

Political Science 244A/444A: Authoritarian Politics

Lisa Blaydes*

Winter 2021

Class: 10:00-11:20 am, Monday and Wednesday
Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom.
Course assistant: Ashley Fabrizio (amfab@stanford.edu)

Course Overview

This course offers a thematic approach to the study of authoritarian politics. We will cover the major areas of political science research on autocratic governance while simultaneously building empirical knowledge about the politics of particular authoritarian regimes. The course goals include:

- To acquaint students with the leading theories and empirical findings associated with the study of autocratic regimes. Each class meeting will focus on a particular theme or case study.
- To expose students to different research strategies.
- To develop seminar skills. Students will be asked to present the readings, to write short papers to be delivered to the seminar group, and to engage in critical discussions of the readings.

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the following basis:

1. Writing (30%) — Students will write papers that respond to the readings for a particular class session. These papers should be between 1,000 and 1,500 words. An exemplary paper proposes and defends a thesis related to the topic of the class; addresses anticipated objections to the thesis; and synthesizes the relevant, associated readings. These papers will be posted to the “Discussions” section of Canvas the day before the class meeting so that all students will have a chance to read the papers.
2. Reading and Class Participation (30%)— Students are expected to read all items listed for common reading for the class meeting and be prepared to offer their reactions to the readings.
3. Presentations (20%) — Students will be responsible for presenting the readings during class each week and leading the seminar. Each student should sign-up to present once over the course of the quarter.

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4. Examination (20%) — In the 10th week, a take-home exam will be distributed. The examination will be short and “open book.”

Students will have the option to enroll in PS 244A/444A for 3, 4 or 5 units. The evaluation scheme is common for students enrolled for different numbers of units but the number of response papers will vary depending on the units. For students enrolled for three units, two papers will be required; four units, three papers; five units, four papers.

Agenda of Topics and Readings

All readings will be available on Canvas. The agenda of topics and readings is as follows:

January 11: Introduction

Svolik, Milan. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

January 13: Varieties of Autocracy

Gandhi, Jennifer. 2008. *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

Geddes, Barbara. 1999. “What do we know about Democratization after Twenty Years?” *Annual Review of Political Science*. 2.

Wintrobe, Ronald. 1998. *The Political Economy of Dictatorship*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

January 18: Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday

Optional assignment: Choose one of the following two films (available through library course reserves) and post a short reaction in the “Discussions” section of Canvas: *The Death of Stalin* (2017) and *The Killing Fields* (1984).

January 20: Authoritarian Coalitions

Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright and Erica Frantz. 2018. *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization and Collapse*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-2.

Magaloni, Beatriz. 2008. “Credible Power-Sharing and the Longevity of Authoritarian Rule.” *Comparative Political Studies*. 41(4).

January 25: Case Study — The Rise of German Authoritarianism

Berman, Sheri. 1997. “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic.” *World Politics*. 49(3).

Ermakoff, Ivan. 2008. *Ruling Oneself Out: A Theory of Collective Abdications*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Preface.

King, Gary, Ori Rosen, Martin Tanner, and Alexander Wagner. 2008. "Ordinary Economic Voting Behavior in the Extraordinary Election of Adolf Hitler." *Journal of Economic History*. 68(4).

January 27: Totalitarianism

Arendt, Hannah. 1956. "Authority in the Twentieth Century." *Review of Politics*. 18(4).

Linz, Juan. 2000. *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. Chapter 2.

Revkin, Mara. 2016. "The Legal Foundations of the Islamic State." *Brookings Project on US Relations with the Islamic World*. 23.

February 1: Case Study — Autocracy and Famine

Kung, James and Shuo Chen. 2011. "The Tragedy of the Nomenklatura: Career Incentives and Political Radicalism during China's Great Leap Famine." *American Political Science Review*. 105(1).

Rozenas, Arturas and Yuri Zhukov. "Mass Repression and Political Loyalty: Evidence from Stalin's 'Terror by Hunger'." *American Political Science Review*. 113(2).

Sen, Amartya. 1999. *Democracy as Freedom*. New York, NY: Random House. pages 178-188.

February 3: Parties and Elections

Blaydes, Lisa. 2011. *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3.

Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright and Erica Frantz. 2018. *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization and Collapse*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6.

Magaloni, Beatriz. 2006. *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Introduction.

February 8: Distributive Politics

Albertus, Michael. 2015. *Autocracy and Redistribution: The Politics of Land Reform*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1 and pages 60-75.

Hsieh, Chang-Tai, Edward Miguel, Daniel Ortega and Francisco Rodriguez. 2011. "The Price of Political Opposition: Evidence from Venezuela's Maisanta." *American Economic Journal*. 3(2).

Pan, Jennifer. 2020. *Welfare for Autocrats: How Social Assistance in China Cares for Its Rulers*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

February 10: Institutions and Economics

Shih, Victor, Chris Adolph, and Mingxing Liu. 2012. "Getting Ahead in the Communist Party: Explaining the Advancement of Central Committee Members in China." *American Political Science Review*.

106(1).

Treux, Rory. 2014. "The Returns to Office in a 'Rubber Stamp' Parliament." *American Political Science Review*. 108(2).

Wright, Joseph. 2008. "Do Authoritarian Institutions Constrain? How Legislatures Affect Economic Growth and Investment." *American Journal of Political Science*. 52(2).

February 15: Case Study — Autocracy and Oil Rents

Hertog, Steffen. 2010. "The Sociology of the Gulf Rentier Systems: Societies of Intermediaries." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 52(2).

Jones, Calvert. 2019. "Adviser to The King: Experts, Rationalization, and Legitimacy." *World Politics*. 71(1).

Yom, Sean and Gregory Gause. 2012. "Resilient Royals: How Arab Monarchies Hang On." *Journal of Democracy*. 23(4).

February 17: Repression

Blaydes, Lisa. 2018. *State of Repression: Iraq under Saddam Hussein*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1.

Finkel, Evgeny. 2015. "The Phoenix Effect of State Repression: Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust." *American Political Science Review*. 109(2).

Greitens, Sheena. *Dictators and their Secret Police: Coercive Institutions and State Violence*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2.

February 22: Political Culture

Cantoni, Davide, Yuyu Chen, David Yang, Noam Yuchtman, and Jane Zhang 2017. "Curriculum and Ideology." *Journal of Political Economy*. 125(2).

Huang, Haifeng. 2015. "Propaganda as Signaling." *Comparative Politics*. 47(4).

Wedeen, Lisa. 1998. "Acting 'As If': Symbolic Politics and Social Control in Syria." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 40(3).

February 24: Censorship and Information Manipulation

Esberg, Jane. 2020. "Censorship as Reward: Evidence from Pop Culture Censorship in Chile." *American Political Science Review*. 114(3).

King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret Roberts. 2013. "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression." *American Political Science Review*. 107(2).

Rozenas, Arturas and Denis Stukal. 2019. "How Autocrats Manipulate Economic News: Evidence from Russia's State-Controlled Television." *Journal of Politics*. 81(3).

March 1: Resistance Tactics

Fu, Diana. 2017. *Mobilizing without the Masses: Control and Contention in China*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

O'Brien, Kevin. 1996. "Rightful Resistance." *World Politics*. 49(1).

Scott, James. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. pages 136-156.

March 3: Coups

Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright and Erica Frantz. 2018. *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization and Collapse*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 8.

Quinlivan, James. 1999. "Coup-Proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East." *International Security*. 24(2).

Roessler, Philip. 2011. "The Enemy Within: Personal Rule, Coups, and Civil War in Africa." *World Politics*. 63(2).

March 8: Revolutions and Revolutionary Thresholds

Kuran, Timur. 1991. "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989." *World Politics*. 44(1): 7-48.

Slater, Dan. 2009. "Revolutions, Crackdowns, and Quiescence: Communal Elites and Democratic Mobilization in Southeast Asia." *American Journal of Sociology*. 115(1).

Solnick, Steven. 1996. "The Breakdown of Hierarchies in the Soviet Union and China: A Neoinstitutional Perspective." *World Politics*. 48(2).

March 10: Authoritarian Enclaves

Mickey, Robert. 2015. *Paths Out of Dixie: The Democratization of Authoritarian Enclaves in America's Deep South, 1944-1972*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 2.

Parker, Christopher Sebastian and Christopher Towler. 2019. "Race and Authoritarianism in American Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 22.

March 15: Case Study — Police and Policing

Magaloni, Beatriz and Luis Rodriguez. 2020. "Institutionalized Police Brutality: Torture, the Militarization of Security, and the Reform of Inquisitorial Criminal Justice in Mexico." *American Political Science Review*. 144(4).

Soss, Joe and Vesla Weaver. 2017. "Police are Our Government: Politics, Political Science, and the Policing of Race–class Subjugated Communities." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 20.

March 17: Undermining Democracy

Levitsky, Steven and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How Democracies Die*. New York, NY: Crown. Introduction, Chapters 1 and 4.

Przeworski, Adam. 2019. *Crises of Democracy*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 2 and 6.

Note for Students

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). In addition, students should retain receipts for books and other course-related expenses, as these may be qualified educational expenses for tax purposes. If you are an undergraduate receiving financial aid, you may be eligible for additional financial aid for required books and course materials if these expenses exceed the aid amount in your award letter.