Democracy, Dictatorship, and Regime Change

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Course Description

The purpose of this course is to examine key topics, major contributions, and recent advances in the study of democracy, dictatorship, and regime change. We will cover topics such as democracy origins, consolidation, transitions to democracy, democratization processes, origins of dictatorships, role of institutions in dictatorships, etc. We will first cover the theoretical foundations of each topic, and then we will give empirical examples.

While many countries in the international system are democratic, the quality of these democracies is questionable and varies considerably across them. Many in some of these democracies suffer from deep levels of corruption, poor elite accountability, human rights abuses and violations, and oftentimes policies that go against the very foundations of democratic governance. We will cover in the course the classic regime types (democracy, hybrid regimes, and dictatorship), transitions between them, and the strategies they (and their leaders) use to stay in power.

GOALS OF THE COURSE

The most important goal of the course is to provide students with a solid understanding of theories and empirical evidence regarding the origins, conduct, and institutional foundations of democracies and dictatorships. This will be achieved by reading the required material, discussing it in class with a critical eye, and writing short papers on assigned topics or a research paper.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS EVALUATION

- **Class Attendance and Participation** (20%): Students are expected to attend every class session, do all of the required reading before class, and come prepared to discuss it. Missing more than one class session without an excuse will adversely affect the participation grade. Participation in discussion will be judged not only by the quantity of a student’s remarks, but also by their quality.

- **Final paper** (40%): a research paper on any of the topics covered in the syllabus. Students will have to finalize the topic with the instructor before starting to work on the paper. Also, the students will have to come up with a clear research question.

- **Two Critical Review Papers** (20% each): 8 double-spaced pages maximum, at the beginning of 5th, 8th, and 11th classes. The goal is to pick an article from the readings, one that has not been discussed in class (yet), and to summarize its main argument(s), and then criticize it on various grounds – methodological, flow of argument, etc.
Readings

I hope you find these books interesting and useful beyond the purpose of reading them for this class. In addition to these books, I will assign articles which I will post ahead of time on Blackboard.

Required Texts


Keep up with the assigned readings. I hope you find them varied and interesting. In such a course it is almost impossible to assign readings that ALL students will find interesting, but I hope that the diverse articles and large range of topics will cover at least some of each student’s interests. The lectures will build partly on the readings, but not only on them, and I will add lots of information from additional sources.

POLICIES and WARNINGS

The class will combine lectures with ample opportunity for discussion of various theoretical approaches, policy issues, and trends in warfare. Informed discussion based on the readings and thoughtful consideration of the issues is encouraged; there are no right or wrong answers on these topics (nor do I claim to have such knowledge of the future), but there are informed and uninformed answers. You are encouraged to think about questions, puzzles, and issues that you find interesting while reading the weekly selections and prior to class.

The participation grade is good mainly for “brownie points.” If you end up anywhere near the borderline on grades and your involvement in discussions has convinced me you know more than was reflected in your written work, I will adjust the grade accordingly. Informed discussion cannot hurt your grade. Remember – we are talking about BORDERLINE cases. This does not substitute for satisfactory/good written work.

1. A student CANNOT receive a passing grade for the course if she/he has not completed all assignments.

2. I think I am a reasonable person, and will work with you if you have a learning disability, family emergency, or illness. In general, I expect at least a week advance notification that you will miss an assignment. I will arrange for you to make up the work in a timely manner. If you are physically unable to contact me in advance (e.g., if you wake up extremely ill), you must contact me (via e-mail or phone) as soon as possible and then bring some form of verification from a physician. Failure complete an assignment without appropriately notifying me will result in zero credit for that assignment.

3. Violations of policies on academic misconduct, including but not limited to giving or receiving unauthorized assistance on exams or assignments and plagiarism, will be treated VERY seriously.
Assignments involving academic misconduct will receive a zero, and further sanctions will be imposed. Never underestimate your professor’s intelligence, creativity, and resourcefulness!!!!

**Course Schedule**

This is a detailed, though tentative, schedule. We’ll see how we make progress and adjust the readings accordingly. However, I’ll make every effort to follow the schedule. I also reserve the right to add new readings if some will be published after the syllabus is finalized.

**Class 1** – what’s the class about, requirements, the readings, background, framework…

**Class 2 – Democracy vs Dictatorship – Conceptual Issues and Definitions**


**Class 3 – Transitions to Democracy -- Explanations**


**Class 4 – Transitions to Democracy – Correlates**

**Class 5 – Democratic Consolidation and Breakdown**


**Class 6 – Election Monitoring and Administration**


**Class 7 – Non-Democratic Regimes**

- Ronald Wintrobe, “How to understand and deal with dictatorship: an economist’s view,” *Economics of Governance* 2001, No. 2, pp. 35-58

**Classes 8+9 – Institutions in Dictatorships**


Class 10 – Taking, Maintaining, and Transferring Power in Dictatorships

• Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, Chs. 2-6

Class 11 – Popular Resistance and the Dictator’s Response

• Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, Ch. 8
Class 12 – Dealing with Dictatorships

- Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, Ch. 7.

Class 13 – Islamic Authoritarianism

- M. Steven Fish, Are Muslims Distinctive? A Look at the Evidence. 2011, Oxford University Press, Chs. 2 and 7

Class 14 – Regime Types, Foreign Policy, and Military Interventions