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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 legitimization 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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