

AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
MONDAYS 2–4:30 PM, ONLINE
FALL 2020

PROFESSOR ANNE MENG
AMENG@VIRGINIA.EDU
OFFICE HOURS: MONDAYS 4:30-5:30, ONLINE

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The overwhelming majority of governments throughout history have been undemocratic, from the pharaohs of Egypt, to the monarchs of medieval Europe, and emperors of China and Japan. Despite the “third wave” of democracy after the Cold War, many authoritarian regimes have remained surprisingly resilient. A third of the world’s countries and about half of the world’s population still live under autocratic rule today. The goal of the class is to understand the strategies autocratic leaders use to stay in power. Why do some authoritarian regimes have parties, elections, and legislatures? When do autocrats rely on repression, censorship, and coercion in order to maintain order? We will consider theories of authoritarian politics by examining historical and modern-day case studies across the globe.

CLASS LOGISTICS

We will meet over Zoom every week. Our seminars will **not** be recorded. If you can, please turn your camera on during class – we will have a lot of student-led discussions and it’s helpful to see each other in our conversations.

My office hours will be held over Zoom immediately after class ends every week, although you’re welcome to email me if you cannot meet then.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance and Participation – 25%**

Attendance and participation are especially important in seminars, and we will take advantage of the small class size to have many student-led discussions of the material. Attendance for this class is mandatory. Students are expected to have completed all the assigned readings before class and be prepared to engage in critical discussions of the works.

**The paragraph above describes my attendance and participation requirements during “normal” times. Obviously, things are very different and often times, much more challenging, right now. I fully support all of you and want you to prioritize your (physical and mental) health and well-being above everything else. Having said that, I will be very flexible on attendance and participation this semester. If you can’t make a class, it’s no problem, just send me a quick email. If you need anything at all, please don’t hesitate to

get in touch with me. I'm happy to help with anything, whether it's related to this class or not.

Just try your best this semester. Obviously, I encourage everyone to complete all the readings each week - our discussions are fun, lively, and interesting when everyone has done the work. However, if you weren't able to complete all the readings for a particular week, please still come to class anyways. I understand that unanticipated issues might come up this semester.

2. Discussion Questions and Memos – 25%

Discussion Questions (15%): Each student should email me 2 discussion questions every week by 11:59 PM on Sunday before each class.

Memos (10%): Each student is required to write 2 discussion papers throughout the semester. Discussion papers should be emailed to me by 11:59 PM on Sunday before the class. Students can pick any 2 weeks between September 7 and November 23.

Memos should be 2 pages in length and focus on 1 article assigned for that week. The first page of the memo should be a succinct summary of the key points of the article:

- What is the puzzle the author is trying to explain?
- What is the argument?
- What kinds of evidence does the author provide that supports her/his thesis?

The second page of the memo should discuss your *opinions* about the article:

- What surprised you most about the discussion in the article? What did you find most interesting?
- Are there any potential problems with the author's argument?
- What are some other things that the author could have discussed that were not covered in the article?

Students who wrote memos will be the point person for the seminar that week. We will open the discussion with brief presentations where the student will highlight **three** items from the **second** half of the memo they wrote (i.e. I do not want you to summarize the article, I want you to tell us your opinions about it!).

3. Research Paper – 50%

Proposal (5%) – due October 19

Draft Literature Review and Working Theory (10%) – due November 9

Peer Review (5%) – due November 16

Final Paper (30%) – due December 7

The field of authoritarian politics is an active research topic with a number of open questions remaining. The main assignment of this class is to produce a 20-page research paper that addresses a question you find interesting and present case studies to support your argument.

Your paper should include the following sections:

- (1) An introduction that identifies the research question and explains why this question is important.
- (2) A literature review that summarizes existing research on this topic and a discussion of how your paper relates to these existing studies.
- (3) Your own theoretical argument and discussion of key factors that you think explain the outcome that you are looking at.
- (4) Case studies to test your theoretical argument and provide evidence of your argument and mechanisms. Please present between 2-4 cases.

We will write the paper in three main stages. First, a one-page proposal that describes your research question will be due on **October 19**. Second, a draft of the research question, literature review, and working theory (approximately 5-6 pages) will be due on **November 9**. Each student will exchange their draft with an assigned partner and provide feedback on their partner's draft. The feedback should be at least 1 page in length and will be due on **November 16**. The final research paper should be 20 pages doubled-spaced and will be due on **December 7**.

I highly encourage students to come talk to me during office hours about the research paper throughout the semester, and especially during the proposal stage! I can give you early feedback about the feasibility of the topic and we can discuss possible arguments and cases.

COURSE POLICIES

Late assignments

Please do your best to plan ahead and complete all assignments on time. However, if anything does come up, please get in touch with me.

Re-grade policy

If a grade dispute arises, please provide a one-page memo explaining why you believe the grade you received is incorrect. A copy of the graded assignment should be included along with the memo. Re-grade requests must be submitted within a week from the time the grade was first received. Note that re-grade requests may result in a higher *or lower* grade, so utilize this option carefully.

Classroom etiquette

Since we will be using our computers to meet over Zoom, I encourage you to take notes by hand. Please keep other electronic devices stowed away during class.

Academic Honor Code

All students are expected to submit work that reflects their own ideas and to properly cite published sources when referencing the ideas of others. If you have any questions about proper citation practices or what constitutes plagiarism, please come talk to me. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course.

SCHEDULE

I will email you all of the readings every week. We will not be using Collab for this course.

Week 1 (8/31): Introduction

Week 2 (9/7): What is authoritarianism and how should regimes be coded?

Pamela Paxton. 2000. "Women's suffrage in the measurement of democracy: Problems of operationalization." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 35(3): 92-111.

Barbara Geddes. 1999. "What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2:115-144.

Milan Svoblik. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, Chapters 1-2.

Week 3 (9/14): Institutionalized Rule: Parties and Constitutions

Tom Ginsburg and Alberto Simpser. *Constitutions in Authoritarian Regimes*. Chapter 1 (Introduction) and Chapter 7 (The Content of Authoritarian Constitutions)

Beatriz Magaloni. 2008. "Credible Power-Sharing and the Longevity of Authoritarian Rule," *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(4): 715-741.

Anne Meng. 2020. *Constraining Dictatorship*. Chapter 1 (Introduction)

Week 4 (9/21): Non-institutional strategies of rule: Personalism and Patronage

Dan Slater. 2006. "Iron Cage in an Iron Fist: Authoritarian Institutions and the Personalization of Power in Malaysia," *Comparative Politics* 36(1): 81-101.

Lisa Wedeen. 1998. "Acting "As If": Symbolic Politics and Social Control in Syria." *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*: 503-523.

Leonardo Arriola. 2009. "Patronage and Political Stability in Africa," *Comparative Political Studies* 42(10): 1339-1362.

Week 5 (9/28): Coups

Naunihal Singh. 2014. *Seizing Power*. Chapters 1-2 (pages 1-40)

Zach Beauchamp. "Why Turkey's coup failed, according to an expert." *Vox*. July 16, 2016.

Zeeshan Aleem. "Zimbabwe's military just ousted Robert Mugabe." *Vox*. November 15, 2017.

Adam Taylor. "Zimbabwe: When a coup is not a coup." *The Washington Post*. November 15, 2017.

James Quinlivan. 1999. "Coup-proofing: Its Practices and Consequences in the Middle East." *International Security* 24(2): 131-165.

Week 6 (10/5): Coercion and Repression

Lisa Blaydes. 2018. *State of Repression: Iraq Under Saddam Hussein*. Chapter 1 (Introduction) and Chapter 2 (Compliance and Resistance Under Autocracy)

Fiona Shen-Bayh. 2018. "Strategies of Repression: Judicial and Extrajudicial Methods of Autocratic Survival." *World Politics*. 70(3): 321-357

Week 7 (10/12): Leadership Succession

Erica Frantz and Elizabeth Stein. 2017. "Countering Coups: Leadership Succession Rules in Dictatorships." *Comparative Political Studies*, 50(7): 935-962.

Jason Brownlee. 2007. "Hereditary Succession in Modern Autocracies." *World Politics*. 59(4): 595-628.

Anne Meng. 2020. "Winning the Game of Thrones: Leadership Succession in Modern Autocracies." Working paper.

Week 8 (10/19): Dictators at War

[Research Proposal due]

Jessica Weeks. 2012. "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict." *American Political Science Review*. 106(2): 326-347.

Jeff Colgan and Jessica Weeks. 2015. "Revolution, Personalist Dictatorships, and International Conflict." *International Organization* 69(1): 163-194.

Brian Lai and Dan Slater. 2005. "Institutions of the Offensive: Domestic Sources of Dispute Initiation in Authoritarian Regimes, 1950-1992." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(1): 113-126.

Week 9 (10/26): Authoritarian Elections

Ellen Lust-Okar. 2006. "Elections Under Authoritarianism: Preliminary Lessons from Jordan," *Democratization* 13(3): 456-471.

Jennifer Gandhi, Ben Noble, and Milan Svobik. 2020. "Legislature and Legislative Politics Without Democracy." *Comparative Political Studies*. 53(9): 1359-1379.

Michael Miller. 2020. "The Strategic Origins of Electoral Authoritarianism." *British Journal of Political Science* 50(1): 17-44.

Week 10 (11/2): **Election Week! Rethinking American Democracy**

Edward Gibson. 2013. *Boundary Control*. Chapter 3 (Subnational Authoritarianism in the United States: Boundary Control and the ‘Solid South’)

George Edwards. 2019. *Why the Electoral College is Bad for America*. Chapters 1-5.

November 3 is election day in the U.S. For everyone eligible, voting is very important! States try to disenfranchise people, especially students, in lots of arcane ways, so make sure to register ahead of time and learn about your states' requirements for in-person, early, mail-in, etc. forms of voting. Exercise your right to influence your future!

Week 11 (11/9): Distributive Politics

[Draft Literature Review and Working Theory due]

Kenneth Greene. 2010. “The Political Economy of Authoritarian Single-Party Dominance,” *Comparative Political Studies* 43(7): 807-834.

Michael L. Ross. 2001. “Does Oil Hinder Democracy,” *World Politics* 53(3): 325-361.

Treisman, Daniel. 2010. “Is Russia cursed by oil?” *Journal of International Affairs*, 63(2):85–102.

Week 12 (11/16): Media and Restrictions on the Press

[Peer Review Feedback due]

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

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

Scott Gehlbach. 2010. “Reflections on Putin and the Media.” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 26(1): pp. 77-87.

Week 13 (11/23): Revolutions and the Arab Spring

Timur Kuran. 1991. “Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989.” *World Politics*. 44(1):7–48.

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way. 2013. “The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes.” *Journal of Democracy* 24(3): 5-17.

Lisa Anderson. 2011. “Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Differences Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya,” *Foreign Affairs* 90(3): 2-7.

[December 7: Final Research Papers Due]