

**Political Science 3213G**  
**Comparative Authoritarianism**  
**Winter Term 2024**

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Office Hours: Wednesday 4-5:30, or by appointment

### **Course Description**

Historically, most political regimes have been authoritarian, and there is certainly no sign of authoritarianism's disappearance in our time. This course addresses the sources of authoritarianism, the varieties of authoritarian regime, the institutions and practices supportive of dictatorship, the causes of authoritarian decline and failure, and the authoritarian impulses residing within some democratic regimes.

### **Course Format**

This course will take place in person. Our class meetings will combine lecture segments with plenty of opportunities for questions and discussion. So, please do show up on Thursday afternoons having read and absorbed the assigned readings, and ready to engage with the material in vigorous and critical fashion. All assigned readings will be made available on the OWL site. This includes the one book we will be reading just about entirely: Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz, 2018. *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization, and Collapse*. Cambridge University Press. Course Readings will link to the library's online copy of this book. But you may also acquire a physical copy from online sellers if you prefer.

### **Learning Outcomes**

In this course, you will develop the ability to (a) distinguish between types of political regimes and types of authoritarian regimes in particular; (b) identify the ways authoritarians exercise and perpetuate their power; (c) understand the sources of resistance to authoritarianism; (d) explain why dictatorships weaken and fail, and how their legacy affects subsequent regime formation; and (e) make sense of the possible impact of authoritarian influences within democratic regimes.

### **Requirements and Evaluation**

- 1) Country Case Study I (25%)
- 2) Country Case Study II (35%)
- 3) Final Exam (30%)
- 4) Participation (10%)

### **Country Case Study I**

Students will be expected to select a country case during a period of authoritarian or quasi-authoritarian rule, and respond to the following questions: How can the political regime type best

be characterized? What are the indicators that help you to determine this? Are there features that do not fit perfectly within the category you have selected, and how significant are they? What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the way the regime is structured in your country? In your view, is this regime stable and successful, and on what basis do you draw your conclusions?

Length: 4-5 pages, double-spaced, one-inch margins, standard font size. In addition to syllabus materials, please use at least four high-quality non-syllabus sources (e.g., journal articles, book chapters). You are encouraged to use syllabus materials for the conceptual and theoretical foundations, and to rely upon your additional research for details on your country case. **Due date:** February 12, 11:55 pm. **Late penalty:** 2% per day.

### **Country Case Study II**

Students will be expected to pick a different country case, again during a period of authoritarian or quasi-authoritarian rule, and respond to the following questions: What is the nature of the political regime? How, and to what extent, has the regime been institutionalized? How has the regime attempted to sustain itself? Has it been stable and successful, and why or why not? Have the regime's institutional features been helpful or not in this regard? Length: 6-8 pages, double-spaced, one-inch margins, standard font size. In addition to syllabus materials, please use at least six high-quality non-syllabus sources. The key is to consider the various tools developed in the source as providing the conceptual and theoretical foundations for the paper, and to rely upon your additional research for details on your country case. **Due date:** April 2, 11:55 pm. **Late penalty:** 2% per day.

### **Final Exam**

Students will write a two-hour exam, in the formal exam period at the end of the term, based on questions provided for advance preparation.

### **Participation**

Students will be expected to participate regularly and constructively in our weekly meetings. Participation will be evaluated based on the following considerations: relevance, responsiveness to the material laid out in assigned readings and lecture segments, and insightfulness. Keep in mind that a well-informed and helpful question can be an important element in course participation.

\*\*\*Attendance is required for success in this course.

\*\*\*Electronic devices will be permissible only for the purpose of note-taking and any other class-related activities. Disruptive use of these devices will not be permitted.

### **Prerequisite**

Political Science 2231E (2531F/G) or 2245E (2545F/G) or International Relations 2701E (2704F/G).

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

## **Plagiarism and AI**

Academic offenses such as plagiarism and reliance on AI technologies such as ChatGPT will be taken very seriously. All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

## **COURSE READINGS:**

### **Week One**

#### **Introduction** (January 11)

No required readings.

### **Week Two**

#### ***Regime Types: Democracy and Dictatorship*** (January 18)

Jose Cheibub, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Vreeland, 2009. "Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited." *Public Choice* 143 (1-2): 67-101.

Barbara Geddes, 1999. "What Have We Learned About Democratization After 20 Years?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 115-144.

Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz, 2018. *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization, and Collapse*. Cambridge University Press, chapter 1.

### **Week Three**

#### ***Sources of Dictatorship*** (January 25)

Geddes et al., *How Dictatorships Work*, chapters 2 and 3.

Dan Slater, "Violent Origins of Authoritarian Variation: Rebellion Type and Regime Type in Cold War Southeast Asia." *Government and Opposition* vol. 55 (2020): 21-40.

V. Ximena Velasco Guachalla, Calla Hummel, Sam Handlin, and Amy Erica Smith, "Latin America Erupts: When Does Competitive Authoritarianism Take Root?" *Journal of Democracy* vol. 32, no. 3 (July 2021): 63-77.

## **Week Four**

### ***Monarchy and Totalitarianism*** (February 1)

John Gerring, Tore Wig, Wouter Veenendaal, Daniel Weitzel, Jan Teorell, and Kyosuke Kikuta, 2021. "Why Monarchy? The Rise and Demise of a Regime Type." *Comparative Political Studies* 54 (3-4): 585-622.

Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, 1956. *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*. Harvard University Press, chapters 1 and 3.

Antonio Costa Pinto, 2002. "Elites, Single Parties and Political Decision-making in Fascist-era Dictatorships." *Contemporary European History* 11 (3): 429-54.

## **Week Five**

### ***Personalist and Military Regimes*** (February 8)

Geddes et al., *How Dictatorships Work*, chapters 4 and 5 (pp. 95-101).

Wonjun Song and Joseph Wright, 2018. "The North Korean Autocracy in Comparative Perspective." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 18: 157-180.

## **Week Six**

### ***Repression*** (February 15)

Geddes et al., *How Dictatorships Work*, chapter 7.

Sheena Chestnut Greitens, 2016. *Dictators and Their Secret Police: Coercive Institutions and State Violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press, chapter 5.

Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring." *Comparative Politics* 44 2 (2012): 127-49.

**\*\*Break: No session February 22**

## **Week Seven**

### ***Information and Influence*** (February 29)

Lisa Wedeen, 1998. "Acting 'As If': Symbolic Politics and Social Control in Syria." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40 (3): 503-523.

Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts, 2013. "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression." *American Political Science Review* 107 (2): 326-343.

Seva Gunitsky, 2015. "Corrupting the Cyber-Commons: Social Media as a Tool of Autocratic Stability." *Perspectives on Politics* 13 (1): 42-54.

Péter Krekó, 2021. "How Authoritarians Inflate their Image." *Journal of Democracy* 32 (3): 109-23.

### **Week Eight**

***The Institutional Turn I: Authoritarian Parties*** (March 7)

Geddes et al., *How Dictatorships Work*, chapters 5 (pp. 101-125), and 6 (pp. 129-37).

Benjamin Smith, 2005. "The Life of the Party: The Origins of Regime Breakdown and Persistence Under Single-Party Rule." *World Politics* 57 (3): 421-451.

### **Week Nine**

***The Institutional Turn II: Authoritarian Elections*** (March 14)

Geddes et al., *How Dictatorships Work*, chapter 6 (pp. 137-53).

Michael Miller, 2015. "Democratic Pieces: Autocratic Elections and Democratic Development Since 1815." *British Journal of Political Science* 45 (3): 501-30.

Ellen Lust-Okar, 2009. "Legislative Elections in Hegemonic Authoritarian Regimes: Competitive Clientelism and Resistance to Democratization." In *Democratization by Elections: A New Mode of Transition*, ed., Staffan I. Lindberg. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

### **Week Ten**

***China and Russia Compared*** (March 21)

Andrew Nathan, 2003. "China's Changing of the Guard: Authoritarian Resilience." *Journal of Democracy* 14 (1): 6-17.

Joseph Fewsmith, 2021. "Balances, Norms, and Institutions: Why Elite Politics in the CCP Have Not Institutionalized." *The China Quarterly* 248: 265-282.

Timothy Frye, 2021. *Weak Strongman: The Limits of Power in Putin's Russia* (Princeton University Press, 2021), chapter 5.

Karrie J. Koesel and Valerie J. Bunce, 2018. "Diffusion-Proofing: Russian and Chinese Responses to Waves of Popular Mobilization Against Authoritarian Rulers." In *Citizens and the State in Authoritarian Regimes*, eds., Karrie Koesel, Valerie J. Bunce, and Jessica Chen Weiss. Oxford University Press.

## **Week Eleven**

### ***Authoritarian Collapse and Democratization*** (March 28)

Geddes et al., *How Dictatorships Work*, chapter 8.

Dan Slater and Joseph Wong, 2013. "The Strength to Concede: Ruling Parties and Democratization in Developmental Asia." *Perspectives on Politics* 11 (3): 717-733.

Mark R. Beissinger, 2013. "The Semblance of Democratic Revolution: Coalitions in Ukraine's Orange Revolution." *American Political Science Review* 107 (3): 574-592.

## **Week Twelve**

### ***Authoritarian Legacies and Democratic Backsliding*** (April 4)

Anna Grzymala-Busse, 2019. "Hoist on their Own Petards? The Reinvention and Collapse of Authoritarian Successor Parties." *Party Politics* 25 (4):569-82.

Sheri Berman, 2013. "The Promise of the Arab Spring: In Political Development, No Pain Without Gain." *Foreign Affairs* 92 (1): 64-74.

Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufmann, 2021. "Democratic Backsliding." *Journal of Democracy* 32 (4): 27-41.

Milan W. Svobik, 2019. "Polarization Versus Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 30 (3): 20-32.