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Government 157
Wesleyan University
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Office Hours:
By appointment
Online

Class Meetings:
Mon. & Weds, 1:00 - 2:20 PM
Online

Democracy and Dictatorship: Politics in the Contemporary World

World events in the past three decades have underscored the importance of rethinking age-old questions about democracy: what it means, why it matters, what sorts of institutions can embody it, and what can be done to build, support, and deepen it. This course will explore these issues in light of the experiences of the United States, Sweden, Russia, and Tanzania.

The first part of the course begins by exploring conceptual and normative issues related to democracy, moves on to review how democracy is being studied in contemporary political science, and has a special focus on electoral rights and electoral behavior, this being an election year.

The second part of the course consists of four country studies. The first is Sweden, where we'll study basic political institutions, the political party system, the welfare state, gender quotas, and contemporary politics, including the rise of the populist right and the government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which might be generously characterized as understated and not too successful.

The second country study is Tanzania, where we'll explore the pre-colonial political system of the Makonde (an ethnolinguistic group in the southeast), inquire as to the roots of the minimization of conflict among ethnicities in one of the world's most ethnically diverse countries, evaluate Julius Nyerere's effort to create a democratic one-party state, and investigate democratic backsliding under the current president John Magufuli, whose pandemic response has been even worse than Sweden's.

The third country study is the United States. Drawing on the theoretical works about democratic backsliding and about democracy and populism, we'll try to figure out why Trump won the 2016 election, whether democracy is currently being dismantled in the United States, where the US stands compared to other countries on the integrity of its elections, and how the Trump administration has responded to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Between the last two classes we'll discuss whatever results of the 2020 election we have in hand.

The fourth country study is of Russia and the former Soviet Union. Russia's transition from the former USSR and one-party rule was one of the most important events of the late 20th century. We examine Marxism and Leninism, the ideologies that influenced the Soviet political system, review the historical legacies that have shaped and constrained the decisions of post-transition Russian leaders, characterize the Russian regime during the presidency of Vladimir Putin, and review yet another demoralizing case of inadequate response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Course Requirements

The course grade will be based on reading quizzes, Moodle posts, and class participation. Daily reading quizzes are weighted 40 percent, weekly Moodle posts 40 percent, and class participation 20 percent. There aren't any exams or papers, although the 13 weekly Moodle posts, which should be about 200-250 words each, add up to the equivalent of about a 12-page paper.

Quizzes

The quizzes are posted on the Moodle segment for each class session. They involve multiple-choice questions on each reading. Most of the class sessions have two readings, although several sessions have either one reading or three readings. The multiple-choice questions have four possible answers, only one of which is correct. The total number of questions you will get on the quiz for each class session varies from 2 to 4, depending on how many readings were assigned and how many good questions I thought up. The quizzes are designed (1) to highlight important issues in the reading, (2) to acquaint you with the method of multiple working hypotheses, (3) to teach you to mine as well as to read, and (4) to communicate information. The quiz questions can be challenging, but are never deliberately tricky or funny. If you keep up and do the reading attentively, they are doable. You are allowed, indeed encouraged, to see your questions *before* you do the reading, the better to learn how to mine the reading. The quizzes on each class session open up a few minutes after the previous class session ends, and must be completed by noon before the next class session.

You will hardly ever have much luck Googling for the answer to a quiz question, because most of the questions are not about factual matters, but about an author's interpretation of an historical process or event. Also, you are honor-bound not to ask your classmates or anyone else for assistance on the quizzes. "Deception concerning adherence to the conditions set by the instructor for a formal academic exercise" is [Provision 5 of the Wesleyan Honor Code](#). The quiz is a formal academic exercise, and the conditions I am setting for it are that you may neither request assistance from anyone on your quiz questions, nor may you give assistance to anyone else on their quiz questions. That said, asking a classmate for assistance isn't going to do you much good, because the questions you will get on each reading are selected randomly from a much larger pool of questions. There are between 8 and 20 multiple-choice questions in the pool for each class session, and the random process will select only 2 to 4 of them. Accordingly, it is statistically unlikely that whomever you might ask for assistance will have gotten the same questions that you have received.

Class Sessions

The class sessions will be live over Zoom. I'll usually start each session by giving a live online lecture while screen-sharing a Powerpoint presentation. Either right before or soon after the class session, I will post the Powerpoint presentation on the Moodle. I will also record the class session in the Zoom cloud and post a link to the recording on the Moodle segment pertaining to the class session. If you want to ask a question or make a comment during the lecture part of the class, or to intervene in a discussion, please use the "raise hand" function on Zoom. After the lecture, most sessions will transition to discussion. One thing we can do in the discussion is to resolve any questions you might have about the multiple-choice quiz questions, which as I stated earlier are carefully designed to teach you something, rather than to entertain or annoy you.

Moodle Posts

The lecture and the discussion in the class session, as well as the readings, should inform the Moodle post you will be asked to write each week by Friday night at 9 PM, which is a little more than two days after the end of the Wednesday class session, and a little more than two days before the Monday class session. The Moodle posts will involve your writing a single essay of about 200-250 words in response to a broader question about the week's topics you will find on a Moodle forum linked on each Wednesday's class session. A normal double-spaced paper has about 250 words per page, so your Moodle post is essentially a one-page paper. I'll usually post 3 to 5 questions on the Forum. You are allowed to discuss your Moodle forum answers with classmates if you wish, but you have to write them yourselves. Asking someone else to write some or all of your post, or offering to write some or all of someone else's Moodle post, is a violation of the honor code. All posts must be in standard English with no [internet slang](#) (no LOL, FWIW, OTOH, and so on).

The Moodle posts will pertain to two class sessions. You can choose the question to which to write a response post; a question will normally pertain to only one of the two class sessions. As soon as you submit your post, you will be able to see what other students have written in response to the same question (unless you are the first to post, in which case, just check back a little later). As noted earlier, your Moodle posts will be worth 40 percent of your grade. This 40 percent is divided into two parts: 30 percent will be based on my evaluation of all your Moodle posts taken together; 10 percent will be based on my evaluation of your three best posts, which I will ask you to cut and paste into a Word document and send me at the end of the semester. I will sometimes, but not always, give you feedback on your posts, either in the Moodle forum itself or by email. Your grade for each Moodle post will be based on evidence of (1) your engagement with the lectures and class discussions; (2) your inclusion of citations, with page numbers, to the assigned readings; and (3) the care you appear to have taken in writing the post (they should be polished, like you are turning in a one-page writing assignment). The Moodle forum will close at 9 PM Friday night. If you haven't posted by then, you will not receive a passing grade for that week's Moodle post.

Class Participation

Class participation will be worth 20 percent of the final grade. Your class participation grade will be based on (1) your attendance and participation in class sessions, (2) your timeliness in completing quizzes and Moodle posts, and (3) the evidence you provide in your quizzes and Moodle posts of having completed and thought carefully about the reading assignment.

Grading Mode

You may take this course utilizing either the standard A-F grading mode or CR/U (Credit/Unsatisfactory). You start out taking the course either A-F or CR/U, but you may change your grading mode until Tuesday, November 24, 2020, the last day before Thanksgiving break, which is also the deadline for withdrawing from the course.

This semester is taking place in unusual circumstances, but to get credit for this course, you have to do satisfactory work and participate in the class sessions, even if you take the course CR/U. After three missed or unsatisfactory quizzes, three missed classes, or three missed Moodle posts, I will send an Unsatisfactory Progress Report to your Class Dean, and the three of us will work out together where to go from there.

Honor Code

Any instance of cheating or plagiarism will suffice for a grade of "F" or "U" for the entire course.

Obtaining Course Readings

All readings are available on the course Moodle site. No books are required for this course.

Accessibility Services

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 accommodation, 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 must provide documentation of the disability.

Accommodation may require early planning, and retroactive requests for accommodation are not usually granted. Accordingly, if you believe that you need accommodation for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Accessibility Services (accessibility@wesleyan.edu), located in North College, Room 021, or call 860/685-5581 for an appointment to discuss your needs and to review the process for requesting accommodation.

Summary of Course Schedule

Mo Aug 31 Introduction to the Course

1. Democracy: Initial Considerations

1.1. Conceptual and Normative issues

We Sep 2 Conceptualizing, Justifying, and Measuring Democracy
Mo Sep 7 Democracy, Political Knowledge, and Political Decision-Making

1.2. Democracy in Contemporary Comparative Politics

We Sep 9 Democratic Consolidation and Democratic Backsliding
Mo Sep 14 Democracy and Populism

1.3. Electoral Rights and Electoral Behavior

We Sep 16 Who Has the Right to Vote?
Mo Sep 21 Who Actually Does Vote?

2. Democracy: Country Studies

2.1. Sweden

We Sep 23 Sweden's Political Institutions and Party System
Mo Sep 28 Why Is There Social Democracy in Sweden, But Not in the United States?
We Sep 30 Sweden's Welfare State
Mo Oct 5 Sweden: Gender Quotas for National Legislatures
We Oct 7 Sweden: Contemporary Politics and Pandemic Response

2.2. Tanzania

Mo Oct 12 Political Authority in Pre-Colonial Tanganyika
We Oct 14 The Depoliticization of Ethnicity in Mainland Tanzania
Mo Oct 19 Democracy and the One-Party State in Tanzania
We Oct 21 Tanzania: Contemporary Politics and Pandemic Response

2.3 The United States

Mo Oct 26 Why Did Trump Win the 2016 Presidential Election?
We Oct 28 Erosion of Democracy in the United States?
Mo Nov 2 Electoral Integrity in the United States
We Nov 4 The 2020 Elections in the United States
Mo Nov 9 The United States: Contemporary Politics and Pandemic Response

2.4. Russia and the former Soviet Union

We Nov 11 Marxism
Mo Nov 16 Marxism and Leninism
We Nov 18 Lenin, Russia, and Revolution
Mo Nov 23 Stalinism and the Collapse of Communism
We Dec 2 Russia: Contemporary Politics and Pandemic Response

TOPICS AND READINGS

Mo Aug 31 Introduction to the Course

No assigned reading

1. Democracy: Initial Considerations

1.1. Conceptual and Normative Issues

We Sep 2 Conceptualizing, Justifying, and Measuring Democracy

Dahl, Robert. *On Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
Chapter 4 (35-43), Chapter 8 (83-99).

Sen, Amartya (1999). "Democracy as a Universal Value." *Journal of Democracy*
10 No. 3 (July), 3-17.

Coppedge, Michael, et al. (2017) "V-Dem Comparisons and Contrasts with Other
Measurement Projects." V-Dem Working Paper Series 2017: 45 (April).
The Varieties of Democracy Institute, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.
Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2951014>. Read pp. 1-30 only.

Mo Sep 7 Democracy, Political Knowledge, and Political Decision-Making

Brennan, Jason (2016). *Against Democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University
Press, Chapter 2 (23-53).

1.2. Democracy in Contemporary Comparative Politics

We Sep 9 Democratic Consolidation and Democratic Backsliding

Schedler, Andreas (1998). "What is Democratic Consolidation?" *Journal of
Democracy* 9 No. 2 (April), 91-107.

Svolik, Milan W. (2019). "Polarization versus Democracy." *Journal of Democracy*
30 No. 3 (July), 20-32.

Mo Sep 14 Democracy and Populism

Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2017). *Populism: A Very Short
Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 5, "Populism and
Democracy," 79-96.

Pappas, Takis S. (2019). "Populists in Power." *Journal of Democracy* 30 No. 2,
70-84.

1.3. Electoral Rights and Electoral Behavior

We Sep 16

Who Has the Right to Vote?

Massicotte, Louis, André Blais, and Antoine Yoshinaka (2004). "Who Has the Right to Vote?" In Massicotte, Blais, and Yoshinaka, *Establishing the Rules of the Game*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Chapter 2 (15-39).

Fraga, Bernard L. (2018). "Race and Turnout in Historical Context." In Fraga, *The Turnout Gap: Race, Ethnicity, and Political Inequality in a Diversifying America*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2 (20-52).

Mo Sep 21

Who Actually Does Vote?

DeSilver, Drew (2018). "US Trails Most Developed Countries in Voter Turnout." Pew Research Center, May 21, pp. 1-6.

Shaw, Daron, and John Petrocik (2020), "American Voter Turnout." In Shaw and Petrocik, *The Turnout Myth: Voting Rates and Partisan Outcomes in American National Elections*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 2 (20-52).

Green, Donald P., and Alan S. Gerber (2010). "Introduction to Social Pressure and Voting: New Experimental Evidence." *Political Behavior* 32 No. 3 (September), 331-336.

2. Democracy: Country Studies

2.1. Sweden

- We Sep 23 Sweden's Political Institutions and Party System
- Lijphart, Arend (1991). "Constitutional Choices for New Democracies." *Journal of Democracy* 2 No. 1 (Winter), 72-84.
- Albertus, Michael, and Victor Menaldo (2018). "Sweden: From Agrarian Oligarchy to Progressive Democracy." In Albertus and Menaldo, *Authoritarianism and the Elite Origins of Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6 (174-208).
- Mo Sep 28 Why Is There Social Democracy in Sweden, But Not in the United States?
- Foner, Eric (1984). "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?" *History Workshop* 17 (Spring), 57-80
- Seymour Martin Lipset (1983), "Radicalism or Reformism: The Sources of Working Class Politics." *American Political Science Review* 77 No. 1 (March), 1-18.
- We Sep 30 Sweden's Welfare State
- Steinmo, Sven (2010). "Sweden: The Evolution of a Bumble Bee." Chapter 2 in Steinmo, *The Evolution of Modern States: Sweden, Japan, and the United States*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 30-86.
- Lynch, Julia F. (2014). "A Cross-National Perspective on the American Welfare State." In Daniel Béland, Christopher Howard, and Kimberly J. Morgan, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Social Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 7 (112-132).
- Mo Oct 5 Sweden: Gender Quotas for National Legislatures
- Hughes, Melanie M., Pamela Paxton, and Mona Lena Krook (2017). "Gender Quotas for Legislatures and Corporate Boards." *Annual Review of Sociology* 43, 331-352.
- Freidenvall, Lenita (2019). "Sweden: An Incremental Process." In Susan Franceschet et al., eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Women's Political Rights*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 31 (455-466).
- We Oct 7 Sweden: Contemporary Politics and Pandemic Response
- Rydgren, Jens, and Sara van der Meiden (2019). "The Radical Right and the End of Swedish Exceptionalism." *European Political Science* 18 No. 3 (September), 439-455.
- Pierre, Jon (2020). "Nudges Against Pandemics: Sweden's COVID-19 Containment Strategy in Perspective." *Policy and Society* 39 No. 3, 1-16.

2.2. Tanzania

Mo Oct 12

Political Authority in Pre-Colonial Tanganyika

Ilfie, John (1979). "Tanganyika in 1800." In Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2 (6-25).

Liebenow, J. Gus (1971). "Fragmentation and Cohesion in Traditional Makonde Society." In Liebenow, *Colonial Rule and Political Development in Tanzania: The Case of the Makonde*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. Chapter 3 (40-71).

We Oct 14

The Depoliticization of Ethnicity in Mainland Tanzania

Malipula, Mrisho (2014). "Depoliticised Ethnicity in Tanzania: A Structural and Historical Narrative." *Afrika Focus* 27 No. 2, 49-70.

Mo Oct 19

Democracy and the One-Party State in Tanzania

Nyerere, Julius (1966). *Freedom and Unity*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 103-106, 195-203.

McHenry, Dean (1994). "Democracy and Socialism." In McHenry, *Limited Choices: The Political Struggle for Socialism in Tanzania*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. Chapter 4, 47-74.

Humana, Charles (1992). *World Human Rights Guide*. London: Hutchinson, 3-10, 306-309 (Sweden), 314-318 (Tanzania), 350-353 (USA).

We Oct 21

Tanzania: Contemporary Politics and Pandemic Response

Hoffman, Barak, and Lindsay Robinson (2009). "Tanzania's Missing Opposition." *Journal of Democracy* 20 No. 4 (October), 123-136

Paget, Dan (2017). "Tanzania: Shrinking Space and Opposition Protest" *Journal of Democracy* 28 No. 3 (July), 153-167.

2.3 The United States

Mo Oct 26 Why Did Trump Win the 2016 Presidential Election?

Sides, John, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck (2018). *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 8, "What Happened?," 154-200.

We Oct 28 Erosion of Democracy in the United States?

Roberts, Kenneth M. (2019). "Parties, Populism, and Democratic Decay: A Comparative Perspective on Political Polarization in the United States." In Kurt Weyland and Raúl L. Madrid, eds., *When Democracy Trumps Populism: European and Latin American Lessons for the United States*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5, 132-153.

Madrid, Raúl L., and Kurt Weyland (2019). "Conclusion: Why US Democracy Will Survive Trump." In Kurt Weyland and Raúl L. Madrid, eds., *When Democracy Trumps Populism: European and Latin American Lessons for the United States*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6, 154-186.

Mo Nov 2 Electoral Integrity in the United States

Norris, Pippa (2016). "Why American Elections Are Flawed (And How to Fix Them)." Harvard Kennedy School Faculty Research Working Paper 16-038 (September).

<https://research.hks.harvard.edu/publications/workingpapers/Index.aspx>

Graff, Garrett M. (2020) "8 Big Reasons Election Day 2020 Could Be a Disaster." *Politico Magazine* July 24, 2020.

<https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/07/24/2020-election-disaster-perfect-storm-372778>

We Nov 4 The 2020 Elections in the United States

No new readings. Discussion of the results (?) of the 2020 elections

Mo Nov 9 The United States: Contemporary Politics and Pandemic Response

Watch: Frontline: The Virus: What Went Wrong? (PBS, aired 16 June 2020)

<https://www.pbs.org/video/the-virus-what-went-wrong-mk79yu/>

2.4. Russia and the former Soviet Union

We Nov 11 Marxism

Marx, Karl (1844/1848). "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844"; "The Communist Manifesto." Both in David McLellan, ed., *Karl Marx: Selected Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, 75-96, 221-247.

Mo Nov 16 Marxism and Leninism

Lenin, V. I. (1902). "What Is To Be Done?" In Henry M. Christman, *Essential Works of Lenin*. New York: Dover Publications, 1987. Selections, repaginated 1-37.

Lenin, V. I. (1917). *State and Revolution*. Annotated and introduced by Todd Chretien. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014. Selections, pp. 41-82.

We Nov 18 Lenin, Russia, and Revolution

Chamberlin, William Henry (1935/1965), *The Russian Revolution, 1917-1921*, Vol. 1. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1-17.

DeBardeleben, Joan (1992), "The Emergence of the Soviet State." In Mark Kesselman and Joel Krieger, eds., *European Politics in Transition*, 2nd ed. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 513-543.

Mo Nov 23 Stalinism and the Collapse of Communism

"Z" [Martin Malia] (1990). "To the Stalin Mausoleum." *Dædalus* 119 No. 1 (Winter), 295-340

We Dec 2 Russia: Contemporary Politics and Pandemic Response

McFaul, Michael (2018). "Choosing Autocracy: Actors, Institutions, and Revolution in the Erosion of Russian Democracy." *Comparative Politics* 50 No. 3 (April), 305-325.

Fish, M. Steven (2018). "What Has Russia Become?" *Comparative Politics* 50 No. 3 (April), 327-346.