Examiner guidelines SOSANT2580 autumn 2025

Exam Questions:

1. **How can anthropologists fruitfully investigate the drivers of far-right mobilisation?**

In your answer, discuss the key analytical frameworks and ethnographic approaches discussed in the course. Draw on relevant literature from the syllabus to illustrate how social scientists and anthropologists understand the processes, grievances, and social conditions that shape far-right mobilisation. Your essay should engage with at least *three* central course themes, including neo-nationalism, populism, fascism, identity politics, racialisation, conspiracy theories, and everyday political practices.

2. **Critically analyse the role of social media and internet culture in contemporary far-right mobilisation.**

Your response should examine how digital platforms contribute to the formation of far-right identities and processes of belonging, radicalisation, and transnational connection. Use perspectives and ethnographic case studies from the course readings. This may include work on digital subcultures, memetic politics, gender, conspiracy theories, and online activism to support your analysis.

Guidance for Examiners

Below is guidance to help examiners assess the answers consistently, based on course goals in anthropology, critical analysis, and engagement with ethnography.

General Guidance (for both questions)

High-quality answers should demonstrate:

1. Engagement with course literature

- Explicit and accurate use of key texts from the reading list (e.g. Gingrich & Banks, Snyder, Mudde, Brubaker, Thorleifsson, Holmes, Pasieka, Blee, Feischmidt & Pulay, Hervik, Rakopoulos, Askanius).

- Ability to integrate ethnographic case studies and theoretical arguments rather than only summarising them.

2. Anthropological perspective

- Sensitivity to methodological and ethical issues.
- Understanding of concepts such as positionality, fieldwork challenges, everyday practices, identity-making, cultural meaning, racialisation, and political subjectivity.

3. Analytical depth

- Ability to compare perspectives, highlight tensions in the literature, and distinguish between structural, cultural, and affective drivers.
- Critical reflection on categories such as “far right”, “populism”, “extremism”, “nationalism”.

4. Coherent argumentation

- A clear thesis, well-structured reasoning, and strong use of examples.
- Proper academic tone and referencing.

Question 1 – Investigating the drivers of far-right mobilization

Expected elements in strong answers:

Core themes:

- Neo-nationalism (Gingrich & Banks; Feischmidt & Pulay).
- Populism and identity politics (Mudde; Brubaker; Hervik).
- Racialisation processes (Hervik).
- Economic and post-industrial transformations (Thorleifsson, “From coal to UKIP”).
- Cultural and affective dimensions (Holmes; Pasieka).
- Conspiracy theories as sense-making (Rakopoulos).
- Gender and family imaginaries (Askanius; far-right female influencers).

Anthropological approaches:

- Ethnography of everyday life and political subjectivity.
- "Eye-level" anthropology (Holmes).
- Engaged or empathetic fieldwork paradigms (Pasieka; Blee).
- Multi-sited or transnational approaches.

What distinguishes excellent answers:

- Ability to synthesise structural (economic, political), cultural (identity, belonging), and digital/mediated drivers.
- Reflexive discussion of how anthropologists can study groups that may be adversarial or ethically challenging.
- Linking micro-stories to macro processes (globalisation, insecurity, demographic shifts).

Question 2 – Social media, internet cultures, and far-right mobilization

Expected elements in strong answers:

Key readings and concepts:

- Thorleifsson on 4chan/pol/, cyberfascism, and memetic violence.
- Askanius on women in the Nordic Resistance Movement and digital gender politics.
- Feischmidt & Pulay on cultural production and neo-nationalist aesthetics.
- Rakopoulos on conspiracy cultures.
- Holmes on affective infrastructures and fascist atmospheres.
- Snyder (On Tyranny) for reflections on propaganda and authoritarian communication.

Analytical dimensions:

- How memes, humor, irony, anonymity, and transgressive aesthetics facilitate recruitment and ideological diffusion.
- Digital spaces as sites of belonging, identity formation, and emotional community.
- Platform affordances (e.g., algorithms, virality, anonymity) shaping radicalization pathways.

- Online/offline entanglements — how digital networks connect to street politics, music scenes, or activist groups.
- Gendered dynamics of online far-right spaces.

What distinguishes excellent answers:

- Ethnographically grounded analysis of digital cultures (not just general statements about “social media”).
- Understanding of transnational flows of symbols, narratives, and conspiracy theories.
- Critical assessment of how internet culture reshapes political action, not only amplifies it.