



University  
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

**ANDREW EDWIN PROSSER**

BA (Hons) (University of Waterloo, 2017)

**“Constructing ‘the People’ and the Past:  
The *Alternative für Deutschland*, Collective Memory,  
and Populism as a Repertoire”**

Department of Political Science

Wednesday, December 12, 2018

1:00 P.M.

Clearihue Building

Room B017

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Avigail Eisenberg, Department of Political Science, UVic (Co-Supervisor)

Dr. Oliver Schmidtke, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)

External Examiner:

Dr. Elena Pnevmonidou, Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies, UVic

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Dr. Falk Herwig, Department of Physics and Astronomy, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## **Abstract**

Populism is a key, albeit ambiguous, feature of the contemporary political landscape. Prevalent conceptualizations of 'populism' are not analytically useful in understanding the nature of the phenomenon; such conceptualizations are useful for identifying populist actors, rather than revealing the specificity of populism. Conventional conceptions of populism do not adequately address the core feature of populism: the construction of 'the people' against 'the elite.' The thesis argues that conceptualizing populism as a 'discursive repertoire' accounts for how populists construct 'the people' in practice through identity politics. The thesis tests the efficacy of this approach through a discourse-historical analysis of a 'hard' case of populism, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), and focuses on how the AfD constructs 'the people' through the identity politics of collective memory. The analysis revealed that the AfD uses collective memory to establish continuity between 'the people' and the past in ethnocultural terms while simultaneously transcending ethnocultural nationhood by invoking 'the people' in the immediate through direct action. Thus, the populist invocation of 'the people' is temporally complex. Therefore, conceptualizing populism as a repertoire reveals the specificity of populist identity politics and, more specifically, the populist use of history.