

America and Russia, Archetypes of Democracy and Autocracy

Political Science 0010 – 301

Syllabus 1.0

[November 29th, 2022]

Fall 2022

Place: Fisher-Bennett 24

Class Time: Mondays, 1:45 pm

Professor's Office Hours:

Fridays, 10 am – 12 noon

and by appointment, PCPSE 440 or

on Zoom: <https://upenn.zoom.us/j/9144204790>

* No office hours 9/16, 10/7, 11/18; office hours 9:30 am – 1:30 am 11/11

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Professor's On-Campus Mailbox: among the faculty mailboxes in the Department of Political Science, 133 S. 36th Street, Philadelphia, PA, 1st floor, southeast corner of the building

COURSE BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES: Geopolitical adversaries during the Cold War and again more recently, the United States of America and Russia are often taken to be archetypes of two of the primary systems of government in the modern world: democracy and autocracy.

In this class, we will explore the two countries' political systems comparatively and (as best we can) dispassionately. We will start with America, a case likely to be more familiar to most of you. We will then consider government in Russia and the former Soviet Union. Questions that will animate this class include: how has democracy been defined, and what are the features of the particular type of democracy practiced here in America? What are the limitations to contemporary American democracy? Is the U.S. constitution a force for democracy or an impediment to it? What is the relationship between exclusion and democracy—especially but not exclusively racial exclusion? What about the relationship between democracy and a country's size?

Likewise, what defines an autocratic government or even a totalitarian one? Why did Russia's 1917 revolution replace one autocracy (under a Tsar) with another (under the Communist Party)?

Why did Russia's moves toward democratization in the 1990s not lead to a consolidated democracy? In what ways is contemporary Russian autocracy similar to its Soviet predecessor, and in what ways different? What is the extent and the limits of Putin's power?

We will also ask, in what ways are the American and Russian political systems similar? What are the aspects of contemporary politics that exist in both countries? What social or socioeconomic groups are likely to facilitate or impede shifts toward democracy? While this is not a course in international relations, its content will certainly help us understand the external posture of these two nuclear powers.

In part, this class is animated by the belief that we cannot analyze political systems without basic historical knowledge, so this class will also read historians and cover critical junctures in American and Russian political history. It is also animated by the belief that comparison is a fundamental tool of social science—that we cannot fully understand democratic governance without studying its primary alternative in the contemporary world, autocratic governance. That said, this course is taught by a political scientist, and will focus on political science texts, both positive and normative.

LEARNING GOALS: By definition, this will be among students' first college classes. Welcome! Alongside the course's substantive goals, it also seeks to advance students' ability to learn and thrive in college-level social science courses. To that end, we will explicitly discuss strategies for: understanding a syllabus; reading at the college level; improving expository writing; and developing study skills and habits to maintain focus and attention. We will also discuss how universities differ from high schools, including the role of academic disciplines such as political science. Disciplines are not just subject matter, but toolkits to simplify and analyze the world.

INCLUSION: Among my central goals as an educator—and among the University of Pennsylvania's central goals as a school—is to foster an inclusive, supportive, inquisitive environment in which all our students can be, explore, question, and express their authentic selves, irrespective of their specific backgrounds or identities. We are tremendously fortunate to live in a society and a university that is diverse across many dimensions, and to have the opportunity to learn from each other across lines of age, class, ethnicity, gender, language, nativity, nationality, politics, race, religion, and many others. In particular, we all live and study together in West Philadelphia, a predominantly Black community, and should always be asking ourselves how we can be better neighbors.

Building supportive, inquisitive, respectful communities amidst diversity and disadvantage cannot be a passive process—it requires an active, often strenuous effort to listen to one another, to understand one another, and to respect one another. I ask that all students approach this course in a spirit of good faith and forbearance. We are members of a single intellectual community, here to grow and learn from each other. Comments, opinions, and behaviors that may be common or condoned in some communities may be concerning or offensive in others. I try to be quick to listen and slow to judge; I ask the same of my students.

With respect to gender, students are very welcome but not obligated to share their pronouns with me and/or their classmates as they feel comfortable. Some students appreciate the recognition and opportunity to self-identify; other students may be questioning their relationship to these categories and may prefer not to. As always, I ask that students be respectful of one another.

GOALS: At the end of this course, students should be comfortable arguing about definitions of democracy and autocracy, and discussing their features, overlap, and distinctiveness. Students will have a basic vocabulary to talk about the key features of modern governments. Students should also be able to interrogate the perspectives and biases they bring to assessments of America as well as Russia. Students should also be comfortable with writing research papers and the basic vocabulary of social and political science.

BACKGROUND: This is a first-year seminar, in which all entering University of Pennsylvania undergraduates are welcome. Aside from intellectual curiosity and a willingness to work hard, there are no prerequisites.

Teaching Goals

1. Presentations: In the early and middle weeks of the term, one to three students per week will take responsibility for presenting a related, additional reading to the class and discussing its relationship to the material covered in the required readings. Students are encouraged to choose a week that allows them to explore potential final paper topics. This will count for 5% of the class grade.

2. Class Preparation and Participation: To guide the discussion, the instructor will ask for brief papers of approximately 3-4 pages related to the week's topic prior to at least six class meetings, and students are expected to submit 4 brief response papers. These will be due at 9 pm the evening before the class (e.g. Sunday evening). Each week, the presenters will be exempt. These brief responses, along with class preparation, presentations, and participation, will account for 40% of the term grade (10% each).

3. Research Paper: In consultation with the instructor, students will choose a concept, event, or theme from the class about which to write an original 9-12 page research paper.

Statement of Paper Topic: On Sunday, October 23rd, students will post to the class Canvas website a one-paragraph statement of their proposed topic for the research paper. This will count for 5% of the term grade.

Annotated Bibliography: On Friday, November 11th, students will turn in an annotated bibliography identifying key articles/books/sources related to their research, along with a brief discussion of each work's key claims and relationship to the topic. Expected length is 2-3 pages. This will count for 10% of the term grade.

Paper Outline: On Sunday, November 20th, students will turn in a 1-2 page outline which will provide a preview of the final paper, including the theories to be assessed and the evidence to be collected. This will count for 5% of the term grade.

Workshop: On Monday, December 12th, or at a time to be arranged the prior weekend, students will present their own research to the class and provide feedback on one other student's research. This will count for 10% of the term grade. The instructor will solicit class feedback in determining this grade.

On Friday, December 16th, 2012 by 4 PM ET, all students will turn in their final 9-12 page research paper, which will focus on a specific event, issue, concept, or theme in the class (30% of term grade).

CLASS, CELL PHONES, AND COMPUTERS: Students are required to refrain from using the Internet, email, IM, or other programs not related to taking notes. Computer use to take notes is permitted only with the instructor's approval. All cell phones must be off throughout the class.

COVID 19: I hope to conduct this class as normally as possible. However, ***I do request that we begin the semester with masks and then we can revisit this depending on your comfort and local COVID levels.***

ABSENCE/UNPREPARED ATTENDANCE: The general expectation is that students will attend all classes, as it is essential for your learning that you attend and participate.

Now, other responsibilities or challenges may come up during the semester, and students may contract COVID. Thus all students will be granted one “inadvertence”—that is, one week during which they will not be expected to participate in class. Unless they are ill or otherwise unable to attend, even on this “inadvertence” day, they are expected to be physically in class. However, to be excused, any additional absences beyond the inadvertence require written approval from the student’s Dean and the completion of one additional response paper per class missed. Also, students are asked to notify the professor prior to missing any class or an inadvertence.

If you are symptomatic for COVID 19 or another illness, please let the instructor know, and please do ***not*** attend class. We will try to have students listen in via Zoom if they are able, or else to listen to the class recording (again if possible).

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Students are bound to uphold the Code of Academic Integrity. The code prohibits activities that “have the effect of intention of interfering with education, pursuit of knowledge, or fair evaluation of a student’s performance.” Students are responsible for fully adhering to the code, the details of which can be found online at <http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/>. Please note that ignorance of these guidelines is no excuse for failure to comply with them.

LATE PAPERS AND GRADING: Those who anticipate a scheduling conflict should contact the professor weeks prior to any deadline. Except in extraordinary circumstances and with the agreement of the relevant Dean, no extensions will be granted with 48 hours of a deadline. Late papers will be penalized one third of a grade (e.g. A- to B+) for every day.

To the extent possible, grading will be done blindly. Anyone wishing to appeal a grade must do so in writing within one week of receiving the graded assignment. On appeal, the professor reserves the right to raise the grade, to lower it, or to leave it unchanged.

Class participation and blog posts: 40%
In-class presentation: 5% of class grade
Statement of paper topic: 2% of grade
Annotated bibliography: 10% of grade
Paper outline: 10% of grade
Paper workshop/presentation: 8% of grade
Final paper: 25% of grade

CLASS, CELL PHONES, AND COMPUTERS: Students are required to refrain from using the Internet, email, IM, Facebook, SnapChat, Twitter, Instagram, Fortnite, or other programs not related to taking notes. The only way to do this is to ask that people turn off their computers and remain off their phones in class. All cell phones must be off throughout the class. The professor will endeavor to record all the class conversations via Panopto and post those recordings on the class's Canvas webpage. Under no circumstances are students to circulate or make available

LATE PAPERS AND GRADING/ASSESSMENT: Those who anticipate a scheduling conflict should contact the professor weeks prior to any deadline. Except in extraordinary circumstances, *no extensions will be granted within 48 hours of a deadline*. Late papers will be penalized one third of a grade (e.g. A- to B+) for every day. If an extension is sought due to overlapping deadlines, please request an extension from the other relevant professor as well. No more than one extension will be granted in a term without a formal request by the Dean's office.

Anyone wishing to appeal a grade must do so in writing within one week of receiving the graded assignment. On appeal, the professor reserves the right to raise the grade, to lower it, or to leave it unchanged.

Students in this course are expected to uphold academic honesty in all aspects of their academic work and course preparation. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic honesty, please clarify them with the professor prior to starting any assignment.

All assignments will be turned in electronically via Canvas.

OFFICE HOURS: The Professor will hold weekly office hours to address any follow-up questions, to suggest further reading, to discuss assignments, and to cover other topics.

DRAFTS AND PAPERS: The Professor will review drafts during office hours, but not at other times. Those who wish to discuss draft papers in more detail should make use of the Marks Family Writing Center or other such resources.

RESEARCH ASSISTANCE: The University of Pennsylvania is a research university, and has various resources for conducting research, many of which aren't used as extensively as they should. For example, librarians are available and eager to assist with papers and projects.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Academic accommodations will be granted only to those who provide certification.

OBTAINING THE READINGS

Most readings will be available via the course's Canvas website. I work to keep the number of books students may be asked to purchase short. Students are encouraged to purchase these books (all are available at the Penn bookstore). The financial aid office and Penn First Plus provide support for some students to purchase books:

How Democracies Die (Levitsky and Ziblatt)

Weak Strongman (Frye)

Can Democracy Work? A Short History of a Radical Idea, from Ancient Athens to Our World (Miller)

Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government (Achen and Bartels)

Russia: What Everyone Needs to Know (Colton)

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

1. Introduction (September 12th)

Syllabus

Dan Hopkins, "So you are starting your first year at a research university."

<https://themonkeycage.org/2013/08/so-you-are-starting-your-first-year-at-a-research-university/>

James E. Miller, *Can Democracy Work? A Short History of a Radical Idea*, "Prelude: What is Democracy"

Learning goal: how to read a syllabus; academic disciplines

2. The Evolution of Democratic Practice (September 19th)

James E. Miller, *Can Democracy Work? A Short History of a Radical Idea*, 19-131

Learning goal: how to read long assignments; positive-normative distinction

Additional Readings

Barber, Benjamin R. *The Death of Communal Liberty*.

Miller, Rousseau, *Dreamer of Democracy*

3. Constitutionalism (September 26th)

Taylor, Steven L., Matthew S. Shugart, Arend Lijphart, and Bernard Grofman. 2014. *A Different Democracy*. Chapter 2.

Madison, James. Federalist Ten. <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/primary-sources/federalist-no-10>
Greene, Jamal. *How Rights Went Wrong*. Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 9.

Additional Readings

Akil Reed Amar, *America's Constitution*

Hendrickson, *Peace Pact*

Grumbach, *Laboratories Against Democracy*

Derthick, Martha. *Up in Smoke: From Legislation to Litigation in Tobacco Politics*

Theiss-Morse and Hibbing, *Stealth Democracy*

Skretney, *The Minority Rights Evolution*

Learning goals: presentations

4. Civic Engagement (October 3rd)

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume 1, Chapter 4, Chapter 5 up to (but excluding "The Arbitrary Power of Magistrates"), Chapters 7-9

Robert Dahl, 1961, *Who Governs?* Chapter 16 "Spheres of Influence"

Additional Readings

Clinton Rossiter, *The First American Revolution*

Douglas Rae, *City: Urbanism and its End*

Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*

Robert Jackman, "A Renaissance of Political Culture?"

Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone*

Skocpol, *From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*

Verba, Brady, Schlozman, *The Unheavenly Chorus*

Berman, Sheri. 1997. "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic." *World Politics*
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/world-politics/article/civil-society-and-the-collapse-of-the-weimar-republic/8F600974B874D9EF661AE3A0F1032551>

Class October 3rd will begin with a visit from Lonya Humphrey of the University Library

Learning goal: library skills

5. Direct Democracy (October 10th)

Bryant, Frank. *Real Democracy*. Chapters 1, 2, 9, 12

Barry, Dan. 2022. "One Small Step for Democracy in a 'Live Free or Die' Town"

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/10/us/croydon-free-state-politics.html>

Additional Readings

Gerber, Elisabeth et al. *Stealing the Initiative: How State Government Responds to Direct Democracy*

Smith, Daniel A. *Tax Crusaders and the Politics of Direct Democracy*
Democracy in Athens
Direct Democracy in Switzerland
Citrin and Sears, *Tax Revolt: Something for Nothing in California*
Andrew Rehfeld, *The Concept of the Constituency*

Learning goal: writing short, evaluative pieces

6. Racial Exclusion (October 17th)

Fredrickson, *White Supremacy*, Introduction, Chapters III, IV
Robert Mickey, *Paths Out of Dixie*, Chapter 1

Additional Readings

Rana, Aziz. *The Two Faces of American Freedom*
Smith, Rogers. *Civic Ideals*.
Wilkerson, Isabela. *Caste*.
Tesler, Michael. *Post-racial or Most Racial?*
Hanchard, *The Spectre of Race*
Dawson, Michael. *Behind the Mule*
Acharya, Avidit, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen. *Deep Roots: How Slavery Still Shapes Southern Politics*
Trounstine, Jessica. *Segregation by Design*.

7. Public Opinion and Political Elites (October 24th)

Achen, Christopher and Larry Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists*. Chapters 1, 2, 11
Judis, *The Paradox of American Democracy*. Chapter 1, pgs. 3-32

Additional Readings

Schattschneider, E.E. *The Semi-sovereign people*
Caughey, Devin, and Christopher Warshaw. *Dynamic Democracy*.
Jacobs, Lawrence and Robert Shapiro. *Politicians Don't Pander*.
Schumpeter, Joseph. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*

8. 1917 (October 31st)

Figes, Orlando. *A People's Tragedy*. "Lenin's Revolution." Pgs. 474-500.
Fitzpatrick, Shelia. Chp. 1.
Levitsky and Way, *Revolution and Dictatorship*

Additional Readings

Kivelson, *Autocracy in the Provinces*
Edward L. Keenan, "Muscovite Political Folkways"
Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*

Pipes, Richard. *The Russian Revolution*
Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*
Reed, John. *Ten Days that Shook the World*
Orwell, George. *Animal Farm*
Lewin, Moshe. *Making of the Soviet System*

9. Totalitarianism (November 7th)

Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*. 311-326 from Chapter 10; 340-354 from Chapter 11; 460-479 from Chapter 13:
Ezra Klein interview with Anne Applebaum: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/17/opinion/ezra-klein-podcast-anne-applebaum.html>
“The Lives of Others,” 2006 film
Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, Chapter 1

Additional Readings

Ginzburg, *Into the Whirlwind*
Laffont, *The Black Book of Communism*
Tzvetan Todorov, *Facing the Extreme*
Arrested Voices
Mikhalkov, “Burnt by the Sun”, 1994 film
Walicki, Andrzej. *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom*
Kei Hiruta. *Hannah Arendt and Isaiah Berlin : freedom, politics and humanity*. (especially pages 95-102)
Goldman, Wendy Z. *Inventing the Enemy*

10. The Fall of the USSR (November 14th)

Zubok, Vladislav. 2021. *Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union*. Introduction.
Remnick, David. *Lenin’s Tomb*. 434-490.
Solnick, Steven L. *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions*. Introduction.

Additional Readings:

Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*
Yurchak, Alexi. 2005. *Everything was Forever, Until it was No More*
Plokhyy, Serhii. 2014. *The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union*
Sarotte, M.E. *Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate*
Colton and McFaul, *Popular Choice and Managed Democracy*
Arnason, Johann P. 2000. “Communism and Modernity.”

11. The 1990s and Competitive Authoritarianism (November 21st)

Colton, Timothy. *Russia: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Chapter 4.
Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*. Pages 183-201.
Goldgeier, James M., and Michael McFaul. 2003. *Power and Purpose*. “Our Man in Moscow”

Additional Readings:

Treisman, Daniel. *The Return*
Rosenfeld, Bryn. 2021. *The Autocratic Middle Class*
Richard Sakwa. *Russia's Futures*
Pomerantsev, Peter. *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*.
Gehlbach, *Representation through Taxation*
Markus, *Property, predation, and protection*.
Zygar, Mikhail. *All the President's Men: Inside the Court of Vladimir Putin*

12. Putin and Contemporary Russia (November 28th)

Frye, Timothy. *Weak Strongman*.

Additional Readings:

Baturo and Elkink. *The New Kremlinology: Understanding Regime Personalization in Russia*.
Reisinger, William M. and Byron Moraski. *The Regional Roots of Russia's Political Regime*
Hill and Gaddy, *Mr. Putin*
Angela Stent, *Putin's World*
Giles, Keir. 2019. *Moscow Rules: What Drives Russia to Confront the West*
Garrels, Anne. 2016. *Putin Country: A Journey Into the Real Russia*
Masha Gesen, *The Future is History: How Totalitarianism Reclaimed Russia*
Gehlbach, *Representation through Taxation*
Greene and Robertson, *Putin v. the People*
Robertson, Graeme, and Samuel Greene. "The Kremlin Emboldened: How Putin Wins Support."
Journal of Democracy 28.4 (2017): 86-100.
Frye, Gehlbach, et al. 2017. "Is Putin's Popularity Real?" *Post-Soviet Affairs*.

13. How Democracies Die (December 5th)

Levitsky, Steven and Daniel Ziblatt. *How Democracies Die*. Introduction (pgs. 1-10), Chapter 1 (pgs. 11-32), 4 (pgs. 72-96), 7 (pgs. 145-175), 9 (pgs. 204-231)

Additional Readings:

Corrales, *Fixing Democracy*
Haggard and Kaufman, *Dictators and Democrats*
Mainwaring and Perez-Linan, *Democracies and Dictatorships in Latin America*

14. Presentations (December 12th)

Representation
Liberalism
The state
State capacity
Direct democracy
Representative democracy
democracy as institution vs. culture
Political institutions
Normative vs. positive
Collective action problems
Federalism

Other Readings

Haggard and Kaufman, 2016. *Masses, Elites, and Regime Change*.
Svolik, Milan. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*.

Slater, Dan, Lucan A. Way, Jean Lachapelle, and Adam E. Casey. "The Origins of Military Supremacy in Dictatorships." *Journal of Democracy*

Corrales, *Autocracy Rising*