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The Politics Of Everyday Europe: Constructing Authority In The European Union



Synopsis

How do political authorities build support for themselves and their rule? Doing so is key to accruing power, but it can be a complicated affair. The European Union, as a novel political entity, faces a particularly difficult set of challenges. *The Politics of Everyday Europe* argues that the legitimation of EU authority rests in part on a transformation in the symbols and practices of everyday life in Europe. The Single Market and the Euro, European citizenship and the dismantling of borders within Europe, EU public architecture, arts and popular entertainment, and EU diplomacy and foreign policy are important not only for their material effects but for how they change peoples' day-to-day experiences and naturalize European governance. The modern nation-state has long used similar strategies to legitimize its political power. But the EU's cultural infrastructure is unique, as it navigates national identities with a particularly banality, framing the EU as complementary to, rather than in competition with, the nation-states. These underlying social processes have supported the surprising political development of the EU, but they do so in a way that makes EU authority inherently fragile. As economic and political crises have stretched European social solidarity to the breaking point, this book offers a clear theoretical framework for understanding how everyday culture matters and how the construction of meaning can be a potent power resource--albeit one open to contestation and subversion by the very citizens it calls into being.

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Customer Reviews

"The Politics of Everyday Europe is a path-breaking analysis of how the European Union has

created an "imagined community" of Europeans. In this superb book, McNamara deftly shows how the EU has consolidated Europe and its own authority by creating shared symbols and practices for everyday life. From money to travel to architecture and diplomacy the EU has made itself a taken-for-granted social fact through exercises that are often technocratic, even banal, but pervasive and powerful. A must-read, not just for those interested in Europe, but for anyone interested the nature of power in contemporary politics." -Martha Finnemore, University Professor of Political Science and International Affairs, The George Washington University"

Kathleen McNamara asks a simple but profound question: Why is the EU accepted as a new actor and legitimate site of political authority? Demonstrating how the EU has promoted itself as a banal, deracinated political entity, entwined with existing national identities, explains both the EU's development and how its legitimacy may be self-limiting. The real brilliance of the book comes in its asking profound questions about European integration that others have failed to ask. In so doing, McNamara forces us to rethink how we see the EU, and opens up new avenues of inquiry." -R. Daniel Kelemen, Professor of Political Science and Jean Monnet Chair in European Union Politics, Rutgers University"

The Politics of Everyday Europe situates European integration within a broader history of comparative political development, convincingly showing why "Europe" is a part of our everyday reality--for better and for worse--and the consequences for the future of the EU. McNamara's contribution to the sociology of Europe is immense, and challenges our thinking about state transformations and political legitimation in twenty-first century governance." -Virginie Guiraudon, Research professor at the National Center for Scientific Research, Sciences Po Center for European Studies"

Even after decades of intensive scholarship, we still don't fully understand what kind of political object the European Union is, and where it takes its authority from. To answer these very big, cardinal questions, Kathleen McNamara shifts our gaze to the realm of the infinitely small. Myriad everyday practices, part of a seemingly banal cultural infrastructure, add up to compose the social fact of European integration. This brilliant, innovative and timely book sheds new light on longtime puzzles in IR theory, EU studies and comparative political development." -Vincent Pouliot, Associate Professor and William Dawson Scholar, McGill University

Kathleen R. McNamara is an Associate Professor of Government and Foreign Service, and Director of the Mortara Center for International Studies at Georgetown University. She is the author of *The Currency of Ideas: Monetary Politics in the European Union* (Cornell University Press, 1998), co-editor of *Making History: European Integration and Institution Change at Fifty* (Oxford University Press, 2007) and has published numerous essays on the sociology of the European Union,

international political economy, central banking, and the role of ideas and culture in policymaking. McNamara has taught at Princeton University and Sciences Po (Paris), and has been a visiting scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation, a German Marshall Fund Fellow, and a Fulbright Fellow. She is a participant in a variety of government and NGO policy groups, and a Member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

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