

DEMOCRATIC EROSION

POLS1820X

Brown University
Department of Political Science
Fall 2017
[DAY, TIME & LOCATION TBD]

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OVERVIEW

It is often assumed that once a country achieves a certain level of economic and political development, democratic consolidation is permanent, absent some cataclysmic event. Recent trends in American and European politics have led some commentators to call this assumption into question. As Charles Tilly famously argued, “de-democratization occurs more frequently than democratic theorists generally allow.” In this course, we will explore the causes and consequences of democratic erosion in comparative and historical perspective. We will begin by discussing transitions into and out of democracy in Europe and elsewhere in the mid-to-late 20th century. We will then consider four themes that unite both the study and the reality of democratic consolidation and erosion: polarization and identity politics; populism; violence and intimidation; and civil resistance. Next, we will investigate four contemporary cases of democratic erosion: Turkey, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Russia (focusing in particular on the latter). Finally, we will analyze strategies for confronting democratic erosion when it occurs. Readings will address both empirical and normative questions, and will be gleaned from a combination of academic and media sources. Enrollment will be capped at 20. Permission from the instructor is required.

Importantly, this course is *not* intended as a partisan critique of any particular American politician or political party. Rather, it is designed as an opportunity for you to engage, critically and carefully, with the claims you have doubtlessly already heard about the state of democracy in the US and elsewhere; to evaluate whether those claims are valid; and, if they are, to consider strategies for mitigating the risk of democratic erosion both here and abroad.

LEARNING GOALS & OBJECTIVES

This course aims to introduce you to some of the most important issues and debates surrounding democratic consolidation and erosion around the world. The course also seeks to familiarize you with the basic epistemological underpinnings of social science, especially the logic and methods of causal inference and case comparison. The readings, lectures, presentations, discussions, debates and essays are designed to deepen your knowledge of specific cases while also building more general critical thinking and

analytical skills that you will use to form your own understanding of democratic consolidation and erosion, and to present your views in both verbal and written formats.

REQUIREMENTS

There are **four graded assignments** for this course. **First**, by **[DATE TBD]** you will compile a **casebook** on one country that is currently experiencing or recently experienced an episode of democratic erosion. I will provide a list of countries for you to choose from, though you are free to choose whatever country you like (except the US). The casebook should include (1) a 5-page analysis of the causes and consequences of democratic erosion in your country of choice; (2) a bullet-point chronology of events; (3) a bullet-point glossary of individuals, organizations and institutions involved; and (4) a list of relevant resources, including non-fiction, fiction, poetry, documentaries, feature films, music and/or visual art. This list need not be exhaustive; include only the resources that you think are likely to be the most informative.

Second, between **[DATE TBD]** and **[DATE TBD]** you will give a **10-minute presentation** on the country you chose for the first assignment. You should assume your classmates have read your casebook beforehand, and so should focus your presentation on current events and on any especially relevant historical or analytical details that your casebook omitted. You should continue following news from your country throughout the semester for purposes of your final paper (described below).

Third, on **[DATE TBD]** you will participate in a series of debates in which you will develop arguments for and against particular interpretations of the dynamics of democratic erosion in three different countries. You will work in teams to defend one of two opposing positions on how we should understand democratic erosion in these cases, and on what, if anything, should be done to promote democratic reconsolidation. I will select the cases, and will assign you positions to defend. Two teams will participate in each debate, while the rest of the class observes and asks questions. All three debates will be conducted in a single class session. Prior to the debates, your team will prepare a **10-page memo** outlining the arguments in favor of the position you were assigned, potential objections to those arguments, and potential rebuttals to those objections. Your memos should be grounded not only in the specifics of the case, but also in general lessons learned from the readings throughout the semester. The memos will be due on **[DATE TBD]**, the day before the debate.

Finally, by **[DATE TBD]** you will write a **15- to 20-page research paper** comparing the US to the country you chose for your casebook and presentation. You can (and should) reference both of these earlier assignments in your paper, but should not copy any part of them verbatim. Further, you should assume that because I already read your casebook and watched your presentation, you do not need to dedicate much room in your final paper to description, and can use that space for argumentation instead. This is your opportunity to think critically and carefully about whether the risk of democratic erosion in the US is real; whether it has become more severe in recent years; and, if so, whether there is anything that civil society can do to stop it. You may approach the cases

from any angle you choose, but your analysis should incorporate themes from the course; should apply lessons learned from each case to the other; should be argumentative rather than purely descriptive; and should, of course, address the prospects for democracy in both of the countries you analyze.

COURSE TIME ALLOTMENT

Over 13 weeks, you should expect to spend 2.5 hours per week in class (32.5 hours total); 7 hours per week reading and reviewing the required readings (91 hours total); 7 hours writing each of your country case books (14 hours total); 2.5 hours preparing your presentation; 15 hours preparing for the debate and writing your debate memo (excluding some time for preparation in class); and 25 hours researching and writing your final paper.

GRADING

Casebook	15%
Presentation	15%
Debate memo	15%
Participation in debate	5%
Final paper	50%

For the debate memo, all members of your team will receive the same grade. You will be graded individually on all other assignments.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The Brown Writing Center defines plagiarism as “appropriating another person's ideas or words (spoken or written) without attributing those word or ideas to their true source.” Consequences for plagiarism are often severe, and can include suspension or expulsion. This course will follow the guidelines in the Academic Code for determining what is and isn't plagiarism:

In preparing assignments a student often needs or is required to employ outside sources of information or opinion. All such sources should be listed in the bibliography. Citations and footnote references are required for all specific facts that are not common knowledge and about which there is not general agreement. New discoveries or debatable opinions must be credited to the source, with specific references to edition and page even when the student restates the matter in his or her own words. Word-for-word inclusion of any part of someone else's written or oral sentence, even if only a phrase or sentence, requires citation in quotation marks and use of the appropriate conventions for attribution. Citations should normally include author, title, edition, and page. (Quotations longer than one sentence are generally indented from the text of the essay, without quotation marks, and identified by author, title, edition, and page.)

Paraphrasing or summarizing the contents of another's work is not dishonest if the source or sources are clearly identified (author, title, edition, and page), but such paraphrasing does not constitute independent work and may be rejected by the instructor. Students who have questions about accurate and proper citation methods are expected to consult reference guides as well as course instructors.

Consult the Writing Center, the Brown library and/or the Academic Code (https://www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_the_College/curriculum/documents/academic-code.pdf) for more information.

EXTENSIONS & LATE PENALTIES

All written assignments should be emailed to me by 11:59pm on the due date. **Late assignments will be penalized one-third of a letter grade every day**, including the date the late assignment is submitted. For example, if you turn in your casebook on [DATE TBD] and you receive an A, it will count as a B (subtracting 1/3 of a letter grade each for [DATE TBD], [DATE TBD] and [DATE TBD]) when calculating your final grade.

I understand, of course, that you have other classes and commitments, and that you may have trouble meeting one or more of the deadlines above. With the exception of the final paper, you may request an extension on any assignment up to a week **before** the due date, for up to a week **after** the due date, no questions asked. **Any other request for an extension or waiver of the late penalty must be accompanied by a letter or email from the dean's office.** If you request an extension or waiver within a week of the due date **without** a note from the dean, (a) you will not be granted one and (b) you will be penalized one full letter grade (instead of one-third of a letter grade) every day your assignment is late. There will be no exceptions to this policy. In order to submit your grades on time, **I unfortunately cannot offer extensions on the final paper.**

ACCESSIBILITY

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me if you have a disability or other condition that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu.

BOOKS

We will read all or most of the following books:

Arendt, Hannah. 1951. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Berlin: Schocken Books.

Bail, Christopher A. 2016. *Terrified: How Anti-Muslim Fringe Organizations Became Mainstream*. Reprint. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Chenoweth, Erica, and Maria J. Stephan. 2012. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. Reprint. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gessen, Marsha. 2012. *The Man Without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin*. New York: Riverhead.

Haffner, Sebastian. 2000. *Defying Hitler: A Memoir*. London: Picador.

Huntington, Samuel. 1991. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Hyde, Susan D. 2011. *The Pseudo-Democrat's Dilemma: Why Election Observation Became an International Norm*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Mann, Thomas E., and Norman J. Ornstein. 2012. *It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*. New York: Basic Books.

Mudde, Cas, ed. 2016. *The Populist Radical Right: A reader*. London: Routledge.

Müller, Jan-Werner. 2016. *What Is Populism?* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Ulfelder, Jay. 2010. *Dilemmas of Democratic Consolidation: A Game-Theory Approach*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Walzer, Michael. 1999. *On Toleration*. Revised. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

SCHEDULE

All readings are required.

[DATE TBD] (week 1): Introduction

Lust, Ellen, and David Waldner. 2015. *Unwelcome Change: Understanding, Evaluating, and Extending Theories of Democratic Backsliding*. Washington, DC: USAID.

http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PBAAD635.pdf

90 pp.

PART I: DEMOCRACY AND ITS ALTERNATIVES IN COMPARATIVE AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

[DATE TBD] (week 2): 20th century democratic consolidation

Huntington, Samuel. 1991. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press. Ch. 1, 2, 3 and 6. 196. pp.

[DATE TBD] (week 3): 20th century democratic erosion

Arendt, Hannah. 1951. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Berlin: Schocken Books. Ch. 8-13. 260 pp.

[DATE TBD] (week 4): The public's role in democratic erosion

Casebook #1 due

Haffner, Sebastian. 2000. *Defying Hitler: A Memoir*. London: Picador. 320 pp.

PART II: THEMES

[DATE TBD] (week 5): Polarization and identity politics

Casebooks

Slater, Dan. 2013. "Democratic Careening." *World Politics* 65(4): 729–63.
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/world-politics/article/democratic-careening/E94A34CCE67731A1209E100D97DE08F>
34 pp.

Bail, Christopher A. 2016. *Terrified: How Anti-Muslim Fringe Organizations Became Mainstream*. Reprint. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 108 pp.

Walzer, Michael. 1999. *On Toleration*. Revised. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 144 pp.

[DATE TBD] (week 6): Populism

Casebooks

Müller, Jan-Werner. 2016. *What Is Populism?* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 136 pp.

Mudde, Cas, ed. 2016. *The Populist Radical Right: A reader*. London: Routledge. Introduction and ch. 1-6.

[DATE TBD] (week 7): Violence and intimidation

Casebooks

Hyde, Susan D. 2011. *The Pseudo-Democrat's Dilemma: Why Election Observation Became an International Norm*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 248 pp.

[DATE TBD] (week 8): Civil disobedience

Casebook #2 due

Chenoweth, Erica, and Maria J. Stephan. 2012. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. Reprint. New York: Columbia University Press. 320 pp.

PART III: CASES

[DATE TBD] (week 9): Patterns of democratic erosion in the late 20th and early 21st century

Casebooks

Ulfelder, Jay. 2010. *Dilemmas of Democratic Consolidation: A Game-Theory Approach*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers. 177 pp.

Bermeo, Nancy. 2016. "On Democratic Backsliding." *Journal of Democracy* 27(1): 5–19.
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/607612>
14 pp.

[DATE TBD] (week 10): Turkey, Nicaragua and Venezuela

Filkins, Dexter. 2016. "Turkey's Thirty-Year Coup." *The New Yorker* (October 17).
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/10/17/turkeys-thirty-year-coup>

Finnegan, William. 2016. "Venezuela, a Failing State." *The New Yorker* (November 14).
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/14/venezuela-a-failing-state>

Ulfelder, Jay. 2011. "Daniel Ortega Shows Us How to Dismantle a Democracy, 21st-Century Style." *Dart-Throwing Chimp* (November 30).
<https://dartthrowingchimp.wordpress.com/2011/11/30/daniel-ortega-shows-us-how-to-dismantle-a-democracy-21st-century-style/>

[DATE TBD] (week 11): Russia

Gessen, Marsha. 2012. *The Man Without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin*. New York: Riverhead. 352 pp.

[DATE TBD] (week 12): Debate

There are no readings for this week, but you should meet with your team to compare your memos and coordinate your arguments.

[DATE TBD] (week 13): Confronting democratic erosion in the 21st century

Ulfelder, Jay. 2016. "What Now?" *Political Violence @ a Glance* (November 12). <https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2016/11/12/what-now/>

Hughes, Sean Patrick. 2016. "What Now?" *chartwell west* (November 12). <https://chartwellwest.com/2016/11/12/what-now/>

Mann, Thomas E., and Norman J. Ornstein. 2012. *It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*. New York: Basic Books.

[DATE TBD]

Final papers due