

**Political Science 3213G**  
**Comparative Authoritarianism**  
**Winter Term 2025**

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Department of Political Science  
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Office Hours: Thursday 4-5:30, or by appointment

### **Course Description**

Historically, most political regimes have been authoritarian, and there is certainly no sign of authoritarianism's disappearance in our time, even if there have been some remarkable recent challenges to authoritarian regimes. This course addresses the sources of authoritarianism, the varieties of authoritarian regime, the institutions and practices supportive of dictatorship, the causes of authoritarian decline and failure, and the authoritarian impulses residing within some democratic regimes.

### **Course Format**

This course will take place in person. Our class meetings will combine lecture segments with plenty of opportunities for questions and discussion. So, please do show up on Thursday afternoons having read and absorbed the assigned readings, and ready to engage with the material in vigorous and critical fashion. All assigned readings will be made available on the OWL site. This includes the one book we will be reading just about entirely: Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz, 2018. *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization, and Collapse*. Cambridge University Press. Course Readings will link to the library's online copy of this book. But you may of course also acquire a physical copy from online sellers if you prefer.

### **Learning Outcomes**

In this course, you will develop the ability to: (a) distinguish between types of political regimes and types of authoritarian regimes in particular; (b) identify the ways authoritarians exercise and perpetuate their power; (c) understand the sources of resistance to authoritarianism; (d) explain why dictatorships weaken and fail, and how their legacy affects subsequent regime formation; and (e) make sense of the possible impact of authoritarian influences within democratic regimes.

### **Requirements and Evaluation**

- 1) Country Case Study I (25%)
- 2) Country Case Study II (35%)
- 3) Final Exam (30%)
- 4) Participation (10%)

## Country Case Study I

Students will be expected to select a country case during a period of authoritarian or quasi-authoritarian rule, and respond to the following questions: How can the political regime type best be characterized? What are the indicators that help you to determine this? Are there features that do not fit perfectly within the category you have selected, and how significant are they? What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the way the regime is structured in your country? In your view, is this regime stable and successful, and on what basis do you draw your conclusions?

Length: 4-5 pages, double-spaced, one-inch margins, standard font size. In addition to syllabus materials, please use at least four high-quality non-syllabus sources (e.g., journal articles, book chapters). You are encouraged to use syllabus materials for the conceptual and theoretical foundations, and to rely upon your additional research for details on your country case. **Due date:** February 8, 11:59 pm, with flexibility to February 10, 11:59 pm. **Late penalty:** 2% per day.

## Country Case Study II

Students will be expected to pick a different country case, again during a period of authoritarian or quasi-authoritarian rule, and respond to the following questions: What is the nature of the political regime? How, and to what extent, has the regime been institutionalized? How has the regime attempted to sustain itself? Has it been stable and successful, and why or why not? Have the regime's institutional features been helpful or not in this regard? Length: 6-8 pages, double-spaced, one-inch margins, standard font size. In addition to syllabus materials, please use at least six high-quality non-syllabus sources. The key is to consider the various tools developed in the source as providing the conceptual and theoretical foundations for the paper, and to rely upon your additional research for details on your country case. **Due date:** March 29, 11:59 pm, with flexibility to March 31, 11:59 pm. **Late penalty:** 2% per day.

## Final Exam

Students will write a two-hour exam, in the formal exam period at the end of the term, based on questions provided for advance preparation.

## Participation

Students will be expected to participate regularly and constructively in our weekly meetings. Participation will be evaluated based on the following considerations: relevance, responsiveness to the material laid out in assigned readings and lecture segments, and insightfulness. Keep in mind that a well-informed and helpful question can be an important element in course participation.

\*\*\*Attendance is required for success in this course.

\*\*\*Electronic devices will be permissible only for the purpose of note-taking and any other class-related activities. Disruptive use of these devices will not be permitted.

## **Prerequisite**

Political Science 2231E (2531F/G) or 2245E (2545F/G) or International Relations 2701E (2704F/G).

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

## **Plagiarism and AI**

Academic offenses such as plagiarism and reliance on AI technologies such as ChatGPT will be taken very seriously. Students are expected to research and write their own assignments in full. All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

## **COURSE READINGS:**

### **Week One**

#### **Introduction** (January 9)

No required readings.

### **Week Two**

#### ***Regime Types: Democracy and Dictatorship*** (January 16)

Jose Cheibub, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Vreeland, 2009. "Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited." *Public Choice* 143 (1-2): 67-101.

Barbara Geddes, 1999. "What Have We Learned About Democratization After 20 Years?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 115-144.

Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz, 2018. *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization, and Collapse*. Cambridge University Press, chapter 1.

### **Week Three**

#### ***Sources of Dictatorship*** (January 23)

Geddes et al., *How Dictatorships Work*, chapters 2 and 3.

Dan Slater, "Violent Origins of Authoritarian Variation: Rebellion Type and Regime Type in Cold War Southeast Asia." *Government and Opposition* vol. 55 (2020): 21-40.

V. Ximena Velasco Guachalla, Calla Hummel, Sam Handlin, and Amy Erica Smith, "Latin America Erupts: When Does Competitive Authoritarianism Take Root?" *Journal of Democracy* vol. 32, no. 3 (July 2021): 63-77.

#### **Week Four**

##### ***Monarchy and Totalitarianism*** (January 30)

John Gerring, Tore Wig, Wouter Veenendaal, Daniel Weitzel, Jan Teorell, and Kyosuke Kikuta, 2021. "Why Monarchy? The Rise and Demise of a Regime Type." *Comparative Political Studies* 54 (3-4): 585-622.

Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, 1956. *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*. Harvard University Press, chapters 1 and 3.

Antonio Costa Pinto, 2002. "Elites, Single Parties and Political Decision-making in Fascist-era Dictatorships." *Contemporary European History* 11 (3): 429-54.

#### **Week Five**

##### ***Personalist and Military Regimes*** (February 6)

Geddes et al., *How Dictatorships Work*, chapters 4 and 5 (pp. 95-101).

Wonjun Song and Joseph Wright, 2018. "The North Korean Autocracy in Comparative Perspective." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 18: 157-180.

#### **Week Six**

##### ***Repression*** (February 13)

Geddes et al., *How Dictatorships Work*, chapter 7.

Sheena Chestnut Greitens, 2016. *Dictators and Their Secret Police: Coercive Institutions and State Violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press, chapter 5.

Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring." *Comparative Politics* 44 2 (2012): 127-49.

**\*\*Break Week: No session February 20**

## **Week Seven**

### ***Information and Influence*** (February 27)

Lisa Wedeen, 1998. "Acting 'As If': Symbolic Politics and Social Control in Syria." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40 (3): 503-523.

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

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

Péter Krekó, 2021. "How Authoritarians Inflate their Image." *Journal of Democracy* 32 (3): 109-23.

## **Week Eight**

### ***The Institutional Turn I: Authoritarian Parties*** (March 6)

Geddes et al., *How Dictatorships Work*, chapters 5 (pp. 101-125), and 6 (pp. 129-37).

Benjamin Smith, 2005. "The Life of the Party: The Origins of Regime Breakdown and Persistence Under Single-Party Rule." *World Politics* 57 (3): 421-451.

## **Week Nine**

### ***The Institutional Turn II: Authoritarian Elections*** (March 13)

Geddes et al., *How Dictatorships Work*, chapter 6 (pp. 137-53).

Michael Miller, 2015. "Democratic Pieces: Autocratic Elections and Democratic Development Since 1815." *British Journal of Political Science* 45 (3): 501-30.

Ellen Lust-Okar, 2009. "Legislative Elections in Hegemonic Authoritarian Regimes: Competitive Clientelism and Resistance to Democratization." In *Democratization by Elections: A New Mode of Transition*, ed., Staffan I. Lindberg. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

## **Week Ten**

### ***China and Russia Compared*** (March 20)

Andrew Nathan, 2003. "China's Changing of the Guard: Authoritarian Resilience." *Journal of Democracy* 14 (1): 6-17.

Joseph Fewsmith, 2021. "Balances, Norms, and Institutions: Why Elite Politics in the CCP Have Not Institutionalized." *The China Quarterly* 248: 265-282.

Timothy Frye, 2021. *Weak Strongman: The Limits of Power in Putin's Russia* (Princeton University Press, 2021), chapter 5.

Karrie J. Koesel and Valerie J. Bunce, 2018. "Diffusion-Proofing: Russian and Chinese Responses to Waves of Popular Mobilization Against Authoritarian Rulers." In *Citizens and the State in Authoritarian Regimes*, eds., Karrie Koesel, Valerie J. Bunce, and Jessica Chen Weiss. Oxford University Press.

## **Week Eleven**

### ***Authoritarian Collapse and Democratization* (March 27)**

Geddes et al., *How Dictatorships Work*, chapter 8.

Dan Slater and Joseph Wong, 2013. "The Strength to Concede: Ruling Parties and Democratization in Developmental Asia." *Perspectives on Politics* 11 (3): 717-733.

Mark R. Beissinger, 2013. "The Semblance of Democratic Revolution: Coalitions in Ukraine's Orange Revolution." *American Political Science Review* 107 (3): 574-592.

## **Week Twelve**

### ***Authoritarian Legacies and Democratic Backsliding* (April 3)**

Anna Grzymala-Busse, 2019. "Hoist on their Own Petards? The Reinvention and Collapse of Authoritarian Successor Parties." *Party Politics* 25 (4):569-82.

Sheri Berman, 2013. "The Promise of the Arab Spring: In Political Development, No Pain Without Gain." *Foreign Affairs* 92 (1): 64-74.

Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufmann, 2021. "Democratic Backsliding." *Journal of Democracy* 32 (4): 27-41.

Grzegorz Ekiert, Noah Dasanaike, 2024. "The Return of Dictatorship." *Journal of Democracy* 35 (4): 177-91.

Milan W. Svolik, 2019. "Polarization Versus Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 30 (3): 20-32.

## **APPENDIX TO UNDERGRADUATE COURSE OUTLINES DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

### **Prerequisite checking - the student's responsibility**

"Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

### **Essay course requirements**

With the exception of 1000-level courses, most courses in the Department of Political Science are essay courses. Total written assignments (excluding examinations) will be at least 3,000 words in Politics 1020E, at least 5,000 words in a full course numbered 2000 or above, and at least 2,500 words in a half course numbered 2000 or above.

### **Use of Personal Response Systems ("Clickers")**

"Personal Response Systems ("clickers") may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning.

Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else's clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence,
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence."

**Security and Confidentiality of Student Work** (refer to current *Western Academic Calendar* (<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/>))

"**Submitting or Returning Student Assignments, Tests and Exams** - All student assignments, tests and exams will be handled in a secure and confidential manner. Particularly in this respect, leaving student work unattended in public areas for pickup is not permitted."

### **Duplication of work**

Undergraduate students who submit similar assignments on closely related topics in two different courses must obtain the consent of both instructors prior to the submission of the assignment. If prior approval is not obtained, each instructor reserves the right not to accept the assignment.

### **Grade adjustments**

In order to ensure that comparable standards are applied in political science courses, the Department may require instructors to adjust final marks to conform to Departmental guidelines.

### **Academic Offences**

"Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### **Submission of Course Requirements**

ESSAYS, ASSIGNMENTS, TAKE-HOME EXAMS **MUST** BE SUBMITTED ACCORDING TO PROCEDURES SPECIFIED BY YOUR INSTRUCTOR (I.E., IN CLASS, DURING OFFICE HOURS, TA'S OFFICE HOURS) OR UNDER THE INSTRUCTOR'S OFFICE DOOR.

THE MAIN OFFICE DOES NOT DATE-STAMP OR ACCEPT ANY OF THE ABOVE.

**Attendance Regulations for Examinations**

EXAMINATIONS/ATTENDANCE (Sen. Min. Feb.4/49, May 23/58, S.94, S.3538, S.3632, S.04-097)

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations: 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year. 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

**Medical Policy, Late Assignments, etc.**

Students registered in Social Science should refer to [http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/having\\_problems/index.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/having_problems/index.html) for information on Medical Policy, Term Tests, Final Examinations, Late Assignments, Short Absences, Extended Absences, Documentation and other Academic Concerns. Non-Social Science students should refer to their home faculty's academic counselling office.

**University Policy on Cheating and Academic Misconduct**

**Plagiarism:** Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence." (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

**Plagiarism Checking:** "All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com ( <http://www.turnitin.com> )."



**Multiple-choice tests/exams:** "Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating."

Note: Information excerpted and quoted above are Senate regulations from the Handbook of Scholarship and Academic Policy. [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic\\_policies/index.html](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/index.html)

### **PLAGIARISM\***

In writing scholarly papers, you must keep firmly in mind the need to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged borrowing of another writer's words or ideas. Different forms of writing require different types of acknowledgement. The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

**A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.**

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of publication, and page number.

Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

**B. In adopting other writers' ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.**

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source, these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases in their suspension from the University.

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Adopted by the council of the Faculty of Social Science, October, 1970; approved by the Dept. of History August 13, 1991

**Accessibility at Western:** Please contact [poliscie@uwo.ca](mailto:poliscie@uwo.ca) if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

The Registrar's office can be accessed for Student Support Services at <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services (including the services provided by the USC listed here) can be reached at:

<http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Services can be reached at: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.