

Dr Céline Belot talks about her seminar 'From Europhiles to Eurosceptic citizens: Exploring the EU legitimacy crisis', WiSe 2014/15, UoC

THESEUS: Mrs Belot, what has sparked your particular interest in the phenomenon of *Euroscepticism*?

Belot: When watching the news or reading newspapers 20 years ago, everybody – except perhaps for the British – was considered as *Europhile*. Now it's the opposite. I ask myself: Has the majority of European citizens completely changed their minds about European integration in such a 'short' time period, or did we get it wrong 20 years ago? Have we got it right today?

Why is it important to discuss this development of people being *europhile*, meaning enthusiastic about Europe, to being *eurosceptic*?

Belot: We need to understand what perception European citizens have of European integration. What does it represent in their eyes? What do they expect from it? Where do social perceptions of Europe and European integration come from? Why do they diverge from one member state to the other? Answering these questions helps us to realise that, when imagining 'Europe', we do not all talk about the same thing.

What aspects of the phenomenon of *Euroscepticism* do you consider to be inadequately addressed?

Belot: *Euroscepticism* has been much studied at the level of political parties, less at the level of citizens. Besides, when studying *Euroscepticism* at the citizens' level, we mostly use data produced by the European Commission, the Eurobarometers, which are not exactly the best data we – as scientists – could build to study this phenomenon. In my course, I focus on citizens' *Euroscepticism* using both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

How will you proceed?

Belot: At the beginning of the course, each student will have to choose a subject on citizens' attitudes towards European integration on which he will have to hand in a research assignment at the end of the semester. What I aim at during the classes is to help students acquire the conceptual and methodological tools to succeed in this assignment. Readings will be proposed which will be discussed during the course.

What do you wish the students to take away from your class?

Belot: Not to take comments on citizens' *Euroscepticism* for granted when listening to the news, but rather to be able to question which 'Europe' their fellow European citizens consider when judging European integration. I would in particular expect students to be more aware of the importance of contextual, that is time and space, variables when considering *Euroscepticism*.

Thank you for this interview, Mrs Belot!