Comparative Authoritarianism

POLS 975
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Spring 2014
Time: Tuesday 4:00pm-6:40pm
Room: TBD

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2-4pm (or by appointment)
Mode of Delivery: In-person

Course Description:
This is a graduate level course on the comparative politics of authoritarian regimes. Historically, most of the world’s political regimes have been authoritarian. Since the end of the Cold War, democratic countries have come to outnumber those with authoritarian forms of government; but 40% of the world’s governments remain authoritarian, and over half of the planet’s population lives under non-democratic rule. Any effort to understand the foundations comparative politics would be incomplete without a consideration of non-democratic regimes.

We will begin the course by investigating conceptual and operational differences between authoritarian and democratic regimes. We will then ask if those differences matter. The course then proceeds to examine the question of ‘who governs’ in authoritarian regimes. We will look at conceptual distinctions between and empirical examples of personalist, monarchical, military, and single party regimes. The course then moves to consider the means by which authoritarian governments maintain and exercise their power. We will examine issues related to ideology, coercion, cooptation, electoral manipulation, patronage distribution, and political socialization. We will also look at how authoritarian governments manage relations with opposition forces and elites. Most of our focus will be on the political dynamics of contemporary authoritarian regimes, although we will also review the workings of authoritarian regimes from decades past in order to contextualize our discussions.

Although the primary focus of our course is not on democratic transitions, we will be vigilant in identifying the ways that the study of authoritarian rule can inform the study of democratization processes. In addition, your paper assignment will address this issue. Our approach to the material will be thematic. So we will not spend a great deal of time exploring the histories and details of particular cases, but our readings include empirical material from countries in all regions of the world.

Course Objectives:

In this course you will:

1. gain a firm understanding of the difference between democratic and authoritarian regimes
2. become familiar with the different types of authoritarian rule
3. learn about how authoritarian governments exercise and perpetuate their power
4. use the analytic toolkit of social science to examine why we observe certain political outcomes in authoritarian regimes
5. encounter and work through successful examples of applied political science research
6. learn to critique cutting edge research in comparative politics
7. gain exposure to sophisticated methodologies
Requirements:

1) Attend class sessions and participate
   The format of this class will be discussion. Your participation includes both attendance and engagement in class discussion.
   Most of our class time will be spent discussing the themes and arguments presented in our readings. Everyone should have something to say in every class. Your comments need not dazzle every time. Often times, the most productive contributions to class discussions are questions. If you don’t understanding something in the readings, say so. The authors we read are not perfect; one of our primary mandates in the course is to find flaws in these readings and discuss ways to improve them. Speak up and air your grievances. We will all be better for it and you will be rewarded come evaluation time. For each reading you should be prepared to discuss the following questions (if applicable):
   - What is the research question? (i.e. what is the goal of the researcher?)
   - Is this research question important? What is the puzzle being addressed? What is the motivation? (i.e. why was this paper written? Should we care about it?)
   - What are the main concepts being discussed? Are they clear?
   - What is the argument? What are its component parts? Who are the actors? Is it logically coherent? Is it novel?
   - What are the observable implications of the argument?
   - How is the argument tested? (i.e. what is the empirical strategy)
   - How does the author measure key concepts? Are these measurements valid? Reliable?
   - Does the evidence support the theory?
   - What are the major hurdles to causal (or descriptive) inference in the empirical section (if applicable)? How does the author address these issues? Do they do an adequate job?
   
   Attendance is mandatory. Our class is small, and therefore, you cannot free ride on your fellow classmates. Your absences will be noticed by all and have a palpable impact on our sessions. Each unexcused absence will result in the reduction of your participation grade by 1/3 of a letter grade.

2) Complete assigned readings before the date indicated on the syllabus
   In order to participate effectively in discussion, you will need to have done the required readings for that day. Much is expected in terms of reading, but you are up to the task.

3) Seven 2-4 page reaction papers/presentation
   Over the course of the semester, you will write eight reaction papers on a reading (or readings) of your choice from a class session.
   These papers should have three components:
   1) The paper should briefly (one paragraph) sum up the main argument made by the author and the evidence provided.
   2) It should contain an evaluation and critique of the author’s argument and evidence. Does the author’s argument make sense? Why or why not? Does his evidence (if
any) comport with his/her argument? Why or why not? Do you know of other evidence that undermines (or supports) the author’s argument? Does one of the other readings for that day offer a perspective that is discordant with the perspective offered by the author? This section should constitute the lion’s share of the paper.

3) The paper should conclude with some questions for the class that flow from your evaluation/critique.

You will give a short 5-minute presentation on your paper to kick off our discussion of that reading. Your questions should help us in our discussion.

Each week we will determine who will write reaction papers for the following week. I will ask for volunteers.

The reaction papers are due in class on the day we discuss the reading.

4) Students will write one substantial (20-30 page) research design paper.

In this paper, you will propose original research on a topic related to the politics of authoritarian regimes. The aim of the research design is to help you learn how to write a publishable research paper in political science. It should contain all the elements of a journal-quality academic article, except the evidence itself. The research design should accomplish the following tasks.

1) Specify an interesting and important research question.
2) Justify the research question in light of existing literature and/or conventional wisdom. What is the relevant literature and/or research program that this question addresses? Many of your papers will be motivated by some “puzzle.” A social scientific puzzle is a manifestation of a political phenomenon (a case, set of data, observation, or example) that is puzzling in light of intuition, existing literature, or existing empirical results. Puzzles push social scientific inquiry forward. Identifying interesting puzzles is one of the most difficult tasks in all of social science. It requires creativity and an awareness of your sub-field’s overarching goals. It’s really hard. Practice is the best way to learn how to do it.
3) Articulate a theoretical argument to help answer the research question.
4) Describe the empirical implications of the argument. That is, derive hypotheses from the argument.
5) Delineate alternative explanations and what we would expect to see in the data if they are true
6) Set forth a plan for testing these hypotheses. What will the dependent variable be? Independent variables? How will you address problems of inference?

Each of you should meet individually with me about your paper topic before February 11. A two page outline is due on March 4. The final version of the paper will be due on the last day of class—May 6, 2014.

5) Complete one take-home final exam. Due by email on May 15.
Evaluation Scheme:

Class Attendance and Participation: 20%
Reaction Papers: 25%
Research Paper: 40%
Final Exam: 15%

Late Assignment Policy

All assignments are due on the assigned date. Response papers are due on the day that a reading is covered in class. I do not accept late assignments. Exceptions are made only in the most severe and extraordinary circumstances.

Required Texts for Purchase:


Expected Time Commitment:

This is a three-credit course, so the expected time commitment from students is approximately 144 hours. Students will spend 36 hours in class over the course of the semester. Approximately 50% of the remaining time will be spent preparing for class by doing assigned readings and taking notes. 10% will be spent preparing reaction papers. A further 40% will be spent working on the final research design paper.

Academic Honesty:

All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s academic misconduct policy. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course and any plagiarism on any assignment will result in a failing grade for the course. When in doubt, cite. If you have questions about attribution, please see me. I am here to help! More information is available at http://www.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm

University Policies (http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf)
PART I-CONCEPTS


Required:


Schumpeter, Joseph. 1943. Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy. Chapter 21, pp250-256 and Chapter 22, pp 269-273[D2L]


Suggested:


January 28—Conceptualization and Measurement: How do we know an authoritarian regime when we see one? Is there such a thing as a hybrid regime? The gray area between democracy and authoritarianism. Contemporary authoritarian regimes. Introduction to electoral autocracy.

Required:


Required:


Edward Glaeser, Rafael La Porta, Florencio Lopez-de-Silanes, and Andrei Shleifer “Do Institutions Cause Growth?” Journal of Economic Growth, September, 2004


Suggested:


Huntington, Samuel. 1968. Political Order in Changing Societies. [Selections]

Bruce Russett 1994. Grasping the Democratic Peace. Chapters 1 and 2. pp 3-42 [D2L]
Reiter, Dan and Alan Stam. 2003. Democracies at War. Chapter 2 [D2L]


Jack Snyder, From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000) [Selection]

PART II: WHO GOVERNS IN AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES?

February 18 – Personalist and Military Regimes—What is traditional authority? Charismatic authority? Dynasties. The foundations of personal rule. Succession. How does a military regime differ from other types of authoritarian regimes? Do military leaders have preferences that are unique from normal politicians? Are military regimes different from personalist regimes? Why are there so few military regimes in the world today? Regime type and regime longevity.

Required:


Suggested:


Required:

Brownlee, Jason. 2007. *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*. Introduction and Chapter 1 pp1-44. [D21]


**Suggested:**


Brownlee, Remainder


**PART III: HOW AUTHORITARIAN LEADERS RULE**


**Required:**

Levitsky, Steven and Lucan Way. 2013 “The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes” *Journal of Democracy*. 24(3)


Gandhi, Jennifer and Adam Przeworski. 2006. “Cooperation, Cooptation, and Rebellion under Dictatorships” *Economics and Politics*


Suggested:


**March 18—‘Ruling’ via Elections**— Why do authoritarian leaders hold elections? Elections as precursors to democratization? Elections as mechanisms of authoritarian rule?

**Required:**


Teorell, Jan and Axel Hadenius. 2009. “Elections as Levers of Democratization” in Democratization by Elections: A New Mode of Transition. [D2L]


**Suggested:**


**April 1—“Winning” Authoritarian Elections: Electoral Fraud**— Why use electoral fraud? Why not? How do we detect electoral fraud? How do citizens find out about electoral fraud?

**Required:**


Required:


Suggested:

April 15- Patronage and Social Support How do authoritarian leaders use state resources to appease citizens and social groups? Are they different from democracies in this sense? What factors inhibit their ability to gain privileged access to state resources? Performance legitimacy. The role of economic growth.

Required:


Suggested:


April 22-Natural resources—Do natural resources undermine democracy? How autocrats use natural resources to their advantage.


Ross, Michael and Jorgen Juel Andersen. 2014. “The Big Oil Change: A Closer Look at the Haber-Menaldo Analysis” *Comparative Political Studies*


**April 29—Managing the Opposition** What is the role of opposition in authoritarian regimes? How is it different from the role of the opposition in democracies? Can the opposition win? How? When do regimes permit the oppositions to organize? Opposition coalitions. Coordination problems.

**Required:**


**May 6: Protest**—Social unrest. How do dictators manage protest? When is it successful? What are its causes?


