GVT 157 Democracy and Dictatorship: Politics in the Contemporary World

Fall 2014  Ioana Emi Matesan
PAC 136  PAC 202, 860-685-3323
M/W– 11:00 am – 12:20 pm  imatesan@wesleyan.edu

Course Description

This course examines some of the major substantive topics and debates in comparative politics, the subfield of political science that preoccupies itself primarily with understanding the political dynamics that occur within different countries. We will explore various theoretical lenses and methodological approaches, in order to equip you with the tools to critically reflect on contemporary events and political processes. Through the readings, discussions and assignments, the goal is to help you understand the major issues addressed in comparative politics, while improving your understanding of specific countries, and enhancing your speaking, writing and analytical skills.

The course is organized in six parts. We begin by asking what states are, how they emerged, and how state-building and nation-building vary in different parts of the world. The second part of the class investigates the varieties of political systems existent today. First, we examine what a democracy is, how it can be measured, and how we should conceptualize the wide spectrum of non-democratic political regimes. After considering what defines a democracy, we move on to compare the different forms of electoral systems and party systems.

The third part of the course is devoted to understanding why some countries develop democratic institutions, and others do not. While the literature on democratization is vast, we will draw from historical sociology, structural and economic explanations and cultural theories among others to find some potential answers. Because no understanding of democratization is complete without a better comprehension of how non-democratic systems work and survive, the next part of the course sheds light on how authoritarian regimes emerge and stay in power. We examine why fascism emerged in Germany, how communism evolved in Russia, why oil rich countries might be able to curtail political reforms, and how the military rose to power in Chile.

Unit five examines when it is that authoritarian regimes collapse, and what factors shape the political path after the regime breakdown. To better understand why some dictators fall and others don’t, and why some protests “succeed” while others fail, the unit concludes with a look at the 2011 wave of revolts in the Middle East and North Africa.

The last part of the course considers other contemporary challenges, such as the impact of technology on politics, economic development, and the problems of ethnic conflict and political violence. The course concludes with a reflection on the role of citizens in politics and the nature of political participation in the United States.
Class Format

This course will be primarily focused on classroom discussions, which will be occasionally complemented by short lectures. You should come to class prepared to discuss the readings, engage with the arguments, evaluate the theoretical claims, and apply them to your case study and to current events.

Readings

Required books:

These books are also on reserve at Olin Library. All other readings will be uploaded on Moodle, or are available online. Some of the weeks also include recommended readings. These additional materials can enhance your understanding of the issues discussed and can serve as valuable reference points if you have a special interest in any particular subject; however, you are not required to read these supplemental materials for class.

In addition to the course readings, you will greatly benefit from staying up on current events. There are many ways to do this quickly and efficiently, whether it is by reading a newspaper like the New York Times, reading periodically magazines like The Economist, checking BBC World News or Al Jazeera America, signing up for newsfeeds or using news apps. The tool is entirely up to you.

Assignments and Grades

Grading

The grades for this class will be based on a total of 100 possible points, broken down as follows:

- Attendance and participation: 20 points
- Paper 1 – Country Background Brief: 15 points
- Paper 2 – Country Analysis: 25 points
- Midterm: 20 points
- Final exam: 20 points

Attendance & Participation

For this class to be successful, it is necessary for everybody to come to class prepared and ready to engage in meaningful discussions and intellectual debates with one another. Therefore, attendance is mandatory, and a significant portion of your grade will be based
on your active participation in the course. Please note that after three unexcused absences, each additional absence will reduce your attendance and participation grade by 5 points.

You should come to class prepared to discuss the readings and to engage with both the course material and with your colleagues. While every topic addressed will raise different issues, there are certain sets of questions that you should keep in the back of your mind when doing all the readings. For instance: What is the main argument? How are the central concepts defined? What assumptions does the author hold? Is the author making any causal claims, and if so what are they? Is the empirical evidence convincing? Is the argument coherent and logically consistent? Is the author ignoring any potential alternative explanations? How do the claims made fit with other readings? How does the thesis help us understand current events? What are the policy implications?

Meaningful participation requires that you treat everybody with respect, regardless of whether you agree or disagree with their views. It is never appropriate for critiques to degenerate into personal attacks, and it is crucial that debates are civil, respectful and grounded in intellectual arguments. Rude and inappropriate comments or disruptive behavior (arriving late, leaving early, using cell phones, surfing the web, etc) can result in a reduced grade. Please note that while you can use your laptops to take notes or access the readings, surfing the web and the use of other electronics including cell phones is prohibited, except for emergencies.

**Paper 1 – Country Background Brief**

*3-5 pages double spaced, due in class on Monday, September 29.*

This first paper should be in the form of an informative background report on a country that you will be randomly assigned in class. You will be evaluated on your ability to collect and report relevant and reliable information in a clear and concise manner. Your paper should provide: 1) some general information about the country, such as location, population, predominant religious or ethnic composition, etc.; 2) an overview of its political system, including a discussion of what regime type best characterizes the country, how long that regime type has been in place, information about its electoral system, etc.; 3) a brief discussion of when the last elections were held, what the outcomes were, whether they were free and fair, and what the voter turnout was; and 4) a concise discussion that identifies the most important challenges for democracy or obstacles to democratization that your country is facing.

For information on various countries, the following sources will be useful:

- Freedom House
- Polity country reports
- Democracy Barometer
- World Bank
- IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems) and their election guide
- ACE Electoral Knowledge Network
- Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
- **Comparative Study of Electoral Systems** (they have reports on specific elections, but the country coverage is pretty limited)

**Paper 2 – Country Analysis**

Outline due in class on Monday, Nov. 3

Paper - 5-7 pages double spaced, due in class on Monday, Nov. 17

After you establish some basic facts about your country and identify its regime type in the first paper, in this second paper you move on to a more in-depth analysis of why your country is either democratic or non-democratic, and what the prospects for the future are. If your country is a democracy, your paper should offer a persuasive account of what factors best account for the rise of democracy there, and whether a democratic reversal is likely. If your country falls into any other category of regime type, your paper should offer a convincing analysis of what the greatest obstacles to democratization are, and how feasible it will be to overcome these problems in the future. Your paper should integrate at least three outside academic readings, in addition to engaging the readings from the course. You will be evaluated on your ability to apply the readings and theoretical insights to your case, the persuasiveness of your thesis and the strength of the evidence presented, the extent to which you consider counter-arguments, and your overall writing style (spelling, grammar, composition).

Please note that you are required to turn in a first draft of your paper outline two weeks before the paper is due. This draft will not be graded, but will serve as an opportunity to receive feedback for your paper. The outline need not be longer than 2 pages, should include a thesis statement, bullet points of what your main arguments will be, and a bibliography that includes the outside academic readings that you are consulting.

**Midterm Exam**

In class on Monday, October 13.

The midterm will be an in class exam in the form of short essay questions that will cover all the readings from the first seven weeks of class.

**Final Exam**

Take-home paper, due in hard copy in my office (PAC 202) by Wednesday, December 10, by 5:00 pm.

The final exam will be a take-home, open-book exam that will cover the materials from the entire semester. You will receive the essay questions for the final exam and the detailed guidelines in class on Monday, December 1st.

**Other Policies**

Unless you have a documented emergency or we make arrangements in advance, late assignments will be severely penalized, and you will lose 2 points for each day that it is late. I will not accept any assignment if it is more than three days late.
If you need to miss class because of a religious observance, please notify me as early as possible so we can make arrangements in advance on how to keep you up to speed.

Please note that I reserve the right to make changes and adjustments to the syllabus throughout the semester. Should such changes happen, you will be notified in class and via Moodle.

**Grading Rubric**

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<tr>
<th>Points Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>97-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>93-96</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>50-52</td>
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<tr>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Under 50</td>
<td>F</td>
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**Academic Honesty**

Please note that in this course, no form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. Infractions can result in you failing the entire course. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please visit:

http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/plagiarism.html

If you want to learn more about how to properly use citations, you can read the guidelines offered by the Wesleyan library at: http://libguides.wesleyan.edu/citing

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, room 021, or call 860-685-5581 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

**Other Services**

You are encouraged to take advantage of the many services available to you at Wesleyan. Writing workshop tutors are available to help you with your papers. For more information, visit wesleyan.edu/writing/workshop or call 860-685-2440.
For assistance with your research on your country, you may also want to schedule an appointment with a librarian. You can do so online at: http://www.wesleyan.edu/library/howdoi/makeanappointment.html

### COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

#### PART I - States, Nations and Regimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday - Sept. 1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Review of syllabus and course expectations. Discussion of why we study theories, and how we evaluate arguments in political science.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday - Sept. 8</td>
<td>State-Building Beyond the European Context</td>
<td>How did states emerge in the Middle East and North Africa? What are the legacies of state formation on contemporary politics? Are war-making and state-making still inter-related in today’s world? What was the impact of war on state strength in Afghanistan and Vietnam?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday - Sept. 10</td>
<td>Stateness, Nationalism and Democratization</td>
<td>What is the difference between state-building and nation-building? How are the two processes related to democratization? Do multinational states face different challenges of democratization than more homogenous societies?</td>
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READINGS

RECOMMENDED READINGS

PART II – COMPARING POLITICAL SYSTEMS

Monday – Sept. 15
Definitions of Democracy

OVERVIEW
What is a democracy? Are elections the essence of democracy? Are there different levels of democratization?

Country assignments in class.

READINGS

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Wednesday – Sept. 17
Variations in Political Regimes

OVERVIEW
What is the difference between liberalization and democratization? How do we distinguish among non-democratic regimes?

READINGS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday – Sept. 22</th>
<th>Elections and Electoral Systems</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>OVERVIEW</strong></td>
<td>What are the benefits and disadvantages of different electoral systems? When, why and how does electoral reform happen? What were the consequences of the electoral reforms in the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia? What electoral system is in place in your country? When were the most recent elections there? Were they free and fair?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Wednesday – Sept. 24</th>
<th>Political Parties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>OVERVIEW</strong></td>
<td>What is the role of political parties? How do different party systems affect representation and governance? How was the rise of the Green Party in Germany affected by the political system? How many parties are there in your country? Are there important ideological differences among them?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Rudig, Wolfgang. 2012. “The Perennial Success of the German
### PART III – DETERMINANTS OF DEMOCRACY

#### Monday – Sept. 29

**Structural Determinants of Democracy**

**ASSIGNMENT**

**Paper 1 due in hard copy at the beginning of class.**

**OVERVIEW**

How did class relations impact the rise of democracy in England? Why does Moore argue that violence contributed to gradualism?

**READINGS**


**RECOMMENDED READINGS**


#### Wednesday – Oct. 1

**Modernization and Economic Determinants of Democracy**

**OVERVIEW**

What is modernization? Through what mechanisms does it impact democratization? How does economic development affect democratization? How would you characterize your country in terms of economic development? Have economic factors impacted the level of democratization (or lack thereof)?

**READINGS**


**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

## Monday – Oct. 6
### Cultural Aspects of Democratization

**OVERVIEW**
Does culture impact the propensity for democratization? What is civic culture? Does it contribute to democratization, or is it an outcome of democratization?

How would you characterize your country in terms of its culture?

**Midterm study sheet handed out in class.**

**READINGS**

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

## Wednesday – Oct. 8
### The Role of Civil Society

**OVERVIEW**
What is the impact of civil society on regime type? What does civil society in your country look like? Has it contributed to political change, and if so how?

**READINGS**

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**
### PART IV - THE DYNAMICS OF AUTHORITARIANISM

**Monday – Oct. 13**  
**MIDTERM (in class)**

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**Wednesday – Oct. 15**  
**The Rise of Fascism**

**OVERVIEW**  
What factors led to the rise of fascism in Germany? How and why did it spread in the German society?

**READINGS**  

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**Monday – October 20**  
**NO CLASS – FALL BREAK**

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**Wednesday – Oct. 22**  
**The Rise and Evolution of Communism**

**OVERVIEW**  
What was the vision of the communists in Russia, and how did it evolve over time? What does Janos suggest was the source of legitimacy for the various communist regimes? What factors led to the decline of communism and to the fall of the Soviet Union, according to Janos?

**READINGS**  

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**Monday – Oct. 27**  
**Rentier States and the Resource Curse**

**OVERVIEW**  
What is a rentier state? Through what mechanisms is oil argued to hinder democratization? Are natural resources a blessing or a curse?
Is your country rich in natural resources? If so, has it affected the regime type?

**READINGS**


**RECOMMENDED READINGS**


**Wednesday – Oct. 29**

**Military Dictatorships**

**OVERVIEW**

What are some of the root causes of the military dictatorship in Chile? How did the military manage to stay in power? What role does the military play in your country? Is there civilian control of the military? Does the military ever become involved in politics?

**READINGS**


**RECOMMENDED READING**


**PART V – AUTHORITARIAN BREAKDOWNS AND POLITICAL TRANSITIONS**

**Monday – Nov. 3**

**Authoritarian Breakdowns and Authoritarian Legacies**

**ASSIGNMENT**

Outline of paper 2 due in class.

**OVERVIEW**

When, how and why do authoritarian regimes collapse? What
happens after the fall of a dictator? What are some of the legacies that impact subsequent regimes even after an authoritarian breakdown?

**READINGS**


**RECOMMENDED READINGS**


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**Wednesday – Nov. 5**

**OVERVIEW**

Who are the most powerful actors that shape how a transition period unfolds? When do transitions start, and when/how do they end? What factors can account for the emergence of a democratic regime?

**READINGS**


**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

### Monday – Nov. 10

#### The “Arab Spring”

**OVERVIEW**
What explains the rise and the diffusion of the 2011 protests in the Middle East and North Africa? How can we understand the divergent outcomes of these protests? Why is Syria such a powder keg, and what is its influence in the region?

**READINGS**

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

### PART VI – NEW OPPORTUNITIES & CONTINUING CHALLENGES

#### Wednesday – Nov. 12

#### The Impact of Technology on Political Reforms – China

**OVERVIEW**
How does technology impact the political climate in China? Are technological advances paving the way for political reforms, or providing new tools for social control?

**READINGS**
### Monday – Nov. 17  
**Economic Development**

**ASSIGNMENT**  
Paper 2 due in hard copy at the beginning of class.

**OVERVIEW**  
Did the communist states have a successful model of development? What is the relationship between economic development and political opening? What is the impact of colonialism on development in tropical Africa?

**READINGS**  

### Wednesday – Nov. 19  
**Development and Dependency**

**OVERVIEW**  
Why does the capitalist system lead some countries to become underdeveloped? Is there any room to break away from the patterns of dependency?

**READINGS**  

### Monday – Nov. 24  
**Political Violence and the Inclusion-Moderation Debate**

**OVERVIEW**  
Does inclusion in the political process lead to the moderation of radical groups? What impact does political inclusion have on Islamist groups?

**READINGS**  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday – Nov. 26</td>
<td>NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday – Dec. 1</td>
<td>Ethnic Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OVERVIEW</strong></td>
<td>How does ethnic violence start and spread? When is ethnicity politically salient? Are there viable institutional solutions to ethnic conflict?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday – Dec. 3</td>
<td>Reflecting Back and Moving Forward</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OVERVIEW</strong></td>
<td>Wrapping up. Reflecting back on the dynamics of democratization and authoritarianism, what is the role of elections and of political participation? Do citizens have agency?</td>
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**FINAL EXAM DUE** Wednesday, December 10, by 5:00 pm. Hard copy, in my office PAC 202.