

**POL 437: Democracies Emerging and Evolving**  
University of Arizona, Summer Session I 2018  
June 4-July 5

**Instructor:** Justin Curtis

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**Course Objectives**

- Understand and critically evaluate various conceptualizations of democracy
- Be able to identify different forms of political regimes around the world
- Make and defend an original argument based on scholarly research
- Improve writing skills by focusing on concise, evidence-based reports

**Organization of the Course**

The class is organized into three sections. There are several readings, slides, and audio lectures associated with each section. The three sections build on one another, but feel free to bounce around within each of the sections; it does not really matter what order you do the readings in or what order you watch the lectures in. There are important connections across all of the material in the course, but those connections can be made in any order. The “Schedule” section of the syllabus contains an introduction to each of the three sections of the course, and so the order laid out in those introduction paragraphs is a logical way to proceed through the course, but if there are readings or lectures that seem more exciting to you, feel free to begin with those.

All readings (with one exception) are available on our D2L site. The one exception is linked here in the syllabus (see below). If you have problems accessing any readings please let me know ASAP.

**Texts and Readings**

All readings will be available on D2L. There is no required text book.

**Grade Policies**

Your grade will be determined in the following way:

- Discussions: 10%
- Simulations: 30% (10% each)
- Democracy Country Reports: 30% (4% for the proposal [***DUE JUNE 10!***], 13% for the democracy section, 13% for the non-democracy section)
- Final Exam: 30%

Other than the Country Report proposal, all assignments are due on July 5, the day that you will take the final exam. No late work will be accepted.

## Assignments

### *Discussions*

The D2L page for this class includes a section for discussions. There are three discussion boards, one for each section of the class. I expect each of you to post twice on each board (so you must have a minimum of 6 total posts, two on each board). These are not meant to be impersonal summaries of the readings and lectures. Each board begins with a question, and the purpose of your posts is to engage with one another as you consider these questions. Your first post can be your own answer to the question that I pose, but your second post needs to engage other students' comments and respond to comments about your first post. This means that you cannot post two comments in a row. Both of your posts can be responses to another student's post, but be sure to add to the conversation; do not just say that you agree or disagree, but critically engage with the discussion. I may ask you to clarify or elaborate your comment. If I do so, I will email you as well as asking a question on the board. Remember, these boards are designed to replicate in-class discussions, so make it a discussion!

I will be actively monitoring the discussion boards to make sure that your comments are germane and to answer questions/offer clarifications. Please do your very best to keep your comments professional. Use proper punctuation and complete sentences.

Your grade will be determined by your ability to engage with one another and answer the question using evidence from the readings and lectures.

### *Simulations*

Throughout the course, you will be expected to apply the readings and lecture material to answer important policy questions. Each of these simulations require you to write a **300-to-500-word essay** to answer to respond to the prompt. I am not looking for a specific answer for any of these essays. Instead, I want you to be able to defend your own arguments using what you have been learning in the readings and lectures. These simulations serve as both your chance to demonstrate that you understand what you are reading, and your chance to respond critically to those readings. These simulations will be evaluated on your ability to rely on and critically engage with the material from class as you respond to the prompts.

***While all assignments are not due until the last day of class, if you submit a simulation response before then, I will provide feedback on your paper that may be valuable to you as you write the other assignments for the class. Please consider this opportunity as you plan your time.***

### **Simulation 1: What is a democracy?**

You are working for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and you have been assigned the task of categorizing the world into democracies and nondemocracies. How do you define democracy? What is the opposite of democracy? Are there gradations of democracy, or is the distinction between democracy and non-democracy strictly binary? What makes a regime more or less democratic? What makes a regime more or less autocratic?

For this simulation (and simulation 2), you are writing a professional memo. Do not simply list the answers to the questions above. Instead, write a succinct and coherent essay that addresses what you deem most important in fulfilling the task: devising a systematic approach to classifying the political regimes of the world.

### **Simulation 2: When do countries democratize?**

Your boss at USAID was very impressed with your definition of democracy. Now she would like to better understand the variance in dictatorships. Specifically, what types of dictatorships are most likely to transition to democracy? Can we predict these democratic transitions? If so, how? If not, why not? What makes countries likely to democratize? What hinders democratization?

Like simulation 1, this simulation is asking you to write a professional memo.

### **Simulation 3: Think like a dictator**

You are the dictator of a fictitious country: [Insert-your-name-here]stan. Every four years, you hold elections for parliament and your party (the United [Insert-your-name-here]stan Party) always wins. However, in the last four years several opposition parties with widely varying ideologies have created a unified electoral front based on one issue: improving the economy. This front has become popular in your country and has received international attention as your government has been unable to increase the size of the economy for three straight years. Your internal polls suggest that the opposition front will win elections by such a margin that they will be able to amend the constitution, and they may be able to keep you from remaining in power indefinitely. You have three options: 1) Cancel the elections, 2) Rig the elections, 3) Allow the election to proceed unimpeded. Which do you choose? What are the risks associated with each of these choices, and why have you chosen the way you did?

Unlike simulation 1 and 2, this simulation is asking you to put yourself in a hypothetical situation, make a decision, and then justify that decision. Remember, you are being asked to act like a dictator, so if you choose to allow the election proceed unimpeded, you will need to justify your decision to face a major risk of losing power; dictators are rarely motivated to give up power because they think democracy is normatively desirable.

### *Democracy Country Reports*

This is an opportunity for you to select a country whose status as a democracy is questionable and then craft two arguments: one that this country is indeed a democracy, and one that it is not. **You will write two separate 800-to-1000-word papers**; one arguing that the country you chose is a democracy, the other arguing that it is a non-democracy. This assignment will require you to research outside of our readings in order to provide evidence that your country is a democracy and a non-democracy. You should rely on our readings to provide definitions for democracy and a theoretical framework.

In order to select your country, go to the 2018 Freedom in the World report from Freedom House (<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2018>). You may select any country whose “aggregate score” is above 15. You may not select the United States. You also cannot choose Egypt, Tunisia, Venezuela, Iran, or Russia because we will be discussing these countries in class.

In order to get you to start thinking about this assignment early, you will need to submit **a one paragraph essay** that identifies the country you have selected and a brief description of sources you will use to write your reports. ***This proposal is due on June 10.***

This assignment will be evaluated on your ability to defend your arguments. You will need to provide a definition of democracy and evidence for why your country can be categorized as a democracy. You will then need to provide a definition of a non-democracy (dictatorship, autocracy, authoritarian regime, hybrid regime etc.) and provide evidence that your country is a non-democracy.

### *Final Exam*

You will all take a final exam. The exam will be in the form of an essay; I will ask you two questions and you will answer one of them. The exam will be open note/open book/open internet. However, you may **not** collaborate with one another on the exam. I will post the exam on the course D2L page at 8am on Thursday July 5<sup>th</sup> and you will have until midnight to submit your answer. However, you are only allowed to take 2 hours to write the exam. ***You must indicate how much time you spent at the bottom of the exam.*** If you do not, or if you take more than 2 hours, you will get a zero.

### **Lectures**

There will be two forms of lectures available for this class: PowerPoint slides and audio recordings. The slides will let you see the organization of the audio, but like all slides, they will be insufficient without the audio lectures. I would suggest listening to the audio while you look at the slides, but you are welcome combine these two forms of lectures however you would like. However, I **highly** recommend that you do not blow off listening to the audio lectures.

In a traditional classroom setting, lectures would also provide an opportunity for you to ask questions about the content of the lecture and the readings. This is not feasible in an online format. However, I want you to have questions and I want to answer your questions. Please contact me via email anytime you have a question. Part of engaging with this material is asking questions. You will not succeed in the course if you do not actively seek answers to your questions. You can also pose questions as part of your posts on our discussion boards; I will do my best to answer questions there as well, so feel free to direct questions directly to me (you can just call me Justin).

### **Final suggestions for the class**

We have five weeks to get through all of the material in this course. These five weeks will go by very quickly. In order to make this class as flexible as possible, all of the assignments (other than the country report proposal) are due on the day of the final exam: July 5<sup>th</sup>. ***Please do not try to do all of the assignments and readings and watch all of the lectures the last week of class.*** Give yourself time to draft and edit your writing assignments.

All five papers you will write are remarkably brief. This will require you to be succinct and clear as you write. All of these assignments are asking you to craft an argument. Therefore, all papers should include a thesis statement. You should then provide evidence that supports that thesis statement. This is one of the most important skills you ought to gain in college. As I mentioned above, I will give feedback on assignments that are turned in before the due date that may be helpful to you in completing subsequent assignments.

I am happy to answer any questions you have about the writing assignments in the course. I also recommend utilizing the University's writing center for help on crafting an argument and using evidence to support an argument. They have online resources available here:

<http://thinktank.arizona.edu/writing-center>

## Readings Schedule

Section 1: *What is a democracy, what is not a democracy, and what is a not democracy?*

Before we can do anything, we need to be very clear about what we mean when we say “democracy.” This is much easier said than done. Schmitter and Karl (1991) attempt to answer precisely this question. This article provides the structural framework for this course by helping us understand what a regime is and how regimes vary institutionally. They also help us understand what we should not think of as democracy; importantly, democracy does not just mean all good things that governments do (See lecture 3). In particular, it may be that some countries that are institutionally democratic actually violate civil liberties. This is the regime-type that Zakaria (1997) warns against. He calls it “illiberal democracy.” By adding this adjective, he creates what Collier and Levitsky (1997) call a “diminished sub-type.” This is one of the most challenging articles that we will read in the course. It forces us to think critically about the words we use to describe regimes, and what the continuum of regimes between democracy and dictatorship actually looks like (if it exists). Levitsky and Way (2002) introduce a different diminished subtype—competitive authoritarianism—that has become very popular in the last 15 years. Where does this belong on that continuum (see lecture 4)? Finally, Fukuyama (1997) argues that History has determined that liberal democracy is the ultimate form of governance. Bell (2015) points out the possible weaknesses inherent in democracy and argues that a single-party non-democracy may lead to much more efficient outcomes (see discussion topic 1).

Readings for this section (available on D2L):

Bell, Daniel. 2015. *The China Model*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Introduction)

Collier, David and Steven Levitsky. 1997. Democracy with adjectives: Conceptual innovation in comparative research. *World Politics*.

Fukuyama, Francis. 1989. The end of history? *The National Interest* (Summer).

Levitsky, Steven and Lucan Way. 2002. The rise of competitive authoritarianism. *Journal of Democracy*.

Schmitter, Philippe and Terry Karl. 1991. What democracy is...and is not. *Journal of Democracy*

Zakaria, Fareed. 1997. The rise of illiberal democracy. *Foreign Affairs*.

Section 2: *What makes countries become democracies, what makes countries become non-democracies, and what keeps countries from changing at all?*

While the first sections of the course largely thought of regimes as stable, the second section of the course considers transitions to and from democracy. This was an important topic of inquiry among political scientists beginning in the mid to late 1970s when authoritarian regimes in Southern Europe, then Latin America, and finally Eastern Europe began to collapse. Geddes (1999) provides a great summary of much of this work which will suffice for our purposes. In particular, it is important to think about the likelihood of transition among different kinds of authoritarian rule. We will also read one article that empirically tests one of the most influential ideas in 20<sup>th</sup> century political science: modernization theory (Przeworski and Limongi 1997). The authors find very little support for modernization's central hypothesis (see lecture 5). We will read one of the earlier pieces about democratization as well. Przeworski (1991) provides a theoretical story for why an authoritarian regime would collapse. He relies on some tools from micro-economic game theory, but do not let this scare you. The most important conclusion he reaches is that transition is only possible if the authoritarian leadership does not have complete information about the democratic opposition (see lecture 6).

Since the hey-day of this "transitology" (yes, that is a real word) literature, scholars have begun to focus on why some countries seems perpetually stuck outside the world of democratic politics. After reviewing some of the key assumptions associated with the "transitions paradigm" Carothers (2002) argues that it has outlived its utility. Instead, we need to think hard about the "grey zone" where states remain autocratic but hold elections. Brownlee (2007) focuses on the way these authoritarian regimes begin and argues that the initial leadership's decisions and ability to overcome factional conflicts make a big difference in whether or not the regime will be stable. In a later work, Brownlee (2009) uses statistical techniques to examine if two types of "hybrid regime" (competitive authoritarian and hegemonic authoritarian) are likely to collapse, and if they do collapse, if they are likely to transition to democracy or not. Finally, we return to Levitsky and Way's (2010) notion of competitive authoritarianism. Now that we understand what it is, we consider why some countries—especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union—remained stuck in this "grey zone" between authoritarianism and democracy, and why others transitioned to democracy (see lecture 7 and discussion 2).

Readings for this section (available on D2L):

Brownlee, Jason. 2007. *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 1)

Brownlee, Jason. 2009. Portents of pluralism: How hybrid regimes affect democratic transitions. *American Journal of Political Science*.

Carothers, Thomas. 2002. The end of the transitions paradigm. *Journal of Democracy*.

Geddes, Barbara. 1999. What do we know about democratization after twenty years? *Annual Review of Political Science*.

Levitsky, Steven and Lucan Way. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 2)

Przeworski, Adam. 1991. *Democracy and the Market*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 2)

Przeworski, Adam and Fernando Limongi. 1997. Modernization: Theories and Facts. *World Politics*.

### Section 3: *Case studies*

The final section of this course will focus on some contemporary examples of regimes that may or may not be transitioning, and may or may not be democracies. One of the most significant moments for democratization in the last few years was what has come to be called the “Arab Spring.” We will look at two countries affected by these protest movements-cum-revolutions that had very different experiences. Brown (2013) considers what he calls Egypt’s “failed” democratization, and Stepan (2012) looks at what remains the only successful democratization from these movements: Tunisia. Then we will consider the limits of democratization in Tunisia (Macdonald and Waggoner 2018) We will also look at the very strange case of robust democratic institutions in a massively repressive authoritarian regime in Iran (Brumberg; 2000; Milani 2015). Moving away from the Middle East, we will also think about Venezuela’s slow transition away from democracy (Hawkins 2010; Corrales 2016), and Russia’s bizarre case of a non-democratic regime that is remarkably popular among its citizens (Willerton 2017—a name that may be familiar to some of you).

Readings for this section (available on D2L):

Brown, Nathan. 2013. Egypt’s failed transition. *Journal of Democracy*.

Brumberg, Daniel. 2000. A comparativist’s perspective. *Journal of Democracy*.

Corrales, Javier. 2016. Venezuela’s Odd Transition to Dictatorship. *Americas Quarterly*, October 24, at <http://www.americasquarterly.org/content/venezuelas-odd-transition-dictatorship>

Hawkins, Kirk. 2010. Who mobilizes? Participatory democracy in Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution. *Latin American Politics and Society*.

Macdonald, Geoffrey and Luke Waggoner. 2018. Dashed hopes and extremism in Tunisia. *Journal of Democracy*

Milani, Abbas. 2015. Iran's paradoxical regime. *Journal of Democracy*

Stepan, Alfred. 2012. Tunisia's transition and the twin tolerations. *Journal of Democracy*.

Willerton, John P. (Pat). 2017. Searching for a Russian National Idea: Putin team efforts and public assessments. *Democratizatsiya: Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*.

## **Lectures Schedule**

Below is a list of the lectures that can be found in both PowerPoint and audio formats on the D2L site.

Lecture 1- Course Overview and Syllabus info

Section 1:

Lecture 2- Intro: What is political science and what is the scientific study of democracy?

Lecture 3- Democracy and its correlates

Lecture 4- Regimes and Regime-Types

Section 2:

Lecture 5- Transitology #1: Structure and modernization

Lecture 6- Transitology #2: Voluntarist approaches

Lecture 7- Where Transitology failed: Hybrid regimes and authoritarian persistence

Section 3:

Lecture 8- Iran

Lecture 9- Venezuela

Lecture 10- Russia

Lecture 11- The Arab Uprisings: Egypt and Tunisia

## **Special Needs**

Any special needs students in the class who may require modification of the seating, testing or other class requirements should contact the instructor. We also work with the University Disability Resource Center. If a course participant is registered with the DRC and would like to submit the appropriate documentation for accommodations, see the web link at <http://drc.arizona.edu/teach/syllabus~statement.html>.



## **Academic conduct and integrity issues**

For information about course rules and understanding regarding academic honesty, integrity, plagiarism, and University policies, see <http://dos.web.arizona.edu/uapolicies>.

## **Threatening Behavior**

The University seeks to promote a safe environment where students and employees may participate in the educational process without compromising their health, safety, or welfare. The Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) Student Code of Conduct, ABOR Policy 5-308, prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to one's self. Threatening behavior can harm and disrupt the University, its community, and its families. See <http://policy.arizona.edu/education-and-student-affairs/threatening-behavior-students>