

PSCI 552
Dictatorship and Democracy
Fall 2022
Wednesday 1pm-3:45pm

Professor Gretchen Helmke
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Office hours by appointment

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 democracy. The second part of the course examines competing theories about the conditions and causes of democratic backsliding. Class will be conducted in a weekly discussion format.

Objectives

The two goals of the course are 1) to introduce students to the classic and the cutting-edge literature on democracy and dictatorship, 2) and to stimulate original research ideas. Actively engaging with the readings and the class discussions is a core part of achieving both objectives. Original research aims to advance the literature and thus requires a careful understanding of the contributions other scholars have made; students must be familiar with the literature to identify extant gaps and puzzles. The weekly class discussions and written assignments are geared towards helping graduate students realize these objectives.

Course Requirements

Students must do all required readings before the class and come to class prepared to discuss and debate the merits of each and every reading. All of the readings will be located in a common Dropbox folder designated for the course.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xm1u1frvnb0bmp/AACLplnYCAuAKRYKj61gZvx7a?dl=0>

On the first day of the course, students will be asked to sign up for the readings in pairs. For each of the readings, one student will be responsible for summarizing the reading and for discussing its positive influence on the field. The other student will be responsible for critiquing the reading and/or identifying ways to build on the reading to advance the field.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1unvxwWs2CUUpjn9BEdvoN44VHshnNrh0sMN33N24-QAI/edit?usp=sharing>

Throughout the semester, students will then choose three of the readings that they present and to develop short research proposals, which build off of the research topic(s) raised by the reading.

Research proposals should be a maximum of 500 words in length and should outline: 1) An existing theoretical or empirical puzzle, 2) an intuition as to a solution to this puzzle, 3) either existing or ideal data needed to test this puzzle, and 4) the identification strategy to be used.

As a final assignment, students must present a research proposal during the last week of class that develops one of their shorter proposals. A final written version of the research proposal is due by 5 pm on December 19th. This proposal (maximum of 3000 words) 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.

Grading

Class Participation and Presentations 45%
Three short research proposals (10% each) 30%
Final Research Proposal 25%

Course Policies

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

Schedule

Week 1. Themes and Organization of the Course

August 31st

Week 2. Foundations

September 7th

- Dahl, Robert A. 2008. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. Yale University Press. P1-16, 33-47
- Przeworski, Adam. 1991. *Democracy and the Market*. Ch. 1.
- Olson, Mancur. 1993. "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development." *The American Political Science Review* 87 (3): 567–76.
- Weingast, Barry R. 1997. "The political foundations of democracy and the rule of the law." *American Political Science Review*.

Week 3. No Class due to APSA

September 14th

Week 4. Emergence of Democracy

September 21st

- 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*.
- 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?: A Test of the 'Bread and Democracy' Thesis and the Case of Prussia." *World Politics* 60 (4): 610–41.

Week 5. Transitions to Democracy I

September 28th

- Przeworski, Adam. 1991. *Democracy and the Market*. Ch. 2.
- Przeworski, Adam, R. Michael Alvarez, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, Fernando Limongi. 2000. *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*. Cambridge University Press. Ch 1 and 2.
- Acemoglu, Daron and James A. Robinson. 2006. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge University Press. Ch. 2

Week 6. Transitions to Democracy II

October 5th

- Albertus, Michael, and Victor Menaldo. 2018. *Authoritarianism and the elite origins of democracy*. Cambridge University Press, 2018. Chs. 1 and 2.
- Albertus, Michael, and Victor Menaldo. 2014. "Gaming Democracy: Elite Dominance during Transition and the Prospects for Redistribution." *British Journal of Political Science* 44 (3): 575–603.
- Haggard, Stephan, and Robert R. Kaufman. 2016. *Dictators and Democrats*. Princeton University Press. Ch 2 and 3

Week 7. Culture and Norms

October 12th

- Bicchieri, Cristina. 2016. *Norms in the Wild: How to Diagnose, Measure, and Change Social Norms*. Oxford University Press. Skim Ch 1, read Ch 2 and 3.
- Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How democracies die*. Broadway Books. Chs. 4 and 5.
- 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*.

Week 8. Experiments and Democratic Norms

October 19th

- Helmke, Gretchen, Jae-Eun Kim, and Seda Ozturk. “Sounding the Alarm: Transgressing Democratic Norms and the Effects of Political Pushback.” Working paper.
- Clayton, Katherine, Nicholas T. Davis, Brendan Nyhan, Ethan Porter, Timothy J. Ryan, and Thomas J. Wood. 2021. “Elite Rhetoric Can Undermine Democratic Norms.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 118 (23).
- Clayton, Katherine. TBD
- Simonovits, G., J. McCoy, and L. Littvay. 2022. “Democratic Hypocrisy and Out-Group Threat: Explaining Citizen Support for Democratic Erosion.” *The Journal of Politics*. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/719009>.

Week 9. Dictatorship I

October 26th

- Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz. 2018. *How dictatorships work: Power, personalization, and collapse*. Cambridge University Press. Ch 4 and 5, appendix
- Meng, A. 2021. “Ruling Parties in Authoritarian Regimes: Rethinking Institutional Strength.” *British Journal of Political Science*.
- Gandhi, Jennifer, and Adam Przeworski. 2007. “Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats.” *Comparative Political Studies* 40 (11): 1279–1301.

Week 10. Dictatorship II

November 2nd

- Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan A. Way. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. Cambridge University Press. Chs. 1 and 2.
- Gandhi, Jennifer. 2008. *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*. Cambridge University Press. Skim Introduction and ch 1, read ch 3.
- Svobik, Milan W. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge University Press. Skim chapter 1, 2, and read 4.

Week 11. Democracy and Counter-majoritarianism

November 9th

- 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.
- Helmke, Gretchen and Jack Paine. 2020. “When Strong Institutions Undermine Strong Democracies”
- Helmke, Gretchen, Mary Kroeger, and Jack Paine. 2022. "Democracy by deterrence: Norms, constitutions, and electoral tilting." *American Journal of Political Science* 66, no. 2: 434-450.
- Howell, William G., Kenneth Shepsle, and Stephane Wolton. 2020. “Executive Absolutism: The Dynamics of Authority Acquisition in a System of Separated Powers.” Working paper.

Week 12. Democratic Erosion I

November 16th

- Luo, Zhaotian and Adam Przeworski. 2020. “Democracy and Its Vulnerabilities: Dynamics of Democratic Backsliding.” Working paper.
- Grillo, Edoardo, and Carlo Prato. 2021. “Reference Points and Democratic Backsliding.” *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Chiopris, Caterina, Monika Nalepa, and Georg Vanberg. 2021. “A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing: Citizen Uncertainty and Democratic Backsliding.”

Week 13. Thanksgiving Holiday

November 23rd

Week 14. Democratic Erosion II

November 30th

- Naidu, Suresh, James A. Robinson, and Lauren E. Young. 2021. “Social Origins of Dictatorships: Elite Networks and Political Transitions in Haiti.” *The American Political Science Review* 115 (3): 900–916.
- Arriola, Leonardo R., Jed Devaro, and Anne Meng. 2021. “Democratic Subversion: Elite Cooptation and Opposition Fragmentation.” *The American Political Science Review* 115 (4): 1358–72.
- Miller, Michael. 2020. “A Republic, If You Can Keep It: Breakdown and Erosion in Modern Democracies.” *Journal of Politics*.

Week 15. Democratic Erosion III

December 7th

- Grumbach. 2021. “Laboratories of Democratic Backsliding.” Working paper.
- Mason, Lilliana, Julie Wronski, and John V. Kane. 2021. “Activating Animus: The Uniquely Social Roots of Trump Support.” *The American Political Science Review* 115 (4): 1508–16.
- Osmundsen, Mathias, Alexander Bor, Peter Bjerregaard Vahlstrup, Anja Bechmann, and Michael Bang Petersen. 2021. “Partisan Polarization Is the Primary Psychological Motivation behind Political Fake News Sharing on Twitter.” *The American Political Science Review* 115 (3): 999–1015.

Week 16. Presentation of Research Proposals

December 14th

- In class presentations of students’ research proposals
- Email Gretchen final research proposals by 5pm on December 19th.