

**PSCI 552**  
**Dictatorship and Democracy**

Spring 2021  
Tuesdays 2:00pm-4:40pm  
Zoom link: TBA

**Professor Gretchen Helmke**

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Office hours by zoom on Wednesdays 1:30pm-3:30 pm

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Office hours by zoom on Wednesdays 1:30pm-3:30 pm

**Course Description**

Why are some political regimes more stable than others? Why do democracies endure or unravel? Why do dictatorships last or crumble? To answer these questions, this course offers a survey of the empirical and theoretical literatures on democracy and dictatorship in comparative politics. The first part of the course focuses on the emergence and instantiation of autocracy. The second part of the course examines competing theories about the conditions and causes of the transition to and consolidation of democracy. The third part of the course examines the emerging literature on democratic backsliding. Class will be conducted in a weekly discussion format.

**Goals**

As a Ph.D.-level course, the primary goal of this class is to stimulate research ideas. Actively engaging with the readings and the class discussions is necessary but not sufficient to achieve this goal. Students should think about possible gaps in the literature and topics on which they can conduct original research. The written assignments for the course will help to facilitate this goal.

**Grading**

Class Participation 30%  
Three short research proposals (15% each) 45%  
Final Research Proposal 25%

**Course Policies**

Extensions to deadlines must be negotiated in advance of the deadline. Late work will not be accepted.

**Course Requirements**

Students must do all required readings before the class for which they are assigned, and be prepared to discuss them actively. All of the readings will be located in a common Dropbox folder designated for the course. We have started a list of additional readings for students who are interested in further reading on the topic outside of class; the list will be periodically updated throughout the semester.

During the course, students must submit and present three short research proposals on a topic relevant to the course material, which should be a maximum of 500 words in length (15% of the grade each). This proposal should outline 1) An existing theoretical or empirical puzzle, 2) an intuition as to a solution to this puzzle, 3) the data needed to test this puzzle, and 4) the identification strategy to be used.

As a final assignment, students must submit and present a research proposal that develops one of their shorter proposals, which should be a maximum of 3000 words in length. This proposal should include a more detailed literature review, a discussion of the proposed theoretical framework, and the empirical hypotheses it implies, as well as serious discussion of how to obtain data to carry out the project. For projects with publicly available data, successful projects will include a rough preliminary analysis.

## Readings

### Week 1. Foundations

February 2nd

- Przeworski, Adam. 1991. *Democracy and the Market*. Ch. 1.
- Boix, Carles, Michael Miller, and Sebastian Rosato. 2012. "A Complete Data Set of Political Regimes, 1800–2007." *Comparative Political Studies*.
- Svobik, Milan W. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge University Press. Chs. 1 and 2.
- Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz. 2014. "Autocratic breakdown and regime transitions: A new data set." *Perspectives on Politics*.

### Week 2. Constraining dictators

February 9<sup>th</sup>

- Myerson, Roger B. 2008. "The autocrat's credibility problem and foundations of the constitutional state." *American Political Science Review*.
- Meng, Anne. 2020. *Constraining Dictatorship: From Personalized Rule to Institutionalized Regimes*. Cambridge University Press. Chs. 1 and 4.
- Blaydes, Lisa and Eric Chaney. 2013. "The Feudal Revolution and Europe's Rise: Political Divergence of the Christian West and the Muslim World before 1500 CE." *American Political Science Review*.
- Gandhi, Jennifer. 2008. *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*. Cambridge University Press. Introduction chapter.

Recommended:

- North, Douglass C. and Barry R. Weingast. 1989. "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England" *Journal of Economic History*.
- Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz. 2018. *How dictatorships work: Power, personalization, and collapse*. Cambridge University Press.
- Svobik, Milan W. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge University Press. Ch. 4.

### **Week 3. Electoral authoritarianism**

February 16<sup>th</sup>

- Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan A. Way. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. Cambridge University Press. Chs. 1 and 2.
- Little, Andrew T., Joshua A. Tucker, and Tom LaGatta. 2015. "Elections, protest, and alternation of power." *Journal of Politics*.
- Miller, Michael K. 2020. "The Autocratic Ruling Parties Dataset: Origins, Durability, and Death." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 64(4): 756-82.
- Hyde, Susan D., and Nikolay Marinov. 2014. "Information and self-enforcing democracy: The role of international election observation." *International Organization*.

Additional reading:

- Gehlbach, Scott, and Alberto Simpser. "Electoral manipulation as bureaucratic control." *American Journal of Political Science* 59.1 (2015): 212-224.
- Magaloni, Beatriz. 2006. *Voting for autocracy: Hegemonic party survival and its demise in Mexico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Magaloni, Beatriz. 2008. "Credible Power-Sharing and the Longevity of Authoritarian Rule." *Comparative Political Studies*.
- Miller, Michael K. 2017. "The Strategic Origins of Electoral Authoritarianism." *British Journal of Political Science*.

### **Week 4. Repression**

February 23<sup>rd</sup>

- Tyson, Scott A. 2018. "The agency problem underlying repression." *Journal of Politics*.
- Ritter, Emily Hencken and Courtenay R. Conrad. 2016. "Preventing and Responding to Dissent: The Observational Challenges of Explaining Strategic Repression." *American Political Science Review* 110 (1): 85-99.
- Blaydes, Lisa. 2018. *State of Repression: Iraq under Saddam Hussein*. Chs. 1 and 10.
- Rozenas, Arturas and Yuri Zhukov. "Mass Repression and Political Loyalty: Evidence from Stalin's 'Terror by Hunger.'" *American Political Science Review*, forthcoming.

Additional reading:

- Greitens, Sheena. 2016. *Dictators and their Secret Police*. Chs. 1 and 2.
- Harkness, Kristen. 2019. *When Soldiers Rebel*.

### **Week 5. Coercive challenges and consequences**

March 2<sup>nd</sup>

- Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan. 2010. "Regime change and revolutionary entrepreneurs." *American Political Science Review*.
- Paine, Jack. 2021. "Organizing Authoritarian Coercion: Trading Off Insider and Outsider Threats." Working paper.
- Francois, Patrick, Ilia Rainer, and Francesco Trebbi. 2015. "How is Power Shared in Africa?"
- Roessler, Philip. 2011. "The Enemy Within: Personal Rule, Coups, and Civil War in Africa." *World Politics*.

#### **Additional reading:**

- Arriola, Leonardo. 2009. "Patronage and political stability in Africa."
- Paine, Jack. 2020. "The Dictator's Power-Sharing Dilemma."
- Paine, Jack. 2021. "Strategic Power Sharing: Commitment, Capability, and Authoritarian Survival."
- Roessler, Philip. 2016. *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa*.
- Roessler and Ohls 2018. "Self-Enforcing Power Sharing."

### **Week 6. Modernization theory**

March 9th

#### **Memo 1 due**

- Przeworski, Adam, et al. 2000. *Democracy and development: Political institutions and well-being in the world, 1950-1990*. Cambridge University Press. Ch. 3.
- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Pierre Yared. 2008. "Income and Democracy." *American Economic Review*.
- Boix, Carles. 2011. "Democracy, development, and the international system." *American Political Science Review*.
- Stokes, Susan C., Thad Dunning, Marcelo Nazareno, and Valeria Brusco. 2013. *Brokers, voters, and clientelism: The puzzle of distributive politics*. Cambridge University Press. Chs. 7 and 8.

### **Week 7. Inequality and democratization**

March 16th

- Acemoglu, Daron and James A. Robinson. 2006. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge University Press. Ch. 2
- Ansell, Ben W., and David J. Samuels. 2014. *Inequality and democratization*. Cambridge University Press. Chs. 2 and 4.
- Ziblatt, Daniel. 2008. "Does Landholding Inequality Block Democratization?" *World Politics*.
- Albertus, Michael. 2015. *Autocracy and Redistribution* chs. TBD

#### **Additional reading:**

- Acemoglu et al. (2014): "Democracy, Redistribution, and Inequality"

- Aidt and Jensen (2014): “Workers of the World, Unite!”
- Aidt and Franck (2015) "Democratization under the threat of revolution"
- Albertus and Menaldo (2014): “Gaming Democracy”
- Dower, Paul Castaneda, Evgeny Finkel, Scott Gehlbach, and Steven Nafziger. 2018. "Collective action and representation in autocracies: Evidence from Russia’s great reforms." *American Political Science Review*.
- Freeman and Quinn (2012): “The Economic Origins of Democracy Reconsidered”
- Haggard and Kaufman: “Inequality and Regime Change” (2012) and *Dictators and Democrats* (2016)
- Houle (2009): “Inequality and Democracy”
- Paine (2019): “Redistributive Political Transitions”
- Powell (2020): “Power Sharing with Weak Institutions”
- Slater, Dan, Benjamin Smith, and Gautam Nair. 2014. "Economic origins of democratic breakdown? The redistributive model and the postcolonial state." *Perspectives on Politics*.
- Smith (2008): “Rethinking the Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy”
- Ziblatt (2008): “Does Landholding Inequality Block Democratization?”

## **Week 8. Institutions and self-enforcing democracy**

March 23rd

### **Memo 2 due**

- Weingast, Barry R. 1997. "The political foundations of democracy and the rule of the law." *American Political Science Review*.
- Fearon, James D. 2011. "Self-enforcing democracy." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*.
- Helmke, Gretchen. 2017. *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Intra-Branch Crises in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press. Chs. 3, 4, and 5
- Graham, Benjamin A.T., Michael K. Miller, and Kaare W. Strom. 2017. “Safeguarding Democracy: Powersharing and Democratic Survival.” *American Political Science Review*.

Additional reading:

- Bidner, Francois, Trebbi. “A Theory of Minimalist Democracy.”
- Buisseret, Peter and Richard Van Weelden. 2020. “Crashing the party? elites, outsiders, and elections.”
- Chacon, Robinson, Torvik. 2011. “When is Democracy an Equilibrium?”
- Nalepa, Monika, Georg Vanberg and Caterina Chiopris. 2018. “Authoritarian Backsliding.”
- Svoboda 2019. “Democracy as an Equilibrium.”

## **Week 9.**

**March 30<sup>th</sup>: No class. University-wide study break day.**

## **Week 10. Countermajoritarian democracy**

April 6th

- Albertus, Michael, and Victor Menaldo. 2018. *Authoritarianism and the elite origins of democracy*. Cambridge University Press, 2018. Chs. 1 and 2.
- Mittal, Sonia, and Barry R. Weingast. "Self-enforcing constitutions: with an application to democratic stability in America's first century." *The Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* 29.2 (2013): 278-302.
- Ziblatt, Daniel. 2017. *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy*. Chs. 1 and 2.
- Helmke, Gretchen and Jack Paine. 2020. "When Strong Institutions Undermine Strong Democracies"

Additional reading:

- Acemoglu and Robinson. 2008. "Persistence of Power, Elites, and Institutions." *American Economic Review*.
- Dahl, Robert A. 2003. *How democratic is the American constitution?* Yale University Press. Chs. 1 and 2.
- Fearon, James and Patrick Francois. 2020. "A Theory of Elite-Initiated Democratization, Illustrated With the Case of Myanmar." Working paper.

## **Week 11. Historical Institutions and Democracy**

April 13th

- North, Douglass C., William Summerhill and Barry R. Weingast. 2000. Order, Disorder, and Economic Change: Latin America Versus North America. In *Governing for Prosperity*, ed. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Hilton L. Root. Yale University Press pp. 17–58.
- Gailmard, Sean. 2017. "Building a New Imperial State." *American Political Science Review*.
- Paine, Jack. 2019. "Democratic Contradictions in European Settler Colonies." *World Politics*.
- Komisarichik, Mayya. 2020. "Electoral Protectionism: How Southern Counties Eliminated Elected Offices In Response to the Voting Rights Act." Working paper.

Additional reading:

- Bateman, David. 2018. *Disenfranchising Democracy*.
- Engerman and Sokoloff 2005. "The Evolution of Suffrage Institutions in the New World."
- Keyssar, Alexander 2000. *The Right to Vote*.
- Valelly, Richard. 2004. *The Two Reconstructions*.
- Valelly, Richard. 2016. *How Suffrage Politics Made—and Makes—America*.
- Teele, Dawn. 2018. *Forging the Franchise*.
- Nikolova, Elena. 2015. *Destined for Democracy?*

- Gailmard, Sean. 2019. "Imperial Politics, English Law, and the Strategic Foundations of Judicial Review in America."

### **Week 12: Elites and democratic backsliding**

April 20<sup>th</sup>

- Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How democracies die*. Broadway Books. Chs. 4 and 5.
- Helmke, Gretchen, Mary Kroeger, and Jack Paine. 2021. "Democracy by Deterrence." Working paper.
- Howell, William G., Kenneth Shepsle, and Stephane Wolton. 2020. "Executive Absolutism: The Dynamics of Authority Acquisition in a System of Separated Powers." Working paper.
- Miller, Michael. 2020. "A Republic, If You Can Keep It: Breakdown and Erosion in Modern Democracies." *Journal of Politics*, forthcoming.

### **Week 13: Citizens and democratic backsliding**

April 27<sup>th</sup>

#### **Memo 3 due**

- Luo, Zhaotian and Adam Przeworski. 2020. "Democracy and Its Vulnerabilities: Dynamics of Democratic Backsliding." Working paper.
- Grillo and Prado. 2020. "Reference Points and Democratic Backsliding." Working paper.
- Helmke, Gretchen and Seda Ozturk. "Sounding the Alarm: Transgressing Democratic Norms and the Effects of Political Pushback." Working paper.
- Graham, Matthew H., and Milan W. Svobik. 2020. "Democracy in America? Partisanship, Polarization, and the Robustness of Support for Democracy in the United States." *American Political Science Review*.

Additional reading:

- V-Dem. "Autocratization Surges—Resistance Grows: Democracy Report 2020." [https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer\\_public/de/39/de39af54-0bc5-4421-89ae-fb20dcc53dba/democracy\\_report.pdf](https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/de/39/de39af54-0bc5-4421-89ae-fb20dcc53dba/democracy_report.pdf)
- Bermeo, Nancy. 2016. "On Democratic Backsliding." *Journal of Democracy*.
- Waldner, David and Ellen Lust. 2018. "Unwelcome Change: Coming to Terms with Democratic Backsliding." *Annual Review of Political Science*.

### **Week 14. Discussion of students' research memos**

May 4<sup>th</sup>

**May 11<sup>th</sup> - Final paper due**