

PSC 580: Models of Non-Democratic Politics

University of Rochester
Fall 2017
Tuesdays, 12:30-3:25
Classroom: 329 Harkness

Instructor: Jack Paine
Office: 326 Harkness
Office hours: Fridays 10-12
jackpaine@rochester.edu
www.jackpaine.com

General Information

This course will cover models of authoritarian politics and transitions to democracy, as well as the related substantive literature. The course is intended for multiple audiences: students that want to produce formal theory, students interested in authoritarianism and democratization, students that want to become informed consumers of formal models, and combinations thereof.

Prerequisites

PSC 407 and 408, or another game theory course approved by the instructor.

Grading

- **40% Final paper.** The only way to learn how to write a paper is by writing papers. Correspondingly, all students are required to write a final paper of approximately 15-25 pages. The exact content of the paper can vary by student. One possible template is to take a model we cover in class and alter it in one or two ways, solve it, and write an accompanying analysis. Another (non-mutually exclusive) possibility is to read in depth on a handful of cases and assess how well one or several models from the course explain important attributes of those cases. Or, students can write about models and/or substantive themes not covered in the course, as long as it somehow relates to formal theory and authoritarian politics/democratic transitions. We will discuss the projects in more depth as the semester proceeds.
- **40% Other assignments.** There will be three types of assignments throughout the semester in addition to reading: presentations, memos, and problem sets.
 - Each student will co-present two modeling articles throughout the semester with one other student. Although these presentations necessarily require explicating some math, the main focus is on explaining the core intuitions and takeaways from the model, as opposed to explaining every proof in detail (although, of course, sometimes details of the proofs are needed to understand the intuition). Students will be linked to partners and articles in the first week of class, choosing among the eight articles listed below with an *.

- Each student will write two 5-7 page memos that reflect on the models and substantive readings. These are open-ended writing assignments that will be discussed more later in the semester. They may serve as sounding boards for the final paper. The memos are due **by email by 5pm on the Sunday before class.**
- A handful of formal problems will be assigned throughout the semester, to be **handed in with a physical copy when class starts.**
- **20% Class participation.** The individual classes in this course are divided into three types: lectures by the instructor, student presentations of published models, and discussions of substantive readings accompanied by model-building attempts. All of these, especially the latter two and **ESPECIALLY** the model-building sessions, will only succeed with active student participation. This requires careful reading and preparation prior to each class. Needless to say, attendance is required at all sessions without a suitable excuse.

Reading

All required reading is to be completed *prior* to the course for which it is assigned. Supplementary readings are not required at any point. They are intended to be helpful for students who want to learn more about a particular topic, and may also be useful for the final paper. This course only scratches the surface of formal and substantive readings related to authoritarian politics and democratization, and I am happy to provide additional references. I made an explicit choice to focus more in depth on a handful of topics rather than to cover a broader range of topics in a more superficial manner. For students interested in broader reading on authoritarian politics and democratic transitions, the Blackboard page contains the syllabi for related courses at other universities (this reading may also be helpful for the final paper).

Students are not required to purchase any books for the course. Excerpts from books will be uploaded to the Blackboard page or, where noted, are available as an eBook through the UR library website. All of my working papers are available on my website. For all articles, read the published version. Please email me if any of the readings mentioned are unclear.

Pedagogical approach

There are many ways to learn how to become an informed consumer and producer of formal models. These include (1) lectured presentations of models, (2) problem sets, (3) student presentations of published models, (4) collective model-building sessions, (5) active reading of substantive literature with an idea toward generating model ideas, (6) deconstructing published modeling articles with an eye toward writing, (7) reflection writings on models and related substance, and (8) solving original model extensions. This course features a mixture of all these approaches.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

*Indicates that a student will present the article/chapter. No asterisk means that I will lecture on the assigned article/chapter.

PART I. DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS

September 5. Introduction to course and workhorse model of political transitions.

Reading: *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* by Acemoglu and Robinson (2006), ch. 5. Also skim “War as a Commitment Problem” by Powell (2006), who provides a broader overview of commitment problem explanations of political violence. Students may also want to consult *Formal Models of Domestic Politics* by Gehlbach (2013, 189-192; this chapter is available on the Blackboard page), who provides an accessible introduction to Markov perfect equilibrium. This solution concept may sound complicated, but if you are familiar with subgame perfect Nash equilibrium, it should be straightforward to understand. In SPNE, strategies are a function of the entire history of the game. In MPE, strategies are a function of only the state variable and previous actions within the same period, hence avoiding action profiles sustained by complicated punishment strategies.

Supplemental reading:

- “Formal Models of Nondemocratic Politics” by Gehlbach et al. (2016) provides a recent overview of formal work on non-democratic politics, and is highly recommended for students interested in getting to know the broader field. Note that most recent work has focused either on formal institutions or on strategic information transmission and the media. Most of the focus in this class, by contrast, is on informal institutions and regime transitions with complete information games.
- “Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer than Others?” by Fearon (2004) and “A Theory of the Oil-Conflict Curse: Greed, Grievances, and Separatist Civil Wars” by Paine (2017) provide additional examples of repeated bargaining games with stochastic transitions between states. “The Inefficient Use of Power” by Powell (2004) shows that these belong to a broader class of bargaining games that share a common “commitment power” explanation for fighting. Mike Gibilisco’s job market paper “Decentralization and the Gamble for Unity” analyzes a related model with an endogenous state variable (and provides a great example of what Rochester students can do!)
- The following lists reference texts on dynamic games. These suggestions are provided mainly for students that want to do more with dynamic games, as the material they cover goes well outside the scope of the present course.
 - Appendix C of Daron Acemoglu’s (2009) textbook *Introduction to Modern Economic Growth*
 - Stokey and Lucas’ (1989) textbook
 - Mailath and Samuelson’s (2006) textbook

September 12. Inequality and democratization. Reading: Pgs. 193-206 of *Formal Models of Domestic Politics* by Gehlbach (2013), Acemoglu and Robinson *EODD* ch. 6.

Supplemental reading:

- Acemoglu and Robinson's (2000, 2001) earlier *APSR*, *QJE*, and *AER* articles provide the core ideas that their book incorporates. Their 2008 *AER* article addresses the possibility that elites can wield power even in democracy.
- *Democracy and Redistribution* by Boix (2003) provides a related model of economic inequality and political transitions using an incomplete information setup, and distinguishes the importance of asset specificity. Also see "Economic Roots of Civil Wars and Revolutions" by Boix (2008).
- I have two working papers that examine alternative modeling assumptions that enable revolutions to occur in equilibrium even if the government uses repression: "Redistributive Regime Transitions: Minority Rule and Liberation Wars in Colonial Africa" and "The Paradox of Authoritarian Repression" (also see Section 6.14 of *EODD*)

September 19. Critiques of redistributive models of political transitions. Reading: chs. 1-4 of Ansell and Samuels (2014),* "APSA-CD October 2013" (see Blackboard), "Qualitative Investigation of Formal Models" by Lorentzen et al. (2017). Think about the following questions while reading: Are these critiques convincing? What features should be incorporated into a model in order to address the most pertinent critiques? What would this alternative model look like? During class, in addition to discussing the readings and a student presentation of Ansell and Samuels' model, we will engage in a "model-building" session where we think about how to further improve these models.

Supplemental reading: A large literature has empirically evaluated different aspects of Acemoglu and Robinson's and Boix's models of redistributive regime transitions (also see the readings through October 17's class).

- Acemoglu et al. (2014): "Democracy, Redistribution, and Inequality"
- Aidt and Franck (2015): "Democratization Under the Threat of Revolution"
- Aidt and Jensen (2014): "Workers of the World, Unite!"
- Albertus (2015): *Autocracy and Redistribution*
- Albertus and Menaldo (2014): "Gaming Democracy"
- Freeman and Quinn (2012): "The Economic Origins of Democracy Reconsidered"
- Gehlbach et al. (2017): "Collective Action and Representation in Autocracies"
- Haggard and Kaufman: "Inequality and Regime Change" (2012) and *Dictators and Democrats* (2016)
- Houle (2009): "Inequality and Democracy"
- Paine (2017): "Redistributive Political Transitions"
- Slater et al. (2014): "Economic Origins of Democratic Breakdown?"
- Smith (2008): "Rethinking the Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy"
- Ziblatt (2008): "Does Landholding Inequality Block Democratization?"

September 26. Alternative models of democratization. Reading: “Why did the Elites Extend the Suffrage” by Lizzeri and Persico (2004),* “Partisan Competition, Growth, and the Franchise” by Oxoby and Llavador (2005).*

October 3. Democratization in Europe

Reading:

- “Democratic Pieces: Autocratic Elections and Democratic Development since 1815” by Miller (2015), *British Journal of Political Science*. Only read pgs. 501-513 (stop at the section “Electoral history and democratic development”)
 - “Conquered or Granted? A History of Suffrage Extensions” by Przeworski (2008), *British Journal of Political Science*.
 - “How Did Europe Democratize?” by Ziblatt (2006), *World Politics*.
 - *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy*, chapter 2, by Ziblatt (2017). Available on Blackboard.
 - *Paths Toward Democracy: The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America* by Collier (1999). General: pgs. 1-36, 54-5, 75-81, 108-9. Britain: 61-66, 96-101. Germany: 101-108. Available on Blackboard.
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October 10. Fall break, no class

October 17. Comparative democratization. Reading: TBD.

FIRST MEMO DUE TODAY

Reading:

- *Paths Toward Democracy: The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America* by Collier (1999). Pgs. 110-126. Available on Blackboard.
- *Dictators and Democrats: Masses, Elites, and Regime Change* by Haggard and Kaufman (2016). Pgs. 1-21, 36-58. Available on Blackboard.
- “Redistributive Political Transitions: Minority Rule and Liberation Wars in Colonial Africa” by Paine (2017). You can skim the statistical results, we will not talk about those in depth. Available on my website.
- “Contingent Democrats: Industrialists, Labor, and Democratization in Late-Developing Countries” by Bellin (2000), *World Politics*.
- *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* by Levitsky and Way (2010). Pgs. 3-74. (Only skim pgs. 38-54. I want you to be familiar with their concepts of “linkage” and “leverage,” but we will not discuss the international dimension of recent democratization in much depth). Available on Blackboard.

PART II. AUTHORITARIAN SURVIVAL

October 24. Checks and balances on authoritarian rule. Reading: “The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law” by Weingast (1997), “Self-Enforcing Democracy” by Fearon (2011)*

October 31. Global games models of coordination. Reading: Pgs. 184-9 of *Formal Models of Domestic Politics* by Gehlbach (2013), “Regime Change and Equilibrium Multiplicity” by Bueno de Mesquita (2014), “The Foundations of Limited Authoritarian Government” by Boix and Svulik (2013).* Note: Although the core idea behind global games models of coordination is relatively straightforward, the math dives off the deep end relatively quickly. Gehlbach’s textbook and Boix and Svulik’s article provide mathematically accessible introductions to this class of models because they assume a uniform distribution. I expect students to also read through the appendix of Boix and Svulik to understand how assuming a uniform distribution enables solving the model. Bueno de Mesquita’s paper is considerably more technically challenging because he uses a Normal distribution. I do not expect students to thoroughly understand the math in his paper. However, he provides a very useful discussion that distinguishes the defining elements of global games (as opposed to related coordination games that do not feature two-sided limit dominance) and relates global games to broader ideas about modeling mass uprisings. I expect students to understand the main points from his paper even if you choose not to go deep through the math (although, of course, that is encouraged for students potentially interested in using this type of model in their research).

Supplemental reading: For additional examples of global games (or related coordination) models of revolution and democratization, see research by:

- Ethan Bueno de Mesquita
- Chen and Xu (2017): “Why do Authoritarian Regimes Allow Citizens to Voice Opinions Publicly?”
- Edmond (2008): “Information Manipulation, Coordination, and Regime Change”
- Andrew Little
- Mehdi Shadmehr
- Scott Tyson
- “Formal Models of Nondemocratic Politics” by Gehlbach et al. (2016) provides additional citations on pg. 569.

November 7. Popular protests against dictators. Reading:

- Bellin, Eva. 2004. “The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective.” *Comparative Politics*, 36(2): 139-157.
- Bellin, Eva R. 2012. “Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring.” *Comparative Politics*, 44(2): 127-149.
- Brancati, Dawn M. “Pocketbook Protests: Explaining the Worldwide Emergence of Pro-Democracy Protests.” *Comparative Political Studies* 47(11): 1503-1530.

- Goodwin, Jeff and Theda Skocpol. 1989. "Explaining Revolutions in the Contemporary Third World." *Politics & Society*, 17(4): 489-509.
- Tucker, Joshua A. 2007. "Enough! Electoral Fraud, Collective Action Problems, and Post-Communist Color Revolutions." *Perspectives on Politics*, 5(3): 535-551.

November 14. Writing a paper, the review process, professional development.

Assignment:

- Read my writing advice document as well as Andrew Little's
- For the following three articles, read ONLY THE INTRODUCTION and take notes on the structure and strategy of the writing, which we will discuss in class. What is the question? Why does it matter? What is the authors' contribution? To which of Andrew Little's introduction templates does each article correspond?
 - "The Guardianship Dilemma" by McMahon and Slantchev (2015). Note that we will read the entire article in two weeks
 - "Persistent Fighting and Shifting Power" by Powell (2012)
 - "Power Sharing and Leadership Dynamics in Authoritarian Regimes" by Svobik (2009). For this one, read the introduction AS WELL AS everything until he begins presenting the formal model.
- Skim my two papers: "Rethinking the Conflict Resource Curse: How Oil Wealth Prevents Center-Seeking Civil Wars" and "A Theory of the Oil-Conflict Curse: Greed, Grievances, and Separatist Civil Wars" and read the attached reviews from journal submissions.
 - NB: We are not going to discuss my models in any detail. However, to better understand the reviews, it will be helpful to skim the papers. Note that the reviews are mostly for earlier drafts of each paper, so the paper versions you read have incorporated many of the comments.

SECOND MEMO DUE TODAY

November 21. No class

November 28. Models of military control. "Quis Custodiet Ipsos Custodes?" by Besley and Robinson (2010)*, "The Guardianship Dilemma" by McMahon and Slantchev (2015)*

NB: My paper "The Dilemma of Authoritarian Power-Sharing" is no longer on the syllabus.

December 5. Controlling the military.

Reading:

- Selections from "The History of Government" by Finer (1997): pgs. 15-23, 59-70, 79-94.
- "Military Rule" by Geddes, Frantz, and Wright (2014)
- "Economic Origins of Democratic Breakdown? The Redistributive Model and the Post-Colonial State" by Slater, Smith, and Nair (2014). STOP ONCE THE STATISTICAL PART BEGINS (pg. 359)
- "The Ethnic Army and the State" by Harkness (2016)

- We will not discuss the statistical results in any depth. I mainly want you to think about the theoretical ideas.
- “Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups d’etat” by Powell (2012)
 - We will not discuss the statistical results in any depth. I mainly want you to think about the theoretical ideas.

****ALSO: Half the class will be a student presentation of the model from chapter 2 of Besley and Persson (2011) *Pillars of Prosperity*.****

December 12. Selectorate theory and its discontents.

Reading:

- *The Logic of Political Survival* by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) chs. 2 and 3*, and also skim ch. 1 to get a sense of the ambitions of the book (available as an eBook through UR library)
- Pgs. 570-573 of “Formal Models of Nondemocratic Politics” by Gehlbach et al. (2016)
- “Power Tool or Dull Blade? Selectorate Theory for Autocracies” by Gallagher and Hanson (2015)

December 15: Final paper due by 5pm. Any extensions to this deadline must be discussed with the instructor well in advance.