger &

Buch-Hansen, 2014). With this legal framework already in place, all that was required for the neoliberal order was an increase in enforcement.

Increased economic integration and competition seem antithetical to one another, yet the two remained at the core of the neoliberal agenda. From the 1990s onwards, the European Commission "...began to issue privatisation directives, abolishing the long-standing public monopolies in key utility sectors...which...were [previously] granted exemptions on the basis of public interest..." (Wigger & Buch-Hansen, 2014, p. 121). The embedding of the new ideology via legal or policy means is what Gill (1998) refers to as "New Constitutionalism" and is reflected in the EU's efforts to legitimize and impose the neoliberal framework. This trend was further expanded via the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty. Each entailed a more liberalized, market-based logic, culminating in the creation of the European Monetary Union (EMU) and single currency. As Farrand and Rizzi (2019) point out, the consent of member-states to such provisions reflects a wider neoliberal consensus that market intervention should be legally prohibited. Gill (1998) goes further in arguing that the EMU forces adherence to strict fiscal conservatism, entrenching the mantras of economic competition and capital liberalization.

Connecting the Dots: Neoliberalism and its Implications:

In light of the Union's affinity for the neoliberal regime, and given its devastating economic implications, the supranational institution can, in a way, be accused of sowing the seeds of today's populist right. As was alluded to, some of the primary concerns of EU citizens are in the sphere of economics: the cost of living, the status of the economy, and unemployment (European Union, 2019a). This, coupled with the data tabulated by Rothschild (2009), indicates a downward trend in economic condition, both in public perception and reality. Yet GDP can only reflect a small sample of the wider economy. Consider, for instance, that between 2008 and 2017 there has been a net increase in household

expenditures on basic needs not met by a corresponding increase in income or savings (Kučas et al., 2020). This is all occurring nearly twenty years after the EMU was established. Under its neoliberal logic, liberalized trade should benefit consumers by providing them with cheaper goods and services produced throughout the Union. Yet, as Kučas et al. (2020) show, the effects have been the opposite.

Such increases can be attributed to the rolling-back of the welfare state and subsequent privatization schemes of governments. While these decisions occur at the national level, they are mandated by the EU and the legal precedents set by the Court of Justice. Regarding privatization, "...consumer prices are lower in countries where public ownership [of utilities] has been preserved…" according to a report that looked at utility expenditures from 1978 to 2006 (Fiorio and Florio, 2013, p. 230). The supranational institution nonetheless continues to advocate strict fiscal conservatism and the selling of utilities as a quick way to raise funds and balance budgets. The privatization of Greece's OTE and Italy's Telecom Italia further emphasize this point as both moves were motivated by the desire to reduce debt and meet the Union's financial standards (Kornelakis, 2015). Unfortunately, data specifically addressing the effects these moves had on consumers is unavailable. Yet the argument made by Fiorio and Florio (2013) and Kučas, et al. (2020) point towards increased consumer expenditure on previously publicly owned services such as telecommunications, electricity or public transit. Recall that such decisions are mandated by the Maastricht Treaty and are necessary to participate in the Monetary Union.

Conversely, some may argue that the EU has, in turn, introduced measures such as the capping of roaming fees (Cini & Šuplata, 2017). While this is significant, it is consistent with the neoliberal logic. The intent of the Union is to ensure the mobility of capital and labour within the community. As a result, the capping of roaming fees is an extension of this mandate, thus removing a potential barrier to commercial interests. Similarly, all these laws

do is abolish tariffs on fees, allowing citizens to use their domestic telecommunication plans while travelling through member-states (European Commission, 2017). This does nothing to protect them from increases in domestic fees resulting from privatization strategies. A similar criticism can be applied to the EU's Emission Trading System. While it is designed to combat climate change, it operates with a neoliberal bend, commodifying carbon emissions and granting corporations the equivalent of property rights over the earth's capacity for pollutants (Vlachou & Pantelias, 2021). This means that even in areas where the Union takes a seemingly progressive stance, there is an underlying move towards market-based solutions.

This perspective extends to the receding welfare state. The embrace of globalisation tends to create winners and losers, exacerbating class divisions (Taylor-Gooby, 2017). "Class" is not necessarily used in a Marxian sense, but in terms of educational attainment and opportunities. The liberalization of markets in the West has resulted in the de-industrialization and off-shorting of industries. This means that traditional, less educated blue-collar workers have been more affected by neoliberalism than those with higher levels of education. This trend is illustrated across the EU-28, where 30% of individuals with minimal levels of education are at a greater risk of poverty than 11.5% of those who are highly educated (European Commission, 2018). Meanwhile, one-fourth of the EU-28 population has stubbornly remained at risk of poverty from 2006 to 2016 (European Commission, 2018). This socio-economic desperation results in conditions that make the populist right more palatable. As Kuttner (2018) argues, such politicians are prevalent in all societies, but it is the economic conditions—the freeing of financial markets and undermining of citizen welfare—that make them popular. So when the EU, either through legislation or legal precedent, imposes a neoliberal policy onto member-states, they are alienating their electorate and pushing them further to the right.

This is not to say that the Union is actively encouraging member-states to cut social services. In fact, the European Commission has conducted reports that have illustrated the positive effects these measures have had on those at risk of poverty (European Commission, 2018). The issue is that the reduction of the welfare state is a byproduct of the neoliberal logic—it comes with the Union's embrace of it. So while unemployment and poverty increase, states like Britain continue to cut funding to necessary social services (Taylor-Gooby, 2017). The latter country, in particular, which championed the neoliberal regime, has failed to see the folly in its policy. Tax cuts for the wealthy and the weakening of unions have not yielded growth but rather sentiments of alienation (Taylor-Gooby, 2017).

Citizens will often look for scapegoats and leaders who will listen when they feel their concerns are not being met by mainstream political parties. Euroscepticism has always existed but has not manifested to the extent that it has today (Usherwood & Startin, 2013). The persistence of neoliberalism, and the gradual erosion of economic opportunities, has acted as a microcosm to today's movement. Recall how 34% of citizens are pessimistic about the supranational institution's future (European Union, 2019c), and the reasons for this, as Mudde (2019) noted, are attributed to wider policy failures. The Union's embrace of neoliberalism has undermined citizen confidence in the institution as well as its legitimacy, both in the court of public opinion and politically, as populist actors look to mobilize support along these pretences.

Why the Right: Ideology and Mobilization:

Up until this point, the relationship between the EU and neoliberalism has been the focal point of analysis. It has served to lay a foundation for the argument that such economic policies have sown disillusionment and alienation among the electorate who, after decades of a diminishing quality of life, have latched on to populist movements in hopes of being heard. This deterioration, as was alluded to earlier, has occurred in both economic growth and

unemployment, as well as persistent levels of poverty (Rothschild, 2009; European Commission, 2018). Along with this trend, there is an uptick in support for the populist right, in public opinion and political success (Politico 2021b, 2021c, 2021d). An additional measure of this is the shift of mainstream parties to the right. As Mudde (2019) points out, the 2019 European Elections witnessed an increase in restrictions on immigration and the gradual normalization of nationalist rhetoric and policy. The movement has become so enmeshed with the mainstream that, as Kuttner (2018, p. 273) put it, "...right-wing populists win even when they lose," as their brand of politics has found a home in traditional conservative parties.

The question now becomes: why the right? As van Elsas et al. (2016) note, there are populist Eurosceptical movements on both sides of the political spectrum. After decades of cuts to the welfare state, one would think that the parties most vehemently advocating for its restoration would gain the most support. This has been the mandate of the Eurosceptic left, who frame their criticisms along socio-economic lines (van Elsas et al., 2016). Yet the results have been the opposite. As Usherwood (2019) points out, these are by no means single-issue parties but the manifestation of citizens' wider socio-economic anxieties over the role, and perceived growing authority, of the EU in their everyday lives.

As a result, the populist right has been able to ride the wave of discontentment to power. Their movement transcends national boundaries, with leaders collectively arguing for the same policy objectives. The message is simple: European integration is harmful and detrimental to national interests, traditions, and identities (van Elsas et al., 2016). This message resonates so effectively given the rise of neoliberalism, spearheaded by the EU. As an elite consolidates wealth and power, the general public deals with the ramifications of liberalized trade, unemployment, and austerity. The only way to cope with the growing power of Brussels, it seems, is to cultivate national identities, economies, and interests

(Mudde, 2007). It demands a combination of protectionist policies, nativist rhetoric, and the hardening of borders in an attempt to defend the nation-state.

Given this platform, the group is inherently xenophobic, creating a perpetual fear of an "other" as a means of mobilizing support. As Davidson and Saull (2017) argue, this too is a fundamental component of the populist right's rise to power and a by-product of the neoliberalization of Europe. The desire to protect national identities and employment opportunities reflect the growing social insecurities of the working class (Mudde, 2019; Davidson & Saull, 2017). Migrants are perceived as incompatible with the dominant nationality, threatening their culture and economy. The hardening of borders is viewed as an essential step in reducing competition for whichever jobs have yet to be affected by offshoring (Kuntz et al., 2017; Davidson & Saull, 2017). Thus xenophobia and outright racist attitudes are the product of socio-economic policy via the expansion of neoliberalism. These sentiments overlap with a perceived or real loss of identity or social position that manifests in hatred or resentment against immigrants or a cosmopolitan elite (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). The reason they have become so dominant today, as was alluded to earlier, is due to the liberation of capital and the offshoring of opportunities, in culmination with a decline in the welfare state (Kuttner, 2018).

Meanwhile, opponents of this position, such as Schwander & Manow (2017), argue that the rise of the right has little to do with economic conditions given the existence of populists during times of growth and decline. While this is true, the pair ignore the underlying socio-economic conditions that make these ideas palatable. In the last hundred years, the only two instances where the far-right has been as politically successful as today was during the 1920s and 1930s (Kuttner, 2018). The similarity between these two periods is that they were times of great financial hardship and free-market fundamentalism. So while Schwander & Manow (2017) may look to alternative explanations for the populist surge in

Europe, the answer may be more obvious than it appears. Workers are fed up with neoliberalism after decades of suffering under it. The populist right claims to have the answers, and the electorate look to them for a voice.

Conclusion:

The EU's embrace of neoliberalism has served as a microcosm of the wider discontentment of its citizens. As a consequence of the system, seemingly unaddressed socio-economic inequalities have facilitated Eurosceptic and xenophobic attitudes. This trichotomy of factors, while emerging sequentially to one another, are intertwining and dependent on each other for existence. As noted throughout the essay, economic crises allow radical ideas to flourish and seem palatable. The neoliberal policies of the EU have degraded the livelihood of its citizens and, whether it be via perception or reality, have pushed them towards populist right-wing parties. These groups have always existed but their voices have been amplified by an electorate that feels disenfranchised by those in power. The messaging surrounding the harms of European integration, and the need for political and economic nationalism, have resonated out of legitimate citizen concerns. While the Union is a common and easy scapegoat, they do bear responsibility. This is no longer the Bretton Woods, Keynesian liberalism that the institution had been founded upon, which balanced labour and capital. It is instead a neoliberal regime that has steamrolled the interests of the working-class to promote capital accumulation.

The EU has effectively sowed the seeds of its demise. Rather than turn a blind eye, the governing body should listen to the polls that it conducts. While there are bureaucratic constraints between levels of government, the Union still wields considerable authority over economic regulations. Euroscepticism and xenophobia are economic issues, a part of the wider complications of the neoliberal order. As the populist right gains a greater foothold

among all levels of government, reform is needed should the Union seek to preserve its relevance, legitimacy, and very existence.

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