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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casebook</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debate memo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in debate</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
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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:


**SCHEDULE**

All readings are required.

**[DATE TBD]** (week 1): Introduction


90 pp.

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

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

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


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

Casebook #1 due


**PART II: THEMES**

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

Casebooks


**[DATE TBD]** (week 6): Populism

Casebooks


DATE TBD (week 7): Violence and intimidation

Casebooks


DATE TBD (week 8): Civil disobedience

Casebook #2 due


PART III: CASES

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

Casebooks


https://muse.jhu.edu/article/607612
14 pp.

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


DATE TBD (week 11): Russia

**[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


**[DATE TBD]**

Final papers due