

Politics of Authoritarian Regimes

Spring 2022

Course Number: 01-790-342
Class Time: TBA
Classroom: TBA
Office hours: TBA

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Course Overview

The overwhelming majority of governments throughout history have been undemocratic. Despite the “third wave” of democracy after the Cold War, many authoritarian regimes have remained surprisingly resilient. A third of the world’s countries and about half of the world’s population still live under autocratic rule today. The study of politics is thus incomplete without careful consideration of what leads to the formation of authoritarian systems, as well as their durability within an increasingly globalized international context. The goal of the class is to help students develop a greater understanding of authoritarian regimes by starting with basic concepts, such as differentiating authoritarian regime types and their power foundations. We will then build upon these concepts to tackle more complex questions about authoritarian regimes’ ruling institutions and strategies, and the roles of media, patronage, and coercion in supporting – or challenging – authoritarian rule. At last, we will discuss a variety of issue areas under authoritarian rule, including economy, collective action, and governance.

We will take a thematic approach to the study of authoritarian regimes, but in order to reinforce the arguments presented the lessons will be supplemented by a case study approach, through which students will contribute to the lecture and discussions by presenting the results of their case studies. The course thus combines theoretical and empirical study, lecture and class discussion, in order to dissect the characteristics of authoritarian regimes and to provide students with a rich environment to learn about the diversity of these regimes, past and present.

Prerequisites

Students may take this course without prerequisites; however, previous background in the study of comparative politics will be helpful.

Requirements and Evaluation

Lectures and reading are arranged with topical coverage. Grades will be based on class participation (25%), two quizzes (20%), case study presentation (20%), and final essays (35%).

Class Participation

It is highly unlikely you will be able to succeed on exams and assignments without regular class attendance. If you have to miss any class meeting, please use the [University absence reporting website](#) to indicate the date and reason for your absence. Each class meeting has

student-participation components (e.g., group discussion, class discussion). All the class-participation activities will be graded using the rubric at the end of this syllabus.

Quizzes

There are two in-class quizzes for Parts I and II of this course (see Course Overview, pg. 3).

Case-Study Presentation

Each student will select one topic for case study from the list in the Course Overview (see pg.3) and make an in-class presentation (20-25 minutes) based on the readings and own research. The presentation slides should be uploaded to the course website on Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on the day prior to the class.

Essays

Topics for the final essays will be posted at Sakai on date and the essays are due on date. If you would like a review on effective writing for essay tests, I recommend [this website](#).

Textbooks

Ezrow, Natasha, and Erica Frantz. 2011. *Dictators and Dictatorships: Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and their Leaders*. New York: Continuum. (ISBN: 978-1441173966)

Svolik, Milan W. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (ISBN: 978-1107607453)

Readings

The textbooks are available for purchase at the university bookstore; they can be ordered from Amazon.com or Barnes and Noble (bn.com) where less expensive copies are often available. The textbooks will also be put on reserve at Douglass Library Course Reserve. Other readings will be posted on Sakai.

Academic Integrity

In accordance with Rutgers University policy on Academic Integrity, you are expected to fully comply with the school's policies. Please see: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require accommodation should review the following statement from the Office of Disability Services (<https://ods.rutgers.edu/faculty/syllabus>).

COURSE OVERVIEW

Week 1	Introduction
PART I	Concepts, Measures, and Foundations
Week 2	Political Regimes and Measurement Case Study: Authoritarian Regimes around the World
Week 3	Seizure of Power and Leadership Succession Case Study: Stalin's Rise to Power
Week 4	Power Sharing Case Study: Personal Dictatorship in Sub-Saharan Africa and Beyond
PART II	Institutions and Ruling Strategies
Week 6	Political Parties Case Study: The Party-State in China
Week 7	Elections Case Study: Autocratic Elections
Week 8	Legislatures Case Study: "Rule of Law" in Authoritarian Regimes
Week 9	Use of Forces Case Study: Military Rule in Latin America
Week 10	Distributive Politics Case Study: The Resource Curse in Middle East and Beyond
Week 11	Media Case Study: Is Technology a Challenge or Weapon for Authoritarian Regimes?
PART III	Issues under Authoritarian Rule
Week 13	Economy Case Study: China's Economic Development under Authoritarianism
Week 14	Protests Case Study: The Arab Spring
Week 15	Social Policy Case Study: Social Wellbeing under Authoritarianism

Topics and Readings

(Readings marked with an asterisk are required. Other readings are recommended for case study.)

Week 1 (dates) Introduction

* Huntington, Samuel P. 1993. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. University of Oklahoma Press. Chapter 1: “What?” Available on [Google Books](#).

Part I: Concepts, Measures, and Foundations

Week 2 (dates) Political Regimes and Measurement

What distinguishes authoritarian from democratic regimes? What are distinguishing characteristics of different types of authoritarian regimes? What are major trends over time regarding the frequency of dictatorships relative to democracies, as well as the frequency of different types of authoritarian regimes?

- * Ezrow, Natasha, and Erica Frantz, Chapters 1 & 6.
- * Svobik, Milan W., Chapter 2.

Case Study Presentation: Authoritarian Regimes around the World

Freedom House. Freedom in the World. Available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>

Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz. 2014. “Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set.” *Perspectives on Politics* 12 (2): 313-311.

Anna Lührmann, Seraphine F. Maerz, Sandra Grahn, Nazifa Alizada, Lisa Gastaldi, Sebastian Hellmeier, Garry Hindle and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2020. Autocratization Surges – Resistance Grows. Democracy Report 2020. Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem). Available at https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/de/39/de39af54-0bc5-4421-89ae-fb20dcc53dba/democracy_report.pdf

Week 3 (dates) Seizure of Power and Leadership Succession

In the absence of the electoral mechanism through which leaders are replaced in democracies, how do leaders take power or get replaced in authoritarian states? Why do some leadership transitions are peaceful and others are not?

- * Ezrow and Frantz, pp. 27-61, pp. 96-112.
- * Svobik, Milan W., Chapter 3.

Case Study: Stalin’s Rise to Power

Gorlizki, Yoram and Khlevniuk, Oleg. 2006. Stalin and his Circle. In Ronald G. Suny,

editor, *The Cambridge history of Russia*, Volume 3, pages 243–267. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Khrushchev, Nikita. 1956. "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences." *20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*. Available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1956/02/24.htm>

Week 4 (dates) Power Sharing

What strategies do authoritarian rulers use to stay in power? To what extent do individual leaders and/or elites determine the character of dictatorship? How do elites manage internal conflict over policy issues and handle issues of succession?

* Ezrow and Frantz, Chapter 4.

* Svolik, Milan W., Chapter 1.

Case Study Presentation: Personalist Dictatorship in Sub-Saharan Africa and Beyond

Ezrow and Frantz, Chapter 11.

Lim, Jae-Cheon. 2012 "North Korea's Hereditary Succession: Comparing Two Key Transitions in the DPRK." *Asian Survey*, 52(3): 550-570.

Week 5 (date) Part I review and Quiz 1

Part II: Institutions and Ruling Strategies

Week 6 (date) Political Parties and Bureaucracy

In what ways do parties provide effective organizations for helping authoritarian regimes remain in power? What are the difficulties and tradeoffs involved in creating strong authoritarian parties? What are sources of vulnerability in the authoritarian party systems?

* Ezrow and Frantz, Chapter 10.

* Svolik, Milan W., Chapter 6.

Case Study Presentation: The Party-State in China

Li, Cheng. 2010. China's Communist Party-State: The Structure and Dynamics of Power. In William A. Joseph, editor, *Politics in China: An Introduction*, pages 165–191. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nathan, Andrew J. 2003. "Authoritarian Resilience." *Journal of Democracy*, 14(1):6-17.

Nathan, Andrew J. 2009. "Authoritarian Impermanence." *Journal of Democracy*, 20(3):37-40.

Week 7 (dates) Elections

It is common that contemporary authoritarian regimes hold at least semi-competitive elections. Why have so many authoritarian rulers agreed to hold elections? In what ways can these elections facilitate democracy? In what ways can these elections serve as a tool to bolster authoritarian rule?

* Ezrow and Frantz, pp. 67-78.

* Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan Way. "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy* 13.2 (2002): 51-65.

Case Study: Autocratic Elections

Schedler, Andreas. 2002. "The Menu of Manipulation." *Journal of Democracy*, 13(2):36–50.

Tucker, Joshua A. 2007. "Enough! Electoral Fraud, Collective Action Problems, and Postcommunist Colored Revolutions." *Perspectives on Politics*, 5(4):535–551.

Hsieh, Chang-Tai, Miguel, Edward, Ortega, Daniel, and Rodriguez, Francisco. 2011. "The Price of Political Opposition: Evidence from Venezuela's Maisanta." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 3(2):196–214.

Week 8 (dates) Legislatures and Law

Why do authoritarian regimes often maintain legislatures given the lack of interest in genuine representation and accountability? How do legislatures in authoritarian contexts differ from the ones in democratic polities? Why is there "rule of law" in authoritarian regimes? How do constitutions, courts and judicial systems undermine or consolidate authoritarianism?

* Svobik, Milan W., Chapter 4.

* Jensen, Nathan M. et al. 2012. "What do legislatures in authoritarian regimes do?", blog post on Monkey Cage. Available at <https://themonkeycage.org/2012/12/what-do-legislatures-in-authoritarian-regimes-do/>

Case Study: "Rule of Law" in Authoritarian Regimes

Schuler, Catherine. "Reinventing the Show Trial: Putin and Pussy Riot." *The Drama Review* 57.1 (Spring 2013): 7-17.

Magaloni, Beatriz. "Enforcing the Autocratic Political Order and the Role of Courts: The Case of México." In *Rule by Law: The Politics of Courts in Authoritarian Regimes*, edited by Ginsburg and Mustafa, 180-206. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Week 9 (dates) Use of Forces

The authoritarian states vary a lot in terms of how much repression they use -- from mild ones to psychotic. What prompts authoritarian rulers to use political repression, especially at the mass scale, and what consequences does it have on the society, opposition, and the regime itself.

* Ezrow and Frantz, Chapter 9.

* Svolik, Milan W., Chapter 5.

Case Study Presentation: Military Rule in Latin America

Cohen, Youssef. 1987. "Democracy from Above: The Political Origins of Military Dictatorship in Brazil." *World Politics* 40 (1): 30-54.

Rouquie, Alain. 1987. *The Military and the State in Latin America*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 6. ([ebook](#))

Week 10 (dates) Distributive Politics

Under fiscal constraints, authoritarian rulers have to strategically distribute benefits to maintain support and buy off opponents in order to maximize the prospects of regime survival. How does a rich nature resource assist or prevent authoritarian rulers in benefit distribution for political interest? Is the resource a curse or blessing for authoritarian regime survival?

* Ezrow and Frantz, Chapter 12.

* Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, Smith, Alastair, Siverson, Randolph M., and Morrow, James D. 2003. *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Chapters 1-2.

Case Study: The Resource Curse

Friedman, Thomas L. 2006. "The First Law of Petropolitics." *Foreign Policy*, (154):28–36.

Ross, Michael L. 2011. "Will Oil Drown the Arab Spring?" *Foreign Affairs*, 90(5): 2-7.

Treisman, Daniel. 2010. "Is Russia Cursed by Oil?" *Journal of International Affairs*, 63(2):85–102.

Week 11 (dates) Media

What are authoritarian rulers' goals when imposing media controls? Under what conditions can rulers achieve these goals? When might authoritarian regimes benefit from loosening media controls? How has the advent of the Internet and social media affected prospects for authoritarian regime survival?

* Howard, Philip, and Muzammil Hussain. "The Role of Digital Media." *Journal of Democracy* 22.3 (July 2011): 35-48.

* Little, Andrew. 2016. "Communication Technology and Protest." *Journal of Politics* 78 (1): 152-166.

Case Study: Is Technology a Challenge or Weapon for Authoritarian Regimes?

Lynch, Marc. "After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State." *Perspectives on Politics* 9.2 (June 2011): 301-310.

Gladwell, Macolm, "Small Change: Why the Revolution will not be Tweeted," *The New Yorker*, October 4, 2010, 86 (30): 42-49. Available at <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-malcolm-gladwell>

Human Rights Watch, Mass Surveillance in China. Available at <https://www.hrw.org/tag/mass-surveillance-china>

Week 12 (date) Part II review and Quiz 2

Part III: Issues under Authoritarian Rule

Week 13 (dates): Economy

Because regimes that are strong enough to enforce property rights are also strong enough to take them away, how can dictators ever credibly commit to protect property rights? What incentives do authoritarian regimes have to pursue policies that either promote or undermine economic growth? Under what conditions can authoritarian regimes succeed at promoting economic development?

* Ezrow and Frantz, Chapter 7.

* Olson, Mancur. 1993. "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development." *American Political Science Review*, 87:567–576.

Case Study: China's Economic Development under Authoritarianism

Xu, Chenggang. 2011. "The Fundamental Institutions of China's Reforms and Development." *Journal of Economic Literature* 49 (4): 1076-1151.

Shirk, Susan. 1993. *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapters 1-2.

Week 14 (dates) Protests

What motivated and enabled ordinary citizens to suddenly rise up and precipitate authoritarian turnover like the one in several Middle Eastern/North African countries in the spring of 2011? What accounts for differences in outcomes across countries in the region? Which authoritarian tools that we have discussed proved most or least effective?

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

* Bellin, Eva R. 2012. "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring." *Comparative Politics*, 44(2): 127-149.

Case Study: The Arab Spring

Goldstone, Jack A., "Understanding the Revolutions of 2011," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2011, Vol. 90, Issue 3, p. 8-16.

Anderson, Lisa. 2011. "Demystifying the Arab Spring." *Foreign Affairs*. 90(3): 2-7.

Gause III, Gregory F. 2011. "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring." *Foreign Affairs*, 90(4): 81-90.

Week 15 (dates) Social Policy

Although authoritarian leaders typically have more space to maneuver the policy, often this presents more challenges than advantages. How is policy made under authoritarian rule? Are authoritarian regimes more effective and efficient than democratic regimes in policymaking? Does social policy crafted in dictatorships differ from social policy in democratic regimes?

* Ezrow and Frantz, Chapter 6.

Case Study: Social Well-beings under Authoritarianism

Justesen, Mogens. "Democracy, Dictatorship and Disease: Political Regimes and HIV/AIDS." *European Journal of Political Economy* 28 (2012): 373-389.

Mares, Isabela; Carnes Matthew E. 2009. "Social Policy in Developing Countries." *The Annual Review of Political Science* 12:93-113.

Week 16 (date): Final Review

* Svolik, Milan W., Chapter 7.

A guide to grading your class participation

A+	A	B	C	D	F
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively supports, engages and listens to peers (ongoing) • arrives fully prepared at every session • plays an active role in discussions (ongoing) • comments advance the level and depth of the dialogue (consistently) • group dynamic and level of discussion are consistently better because of the student's presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actively supports, engages and listens to peers (ongoing) • arrives fully prepared at almost every session • plays an active role in discussions (ongoing) • comments occasionally advance the level and depth of the dialogue • group dynamic and level of discussion are often better because of the student's presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • makes a sincere effort to interact with peers (ongoing) • arrives mostly, if not fully, prepared (ongoing) • participates constructively in discussions (ongoing) • makes relevant comments based on the assigned material (ongoing) • group dynamic and level of discussion are occasionally better (never worse) because of the student's presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited interaction with peers • preparation, and therefore level of participation, are both inconsistent • when prepared, participates constructively in discussions and • when prepared, makes relevant comments based on the assigned material • group dynamic and level of discussion are not affected by the student's presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • virtually no interaction with peers • rarely prepared • rarely participates • comments are generally vague or drawn from outside of the assigned material • demonstrates a noticeable lack of interest (on occasion) • group dynamic and level of discussion are harmed by the student's presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no interaction with peers • never prepared • never participates • demonstrates a noticeable lack of interest in the material (ongoing) • group dynamic and level of discussion are significantly harmed by the student's presence