DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP:  
POLITICS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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ASSESSMENT:  
1) Mid-term test in class on March 5. [20 points]  
2) Three 5-7 page assignments due on Feb 20, April 3 and May 5. [20 points each]  
3) Final examination on Tuesday May 12 at 9.00. [20 points]  
4) Extra credit – a 1-2 page report on outside lectures – and occasional quizzes [5 points]  

Students are required to attend every class and to complete the required reading.  
Do not use a laptop to surf the web or check email during class.  

Beware of plagiarism i.e. using material not written by yourself and without clear attribution to the source.  
Always include “quotation marks” if you copy material from a website or other source.

GOALS OF THE COURSE

The world’s political systems are increasingly polarized between winners and losers, between countries that have ‘made it’ into liberal democracy and market capitalism, and those that remain mired in poverty, stagnation, inequality and war. However, there is growing skepticism about whether democracy is a cure-all solution. Only by studying individual countries can we understand the variety of political and economic systems and the complexity of the modern world, despite the homogenizing process of globalization.

To get up to speed on contemporary events students should read the international section of the New York Times or Washington Post every day. They are available free on the web (nytimes.com and washingtonpost.com).

This course aims to provide you with a conceptual framework, a box of tools in order to help answer the question of who rules, and how, in each of the world’s 196 countries. In fact you will be offered three theoretical frameworks, prisms through which to view the world. Each of these theories is both descriptive and normative - they both describe the world and make a value judgment about what is right and wrong.

The three theories are:  
1) Liberal democracy or pluralism,  
2) Marxism and the theory of imperialism, and  
3) Elite theory

We will try to survey the whole range of political systems currently in operation, looking at the First World (Europe and Japan), what used to be the Second World (Russia and China), and the Third World (Egypt, India, South Africa). The goal is to learn how to grasp the unique historical, cultural and institutional factors that are key to understanding the political dynamics of a given country.

Note that this course is Comparative Politics, focusing on political process within a given country. A different field of political science, International Relations, deals with global issues and institutions that go beyond a state’s borders.
READINGS

Required books:  
Jeff Kopstein &  
Mark Lichbach (eds)  
Comparative Politics: Interests, Identities and Institutions  
(Fourth Edition: Cambridge University Press, 2014)  
Karl Marx & F. Engels  
The Communist Manifesto (Signet Classic edition, 1998)  
James Galvin  
The Arab Uprisings (Oxford University Press, 2012)  
George Orwell  
1984 (1948)

All the readings on the syllabus (except these books) have hyperlinks that will take you direct to the article in the Wesfiles folder for this course. I only use Moodle for grading, not for posting readings.

Required or Core readings are the first items listed for each class.  
Optional readings are extra sources that I will be discussing in class. The more of them you are able to read, the more you will get out of the class, and the better your performance in papers and tests.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE ESSAYS

Each student will be randomly assigned three countries in the second week of class.

You will research the political system in those countries and then write an essay applying one theory to one country i.e. a liberal analysis of Country A, a Marxist analysis of Country B, an Elite Theory analysis of Country C.

Each paper should be 5-7 pages long, consisting of:

- an introduction summarizing your main points.

- a page or so on the political history of the country, as interpreted through the theory being applied. Do not provide a detailed historical chronology.

- a couple of pages explaining how the current political system works, its structure and problems, as seen through the prism of the given theory. Who rules, and how? Is the political situation stable or unstable? What are the threats to stability? What does the theory propose should be done to improve things?

- a page discussing the advantages and disadvantages to using the given theory to analyze the country.

The assignment should be sent to me as an email attachment (Word) by 4.00 pm on the day it is due. Remember what I am looking for is not only facts, but critical analysis of political institutions and processes.

For the history and overview of the political system you should begin with the history and annual reports on each country in Encyclopedia Britannica or Wikipedia, and the CIA and State Department sites listed on the next page.

Do not cut and paste material from internet sources into your essay.

You must locate and use at least one book and two academic journal articles, to give you a sense of academic approaches to the country.

Use at least three newspaper articles from sources such as Wash Post or New York Times to bring you up to date.
WEB SOURCES

Here is a list of some of the most useful sites, in roughly descending order of importance.

- Freedom House
  - Annual country reports (click on the Country Reports button)
- BBC country profiles
  - Archive of recent articles on each country in the world. Note also the handy chronology of major political events.
- Library of Congress Country Studies
  - Detailed descriptions of institutions and recent events
- CIA World Factbook
  - Key facts and good socio-economic data on each country; top right search box.
- Encyclopedia Britannica
  - Access it through Olin library website. Type in a country’s name and you will find articles on government and history. Click on the box ‘Year in review’ o the left and you will find articles summarizing the major political events each year.
- The Economist
  - File of articles on individual countries, search through index.
- Open Democracy
  - European site with lively articles about democratic prospects around the world.
- Human Development Report
  - Development reports and country data, from the UN Development Project.
- Gapminder
  - Click on Gapminder World to load a striking graphics program using HDR data.

For the Marxism paper:
- In Defense of Marxism
  - Theoretical articles and news analysis.
- World Socialist Website
  - Search for stories on your country.

You should also search for relevant articles on your assigned countries in political science journals.
Go to: www.wesleyan.edu/library/ then click on Journal Locator under Electronic Resources

Useful academic journals:
- Current History
- The Journal of Democracy
- Comparative Politics
- Comparative Political Studies

Week 1
Jan 29

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

We are living in a democracy - but what exactly is a democracy?

Core reading:
- Robert Dahl
  - On Democracy, 35-43, 83-99
- Amartya Sen
  - Development as Freedom, Ch. 6, 146-159

Week 2
Feb 3

THE ROOTS OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

What was the classic model Athenian direct democracy? Things changed with the discovery of individual rights and representative government in the 18th century.

Core reading:
- Aristotle
  - Politics (350 BC), Book 4
- Benjamin Constant
  - The Liberty of the Ancients Compared to That of the Moderns (1816)
- The Economist
  - ‘The Magna Carta at 800,’ 20 Dec 2014

Optional reading:
- James Madison
  - The Federalist Papers (1787) no. 10
- Alexis de Tocqueville
  - Democracy in America (1836) chs. 1-5
- Wikipedia
  - ‘Human Rights’
**Week 2**

Feb 5

**WHAT IS THE STATE?**

Does Max Weber’s classic definition of the state still apply? What do states do?

Is the state obsolete in the era of globalization?

**Core reading:**
- Wikipedia: ‘The State,’ ‘Nation state’
- Eric Posner: ‘Human rights law is a complete failure,’ *Wash Post*, 1/14/2015
- Francis Fukuyama: ‘Why is democracy performing so poorly?’, *Journal of Democracy* 26: 1, Jan 2015

**Week 3**

Feb 10-12

**BRITAIN**

What are the differences between the US and British democratic traditions?

How does a parliamentary system differ from a presidential system?

What was Thatcherism, and why did it appear when it did? What did New Labour stand for?

How is the Tory-Lib Dem coalition working out?

**Core reading:**
- Kopstein & Lichbach: *Comparative Politics*, *Introduction*, ch. 1 and ch. 3 Rutland on Britain
- Vernon Bogdanor: ‘The historic legacy of Tony Blair,’ *Current History*, March 2007
- The London Riots of 2011

**Week 4**

Feb 17

**FRANCE & GERMANY**

The reconstruction of democracy after 1945 in France and Germany.

The workings of proportional representation and coalition governments; corporatism and the welfare state.

**Core reading:**
- Kopstein & Lichbach: ch. 4 Mc Falls on France and ch. 5 Gould on Germany

**Optional reading:**

**Week 4**

Feb 19

**ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY**

How did democracy evolve as the right to vote expanded during the 19th and 20th centuries?

Why did it take so long for women to get the vote? What is Anthony Downs’ ‘median voter theorem’?

**Core reading:**
- Philippe Schmitter: ‘What democracy is...and is not,’ *Journal of Democracy*, 2/3, 1991

Continued…..
Optional reading:
Anthony Downs  
An Economic Theory of Democracy (1958) ch. 8
Robert Putnam  
‘Bowling alone: America’s declining social capital,’ Journal of Democracy, 6/1, Jan 1995
Caroline Pateman  
‘Three questions about womanhood suffrage,’ from Caroline Daley & Melanie Nolan (eds.) Suffrage and Beyond, 1995

First assignment, 5-7 pages, to be submitted on Friday Feb 20 by 4.00 pm:

A liberal democratic analysis of country A. How democratic is country A? If not, why not? How could democracy in that country be improved or strengthened? Is that likely to happen?

To research this paper start with the Freedom House country reports (click on the Country Reports button). Also search for articles about your country in Journal of Democracy and through the Olin library website.

Week 5  
Feb 24  
JAPAN

Japan was the first non-European country to modernize itself. After 1945, it became a democracy, and enjoyed great economic success? How does Japanese democracy work?

Core reading:
Kopstein & Lichbach  
Comparative Politics, ch. 6 Schreurs on Japan
Steven Vogel  
‘Japan’s long road to competitive politics,’ Current History, Sept 2010

Week 5-6  
Feb 26-Mar 3  
MARXISM AND IMPERIALISM

According to Marxists liberal democracy is a fraudulent theory that masks domination by the capitalist class, and national politics as subordinate to an international system of global imperialism. What solutions does Marxism propose?

Core reading:
Karl Marx and Frederick Engels  
The Communist Manifesto, (1848)
Karl Marx  
‘The future results of the British rule in India’ (1853)
Optional reading:
Phil Gasper  
‘The meaning of the Manifesto today,’ Socialist Worker, 18 Nov 2005
Vladimir Lenin  
Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism (1916), ch. 7
[the whole book is online here]
Andre Gunder Frank  
The Development of Underdevelopment (1966)

Week 6  
Mar 5  
MID-TERM TEST

A test of your grasp of the theories and concepts introduced in the course so far. The in-class test lasts one hour and include five short identification questions and two short essays.

Mar 9-22  
SPRING BREAK
Week 7
Mar 24

THE SOVIET UNION

The Soviet Union tried to build a state on Marxist principles. Their system was copied in two dozen other countries, usually with disastrous results. How did the Soviet system work? What is a ‘totalitarian’ regime? Why did Gorbachev launch perestroika - and why did it fail? Where is Russia headed today?

Kopstein & Lichbach  Comparative Politics, ch. 7 Hanson on Russia
Leslie Holmes  ‘Totalitarianism,’ International Encyc. of Social & Behavioral Sciences 1984
George Orwell

Week 7
Mar 26

POST-SOVIET RUSSIA

Why did democracy fail to take root in Russia in the 1990s? What is the basis of Putin’s political power?

Core reading:
Dmitri Trenin  ‘The legacy of Vladimir Putin,’ Current History, Oct 2007
Peter Rutland  ‘Russia’s flawed democracy,’ Current History, Oct 1998
Freedom House  ‘Russia Country Report 2014’
Lilia Shevtsova  ‘Medvedev’s Potemkin modernization,’ Current History, October 2010

Week 8
Mar 31-Apr 2

CHINA

What were the differences between Chinese and Soviet socialism? Why is China, unlike Russia, still a Leninist state? How come China has done a better job of managing the transition to capitalism than Russia? Will China become a democracy in the near future?

Core reading:
Kopstein & Lichbach  Comparative Politics, ch. 8 Wu on China
Henry Rowen  ‘When will China be free,’ Journal of Democracy, 18/3, July 2007
PBS  China From the Inside (2007 documentary)

Optional reading:
Freedom House  China Country Report 2014
Andrew Walder  ‘Why China’s regime has staying power,’ Current History, Sept 2009
Martin Dimitrov  ‘The resilient authoritarians,’ Current History, Jan 2008
Bruce Dickson  ‘The future of China’s party state,’ Current History, Sept 2007

Second assignment, 5-7 pages, to be submitted on Friday April 3 by 4.00 pm:

A Marxist analysis of country B. How would a Marxist assess the political and economic situation in country B? Is it stable or unstable? What classes or political forces exist in that country that could overthrow the colonial dependency or capitalist exploitation that prevails there? Even if a revolution is not likely, what “progressive forces” could improve the lot of the oppressed?
Week 9
Apr 7-9

ELITE THEORY

There is a third theory that combines some elements of liberalism and Marxism, while rejecting most of the ideas in these theories. Elite theory offers a framework for explaining the persistence of authoritarianism. Why have there been so many military coups? Why are authoritarian leaders so adept at clinging to power? Why do some launch modernizing reforms and not others? When do revolutions occur? Can they succeed?

Core reading:
Samuel P. Huntington  Political Order in Changing Societies  (1971) 1-58
John Higley & G. Field  Elitism  (1980) 1-68
‘Coup d’etat’  govintelligence.com

Optional reading:
Fareed Zakaria  ‘The rise of illiberal democracy’  Foreign Affairs, 76/6 Nov 97
G. William Domhoff  Who Rules America  website on current US elites
Alan Wolfe  ‘The power elite now,’  American Prospect, 10/44, 1999

Week 10
Apr 14

SOUTH AFRICA

The collapse of the apartheid regime was a major triumph for democracy. It was revolutionary change – but there was no revolution. Why did the Afrikaners agree to give up power? Can South Africa be a model for other African states?

Core reading:
Kopstein & Lichbach  Comparative Politics, ch. 12 Handley on South Africa
Bill Keller  ‘South Africa since Mandela,’  New York Times 12/26/2012
Antoinette Handley  ‘The new South Africa,’  Current History, May 2004
                      Long Night’s Journey into Day  (2000 documentary)
Optional reading:
Antoinette Handley  ‘The new South Africa,’  Current History, May 2004
Freedom House  South Africa Country Report 2012
R.W. Johnson  ‘Zuma’s first year,’  Current History, May 2010
Robert Mattes  ‘South Africa: democracy without the people?’  Journal of Democracy, 12/1, Jan 2002

Week 10
Apr 16

INDIA

India made the transition from colonial rule to become the world’s largest democracy. How can a country so poor, and so divided by religious and ethnic strife, sustain itself as a democracy?

Core reading:
Kopstein & Lichbach  Comparative Politics, ch. 10 Sil on India

Optional reading:
Indrani Bagchi  ‘A tale of two Singh,’  Current History, April 2011
Freedom House  ‘India 2014’
Week 11
Apr 21

MEXICO AND LATIN AMERICA

Mexico had a revolution that led to one-party rule, but not Soviet-style socialism. In 2000 the PRI allowed a free election which was won by the opposition candidate, Vicente Fox. Mexico was not alone. In the 1990s all the Latin American countries, except Cuba, made the transition to democracy.

Kopstein & Lichbach, *Comparative Politics*, ch. 9 Gill on Mexico
Freedom House
Alejandro Toledo, ‘Democracy with development,’ *Journal of Democracy*, 41/4 Oct 2010
Optional reading
Denise Dresser, ‘Fox’s Mexico,’ *Current History*, Feb 2005
Jorge Castaneda, ‘The year of the ballot,’ *Current History*, Feb 2007

Week 11
Apr 23

ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY (pre 2011)

Before 2011, the academic literature was trying to explain the absence of democracy in the Arab world. What kinds of political system are found in Moslem countries? Are Islam and democracy compatible?

Core reading:
Eva Bellin, ‘The robustness of authoritarianism in the Middle East,’ *Comparative Politics* 36/2, 2004, 139-157
Stephen Fish, ‘Democracy’, ch. 7 in *Are Muslims Distinctive?* (2011)

Optional reading:
Larry Diamond, ‘Why no Arab democracies?’ *J. of Democracy* 21/1, Jan 2010, 93-112
Kavita Ramdas, ‘Feminists and fundamentalists,’ *Current History*, March 2006
Vali Nasr, ‘The rise of “Muslim Democracy,”’ *Jr. of Democracy*, 16/2, Apr 2005
Adrian Karatnycky, ‘Moslem countries and the democracy gap,’ *Jr. of Dem*, 13/1, Jan 2002

Week 12
Apr 28-30

THE ARAB SPRING

The uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya caught everyone by surprise. Why did they break out? How important were social media in these revolutions? What are the prospects for stable democracies emerging in the Arab world?

Core reading:
Tina Rosenberg, ‘Revolution U,’ *Foreign Policy*, 16 Feb 2011
CBS News, *How a slap started Tunisia’s revolution* 60 Minutes, 20 Feb 2011
Tarek Masoud, ‘Has the door slammed on Arab democracy?’ *J. of Dem*. 21: 5 Jan 2015

Optional reading:
CONCLUSION

What are the prospects for democracy world-wide? Can democracy survive and prosper? Can it meet the challenges of ethnic conflict, poverty, inequality, and environmental decay?

**Core reading:**
- *The Economist* ‘What’s gone wrong with democracy?’ 28 Feb 2014
- Arch Puddington ‘Freedom in the world 2014’ Freedom House

**Optional reading:**
- Seymour M. Lipset ‘The social prerequisites of democracy revisited,’ *American Sociological Review*, 59, Feb 1994
- Larry Diamond ‘Why democracies survive,’ *Journal of Democracy*, 22/1, Jan. 2011
- Alejandro Toledo ‘Democracy with development,’ *Journal of Democracy*, 21/4, Oct 2010

**Third assignment, 5-7 pages, to be submitted on Tuesday May 5 by 4.00 pm:**

An Elite theory analysis of country C. How would an Elite Theorist assess the political and economic situation in country C? Who makes up the ruling elite, and what is the basis for their power? Is the situation stable or unstable? What classes or political forces exist that could threaten or promote stability?

**Tuesday, May 12, 9.00 am FINAL EXAM**

A test of your grasp of the theories and concepts introduced in the course, and the main features of the cases studies in class. The final will cover the entire syllabus but with a focus on the second half.

Same format as the mid-term: one hour to answer 5 short identification questions and 2 short essay questions.