

POL 9517L Autocratization Experiences Around the World

Summer 2023

Tuesday and Thursday 1-4:00 pm

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1. Aims

In recent years, there has been a wave of autocratization throughout the world. Examples of autocratizing countries include the United States during the Trump administration, Turkey under Erdoğan's rule, and Myanmar captured by the military junta in 2021. What factors can explain autocratization and what are the consequences of autocratization? In this course, we examine the causes, consequences, and remedies of autocratization. We will study both autocratization patterns at the state level and analyse why citizens acquiesce to elites' authoritarian behaviour at the individual level. The key aims of this course are:

- 1) To introduce the concepts of autocratization and the key research designs used to study autocratization.
- 2) To provide students with practical skills to measure and analyze autocratization, both at the state level and at the individual level.
- 3) To increase students' capacity to appraise research on autocratization, and more broadly, research on transitology, public opinion, and political behaviour.

2. Outline of Syllabus

The course is divided into four parts. The first part focuses on conceptualisation and measurement. Specifically, we discuss what autocratization means and how to measure its various facets. Next, we study the causes of autocratization: what factors explain autocratization and how do scholars identify them? The third part covers the consequences of autocratization, namely, how elites and citizens react in the face of autocratization. Last, we conclude by addressing the current debates on autocratization. In particular, we explore solutions that help resist autocratization, study citizens' conceptualizations of democracy, and to situate autocratization in a multi-level system. Throughout this course, we will explore various datasets in the study of democracies, and replicate the current research on autocratization, such that students can learn the techniques needed to conduct their empirical analysis.

3. Course Requirements and Assessments

- Students are expected to do all the assigned reading and to attend all classes.
- The assessment is as follows:
 - 1) Presentations and discussions (30%): From class 7 onwards, students will present a case of autocratization based on the material they learnt in class. The main guiding question is: *why did autocratization take place in country X and what were the socio-political consequences?* Afterwards, we will incorporate the theoretical insights of the assigned reading and discuss how different approaches explain the phenomenon.
 - 2) Take-home assignments (15% x 2): Students are asked to answer conceptual questions and empirical interpretations of the assigned literature.
 - 3) 2500-word research paper (40%): Students are strongly recommended to provide an outline so that they can receive early feedback for their final research paper. Students are also encouraged to read articles from journals (e.g. *Democratization* and *Journal of Democracy*), in order to know the current developments in the field and formulate their research puzzle. In addition, students are advised to collect data early on if they have a substantive research puzzle. If the research paper has strong potential, students may have the opportunity to collaborate with the instructor and turn it into a peer-reviewed publication.

4. Class Schedule and Readings

Part I: Introduction

1. Introduction to the course: the concept of autocratization

- Lührmann, A., & Lindberg, S. I. (2019). A third wave of autocratization is here: What is new about it? *Democratization*, 26(7), 1095–1113.
- Tomini, L. (2021). Don't think of a wave! A research note about the current autocratization debate. *Democratization*, 28(6), 1191–1201.

2. Typology of autocratization

- Sinkkonen, E. (2021). Dynamic dictators: Improving the research agenda on autocratization and authoritarian resilience. *Democratization*, 28(6), 1172–1190.
- Cassani, A., & Tomini, L. (2020). Reversing regimes and concepts: From democratization to autocratization. *European Political Science*, 19(2), 272–287

3. Measurements of autocratization

- Teorell, J., Coppedge, M., Lindberg, S., & Skaaning, S.-E. (2019). Measuring Polyarchy Across the Globe, 1900–2017. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 54(1), 71–95
- Boese, V. A., Edgell, A. B., Hellmeier, S., Maerz, S. F., & Lindberg, S. I. (2021). How democracies prevail: Democratic resilience as a two-stage process. *Democratization*, 28(5), 885–907

Part II: What causes autocratization?

4. The process-tracing approach

- Linz, J., & Stepan, A. (1979). *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown & Reequilibration*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kopstein, J. S., & Wittenberg, J. (2010). Beyond dictatorship and democracy: Rethinking national minority inclusion and regime type in interwar Eastern Europe. *Comparative Political Studies*, 43(8–9), 1089–1118

5. The trade-off approach

- Graham, M. H., & Svobik, M. W. (2020). Democracy in America? Partisanship, polarization, and the robustness of support for democracy in the United States. *American Political Science Review*, 114(2), 392–409.
- Gidengil, E., Stolle, D., & Bergeron-Boutin, O. (2021). The partisan nature of support for democratic backsliding: A comparative perspective. *European Journal of Political Research*, 61, 901–929.

6. The perceptual bias approach

- Krishnarajan, S. (2022). Rationalizing Democracy: The Perceptual Bias and (Un)Democratic Behavior. *American Political Science Review*.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422000806>

Part III: What are the consequences of autocratization?

7. Elites' responses

- Cleary, M. R., & Öztürk, A. (2022). When Does Backsliding Lead to Breakdown? Uncertainty and Opposition Strategies in Democracies at Risk. *Perspectives on Politics*, 20(1), 205–221
- Jiménez, M. (2023). Contesting Autocracy: Repression and Opposition Coordination in Venezuela. *Political Studies*, 71(1), 47–68.

8. Citizens' responses

- Chan, K. M., & Ng, K. L. (2022). Elections with candidate filtering and two mechanisms of demobilization effect. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2022.2051150>
- Laebens, M. G., & Öztürk, A. (2021). Partisanship and Autocratization: Polarization, Power Asymmetry, and Partisan Social Identities in Turkey. *Comparative Political Studies*, 54(2), 245–279.

Part IV: Current debates on autocratization

9. How to resist autocratization?

- Ronvy, J. (2023). Antidote to Backsliding: Ethnic Politics and Democratic Resilience. *American Political Science Review*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305542200140X>
- Clayton, K., & Willer, R. (2023). Endorsements from Republican politicians can increase confidence in U.S. elections. *Research & Politics*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20531680221148967>

10. Citizens' conceptualizations of democracy

- Chapman, H. S., Hanson, M. C., Dzutsati, V., & DeBell, P. (2023). Under the Veil of Democracy: What Do People Mean When They Say They Support Democracy? *Perspectives on Politics*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592722004157>
- Bryan, J. D. (2023). What Kind of Democracy Do We All Support? How Partisan Interest Impacts a Citizen's Conceptualization of Democracy. *Comparative Political Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140231152784>

11. Situating autocratization in a multi-level system

- Chan, K. M. (2023). Autocratization spillover: When electing an authoritarian erodes election trust across borders. Working paper.
- Pérez Sandoval, J. (2023). Measuring and assessing subnational electoral democracy: A new dataset for the Americas and India. *Democratization*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2023.2183195>

12. Review, recap, and preparation for the final assignment

5. Rationale of teaching methods:

- Reading material involves both cases from western and non-western countries, in order to broaden students' understanding of autocratization.
- The discussion sessions will give students the opportunity to present and comprehend theoretical ideas and empirical applications based on the assigned readings.
- Computer demonstration sessions provide students with experience and competence in using different statistical techniques to analyze autocratization.

6. Intended knowledge and skill outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will have:

- A good working knowledge of (a) the measurements and main explanations of autocratization (b) the autocratization experiences in both western and non-western countries, and (c) the latest developments in the field.
- Skills in comparative analysis: e.g. comparing regime indicators, public opinion, and political behaviour across countries and over time.
- A sound understanding of the research design and methods used to analyze autocratization.
- Solid knowledge of statistical techniques used to analyze regimes' status, public opinion, and political behaviour.

7. Assessment rationale:

1. The presentation and discussion assess students' abilities:
 - a. To understand the core arguments and analytical vigour of the reading
 - b. To learn the commonly used research designs
2. The take-home assignments test students' abilities:
 - a. To identify the contributions and limitations of different studies
 - b. To explore and manage datasets that are commonly used in political science
 - c. To recognize the importance of replications of studies
3. The research paper will test students' abilities:
 - a. To address a major question in autocratization
 - b. To draw upon and engage critically with the relevant literature
 - c. To formulate simple theoretical expectations based on cited literature
 - d. To identify and synthesize relevant empirical evidence

8. Academic Integrity:

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report suspected instances of academic dishonesty.