

POLS 394: Authoritarian Politics

Emory University

Fall 2023

Time: TR 1–2:15

Classroom: Anthropology Building 107

Professor: Jack Paine

Office: Tarbuton 310

OHours: T 2:15–4:15

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Course overview. This course analyzes politics in authoritarian regimes. Dictators face constant threats of overthrow and have two primary tools at their disposal to confront these threats: co-optation (carrots) and coercion (sticks). In the first half of the course, we discuss how dictators use these two foundational tools and the limits they face to implementing them. We then build on these core ideas to examine other facets of authoritarian survival, including the durability of revolutionary regimes, the modernization dilemma, and control over information (in particular the Internet and social media). The second half of the course examines how leaders come to power. After discussing non-electoral means of succession (e.g., hereditary monarchies), we examine the prevalence of contemporary electoral authoritarian regimes and recent cases of democratic backsliding. We conclude by applying these ideas to democracy in the United States, both historical and contemporary. Throughout, we discuss cases from a variety of world regions and time periods.

Grading

- Although each session is lecture-based, this is a small class. Attendance at all sessions is required and students are expected to contribute to the class discussion. This is 10% of the final grade.
- Students will complete four short essays throughout the semester, three in class during the semester and one during the finals bloc. Each are worth 15% of the final grade (there's nothing special about the last one despite being held during the finals bloc). The questions will be closely related to topics discussed in class and in the readings. Essays must demonstrate substantial use of the assigned readings to earn better than a C. The essays will be completed on your computers and are open book/note, but you cannot use the Internet for any purpose other than to submit the essay (no communication with others, no use of AI tools). This is, fortunately, easy to detect.
- Each student will choose one or two related empirical cases on which to write a final paper of 12–15 pages, which is worth 30% of the grade. In this paper, you will analyze regimes founded by a violent rebellion. I will provide students with a list of all 86 such regimes since 1900. We cover the relevant material on September 26 and 28 in lecture, and students should have their cases chosen shortly afterwards. Important questions to address in the essays include:
 - Why did a rebellion break out against the prior government?
 - What enabled the rebels to win?

- Did one or multiple rebel groups participate in the fighting? After winning, did a single rebel group control the government, or did the main faction share power with others (either the prior government or other rebel groups)? Did it hold elections and, if so, how competitive were they?
- Did the rebels replace the state military with their own upon winning?
- Generally, what was the relationship between the rebel government and its military? What techniques did the government use to try to make its military loyal? Did the military generally act loyally, or did the government experience coup attempts or other evidence of military disloyalty?
- Did the rebel government face a violent rebellion shortly after gaining power (within 5–10 years)? If so, was the rebellion led by counterrevolutionaries associated with the prior government, other rebel groups that participated in the founding struggle, or other?
- Is the regime still in power today? If not, how did it fall—to a rebellion, coup, election, or other? And if a rebellion, was the (new) victorious rebel group a counterrevolutionary associated with the prior government, another rebel group that participated in the founding struggle, or other?

The paper must present a clear thesis statement in the first paragraph, and draw from any relevant material from class. You must speak with me after class or in office hours at least once during the semester for me to approve your case(s), and I can help you to find resources. I expect you to cite at least five academic sources; if there is any ambiguity as to whether a source counts as an academic source, please contact me.

Reading. Much of the lecture material is based off the readings for that week. Students are expected to spend several hours with the readings prior to the first lecture for which it is assigned, and after lecture to review the material and complete any remaining reading. Although this is a lecture course, I encourage students to participate and to ask questions; in fact, this is incorporated into the final grade. Acquaintance with the material prior to lecture will facilitate better questions and discussions during class. There are no required books to buy and all readings are available online on Canvas.

How to read productively? Don't lose the forest for the trees when reading academic pieces. What is the main argument? What are the main pieces of supporting evidence? Reading notes that summarize the main takeaway points in a few sentences will prove useful for the essays. You may also find it helpful to revise your reading notes after lecture.

Submitting assignments and late policy. At the end of the designated class section, students will email each essay to me as a Microsoft Word document (NOT a Google doc link, NOT a pdf). Please put your NAME IN THE TITLE of the document to make yourself easy to identify when I download them. The only deadline outside of the class period is the final paper, for which the submission requirements are identical. The late policy is that a final paper handed in between 1 and 24 hours late will receive a full grade off, assignments handed in between 24 and 48 hours late will receive two full grades off, and assignments handed in more than 48 hours late will not be accepted.

Academic honesty. The university’s academic honesty policy can be found at:
<http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>.

Department of Accessibility Services. Department of Accessibility Services works with students who have disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact DAS. It is the responsibility of the student to register with DAS. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and that disability accommodations are not provided until an accommodation letter has been processed. Students registered with DAS who have a letter outlining their academic accommodations, are strongly encouraged to coordinate a meeting time with your professor that will be best for both to discuss a protocol to implement the accommodations as needed throughout the semester. This meeting should occur as early in the semester as possible. Students must renew their accommodation letter every semester they attend classes. Contact the Department of Accessibility Services for more information at (404) 727-9877 or accessibility@emory.edu. Additional information is available at the DAS website at <https://accessibility.emory.edu/>.

Schedule of classes

(1) August 24. Overview

- Please read the syllabus before class.
- Recommended readings:
 - Gandhi, Jennifer. 2008. *Political Institutions Under Dictatorship*. Ch. 1.
 - Guriev, Sergei and Daniel Treisman. 2019. “Informational Autocrats.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*.

(2) August 29 and 31. Co-optation and power sharing

- Meng, Anne, Jack Paine, and Robert Powell. 2023. “Authoritarian Power Sharing: Concepts, Mechanisms, and Strategies.” *Annual Review of Political Science*.
- Meng, Anne. 2020. *Constraining Dictatorship: From Personalized Rule to Institutionalized Regimes*. Chs. 1 and 3.
- Roessler, Philip. 2011. “The Enemy Within: Personal Rule, Coups, and Civil War in Africa.” *World Politics*. Read only pgs. 300–21.

(3) September 5 and 7. Repression and the guardianship dilemma

- Svobik, Milan W. 2012. *Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Ch. 5. Read only pgs. 123–33.
- Paine, Jack. 2022. “Reframing the Guardianship Dilemma: How the Military’s Dual Disloyalty Options Imperil Dictators.” *American Political Science Review*. Skip the mathematical model.
- Harkness, Kristen A. 2018. *When Soldiers Rebel: Ethnic Armies and Political Instability in Africa*. Ch. 1 (read only pgs. 22–44) and Ch. 3.

(4) September 12 and 14. Historical applications

- Stasavage, David. 2020. *The Decline and Rise of Democracy*. Ch. 1 (only pgs. 3–16), Chs. 4–6.

- Finer, Samuel E. 1997. *The History of Government*. Pp. 15–23, 59–62, 728–37.

September 19. Finish up previous material

September 21. Essay 1 in class

(5) September 26 and 28. Revolutionary regimes

- Discussion in class about the final paper.
- Miller, Michael K. 2020. “The Autocratic Ruling Parties Dataset: Origins, Durability, and Death.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.
- Levitsky, Steven and Lucan Way. 2022. *Revolution and Dictatorship: The Violent Origins of Durable Authoritarianism*. Chs. 1 and 3.
- Meng, Anne and Jack Paine. 2022. “Rebel Regimes and Military Powersharing: Consequences of Conflict for Authoritarian Durability.” *American Political Science Review*. Skip the technical details.
- Clarke, Killian, Anne Meng, and Jack Paine. 2023. “Violent Rebellion and Political Order.” Skip the technical details.

(6) October 3 and 5. Modernization dilemma

- Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson. 2012. *Why Nations Fail*. Chs. 3, 5, 12, and 13.

October 10. No class, enjoy fall break

(7) October 12 and 17. Controlling information

- King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. 2013. “How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Roberts, Margaret. 2018. *Censored: Distraction and Diversion Inside China's Great Firewall*. Pgs. 1–17.
- Andersen, Ross. 2020. “The Panopticon Is Already Here.” *The Atlantic*.
- Pan, Jennifer and Alexandra A. Siegel. 2020. How Saudi Crackdowns Fail to Silence Online Dissent. *American Political Science Review*.

October 19. Essay 2 in class

(8) October 24 and 26. Non-electoral succession

- Kokkonen, Andrej, Jørgen Møller, and Anders Sundell. 2022. *The Politics of Succession: Forging Stable Monarchies in Europe, AD 1000–1800*. Chs. 1, 2, and 9.
- Meng, Anne. 2021. “Winning the Game of Thrones: Leadership Succession in Modern Autocracies.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Read only pgs. 950–69 and the conclusion.
- Nathan, Andrew J. 2003. “Authoritarian Resilience: China’s Changing of the Guard.” *Journal of Democracy*. Read only pgs. 6–9.
- Shirk, Susan L. 2018. “China in Xi’s “New Era”: The Return to Personalistic Rule.” *Journal of Democracy*.

(9) October 31 and November 2. Electoral authoritarianism

- Lee, Alexander and Jack Paine. 2023. *Colonial Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship*. Selections TBD.
- Levitsky, Steven and Lucan A. Way. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. Ch. 1 and Ch. 5 (only pgs. 183–213).
- Way, Lucan. 2020. “Belarus Uprising: How a Dictator Became Vulnerable.” *Journal of Democracy*.

(10) November 7 and 9. Democratic backsliding in the 21st century

- Przeworski, Adam. 2018. *Why Bother with Elections?* Chs. 1 and 2.
- V-Dem Democracy Report 2022. <https://www.v-dem.net/publications/democracy-reports>. Stop at pg. 37.
- Levitsky, Steven and Daniel Ziblatt. 2017. *How Democracies Die*. Ch. 4.
- Levitsky, Steven and Lucan Way. 2020. “The New Competitive Authoritarianism.” *Journal of Democracy*.
- Svobik, Milan. 2020. “When Polarization Trumps Civic Virtue: Partisan Conflict and the Subversion of Democracy by Incumbents.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*. Read only the introduction and conclusion.

November 14. Finish up previous material

November 16. Essay 3 in class

November 21. No class, safe travels (and be mindful of the paper deadline)

November 23. No class, enjoy Thanksgiving!

(11) November 28 and 30, December 5. Democracy in the United States
Readings TBD.

Final paper due by 11:59pm on Friday, December 1.

Essay 4 during the university-scheduled final exam time: Thursday, December 7. The full exam bloc is 11:30am–2pm. However, to create the same time limit as for the preceding essays, we will use only the bloc 11:30am–12:45pm.