Oberlin College

Politics 268: Democracy in Comparative Perspective

Spring 2012
King 235
MWF 10-11am

Professor Frieda Fuchs
Office: King Bldg, 305A
Office Hours: Monday, 11am-12:30 pm (or by appointment)
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Course Description:

This course is intended to provide students with the conceptual skills needed to comprehend the global resurgence of democracy in the light of scholarly literature and contemporary debates on the subject. With this goal in mind, we will first examine the various meanings assigned by theorists to the term democracy; its strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis other regime types (authoritarianism, totalitarianism); the distinctions between functional and genetic theories of democracy; the importance of differentiating the concepts of liberal and illiberal democracy; and the issues and problems specific to democratic transition and consolidation.

A variety of theories of democracy will be critically examined and tested against cases from Latin America (e.g., Chile), Eastern and Southern Europe (e.g., Poland, Italy), Asia (e.g., India, China), and Africa (e.g., Senegal, Egypt). Special attention will be paid to the relationship between democracy, economic development, social classes, and political culture. Relying on Samuel Huntington’s The Third Wave (1991) as a guiding framework, we will compare and contrast three “third wave” transitions to democracy (Chile, Poland, and Egypt). These case studies will be used to illustrate: 1) how international factors, political and religious institutions, political elites, and pressures from below helped shape democratic transitions; 2) the processes that characterize democratic transitions (i.e., transformation, transplacement, replacement); 3) the unique challenges that countries transitioning to democracy face and that could lead to the restoration of authoritarianism (e.g., the torturer problem, the role of the military in politics, economic challenges).

Course Policies and Expectations:

Reading assignments have to be completed by the beginning of the class for which they have been assigned. Please read the material in the order in which it has been assigned.
Late papers will be penalized. No work will be accepted more than week after the due date.
Writing assignments will not be accepted in e-mail form—hard copies only! Typing guidelines:
12 pt., double-spaced, pages numbered and stapled, with standard one-inch margins. Papers with serious grammatical errors or too many spelling mistakes will be returned to the student for editing. Please keep electronic backup and hard copies of all written assignments for your records.

Depending on the topic under discussion, you will be requested to gather information or prepare notes for an interactive in-class exercise. Typical examples: I may ask you to check out a website, collect articles on a specific topic, and so on. I also reserve the right to do surprise pop quizzes or in-class writing assignments if I feel that the class is not keeping up with the assigned reading or participating enough. To ensure active participation, students will be designated on a rotating basis to report back me on a study question or a specific aspect of the reading. I may also require students to bring articles to class on a specific topic to help illustrate concepts or class themes.

**NO LAPTOPS PLEASE.** Refrain from eating, yawning, stretching—use common sense (beverages are fine). More than 3 unexcused absences will lead to a 10% lowering of grade. Missing your presentation in second half of class will result in a 25% drop in grade.

**Materials (Required):**

For Purchase (Oberlin Bookstore). Materials listed below have also been placed on Hard Copy Reserve (Mudd Library, 1st floor. circulation)


Films and Documentaries:

All items listed below have been placed on Reserve (Mudd Library, 1st floor, circulation)

Required: The Take [2004] (dir. A. Lewis, N. Klein) [Screening Wed., 2/15, 8 p.m., King 239]
Required: Herod’s Law [1999] (dir. Luis Estrada) [Screening Wed., 2/29, 8 p.m., King 239]
Required: The Judge and the General (2008) (dir. E. Farnsworth) [Screening Wed., 5/2, 8 p.m., King 239]

Recommended: “The Pinochet Case” and “Chile: Obstinate Memory” (dir. P. Guzman)

Course Requirements and Grading:

Attendance, Participation, Blackboard (20 percent) (refer to course schedule for posting dates)
1 Midterm Quiz (10 percent) [Mon., 3/5, 2012]
First Short Paper (5-6 pages) (20 percent) [Wed., 3/21]
Student Presentations (10 percent) [see weeks 9-12]
Second Short Paper (5-6 pages) (20 percent) [Mon., 4/30]
In-Class Final (20 percent) [Wed., 5/16, 7-9 p.m.]

Blackboard:

In order to encourage continuity and participation in the classroom there will be five required Blackboard postings throughout the semester. Depending on the week, students will be required to pose questions and/or write short summaries of the readings, and will not be formally graded on the postings. You will receive feedback and an evaluation by midterm period. However, the frequency, length, and quality of your postings will be taken into account in determining the final grade (with frequency and quality more important than length). All postings will be due by 6pm, Tuesday on the dates specified in the syllabus (2/21; 2/28; 3/13; 4/10; 5/8). This will ensure that I have sufficient time to read them.

Honor Code:

This course and all its assignments are covered by the Oberlin College honor code. This means, most importantly, that—unless otherwise indicated—you are to produce your own work and honor the rules and conventions of scholarly quotation, attribution, and citation. While you are allowed to ask advice and help from librarians and official writing tutors, you are, in the end, to submit work produced by you. Some assignments may be collaborative in nature; those will be clearly identified as such. Any case of (suspected) plagiarism will be reported to the Honors Committee. For more details, see http://new.oberlin.edu/students/policies/10-Policies-Honor.pdf
Students with Disabilities:

Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term (2/17/12). Failure to do so may result in my inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential.

Course Schedule

PART I: WHAT DEMOCRACY IS AND IS NOT? IS DEMOCRACY THE BEST SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT? HOW DO WE MEASURE DEMOCRACY?

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION
2/6-2/8-2/10:

Mon., 2/6: Introduction

Review of the Syllabus, Class Requirements, etc.

Wed., 2/8: The Three Waves of Democracy


Fri., 2/10: Is Democracy the Best System of Government?


WEEK 2: DEFINING DEMOCRACY
2/13-2/15-2/17:

Mon., 2/13: Schumpeter’s Minimalist Conception of Democracy


Wed., 2/15: The Case for Participatory Democracy


*Wed., 2/15, 8:00pm: Film Screening--The Take

Fri., 2/17: Participation and Democracy?

Discussion of the Film The Take


WEEK 3: THE MEANING OF DEMOCRACY
2/20-2/22-2/24:

Mon., 2/20: The Economic and Political Meaning of Democracy


*Tue, 2/21, Blackboard Posting 1, due 6 p.m. (topic to be posted on Blackboard on 2.17)


Huntington, The Third Wave, pp.298-311.


2/24: Human Rights, Liberty, and Democracy


WEEK 4: LIBERAL VS. ILLIBERAL DEMOCRACY
2/27-2/29-3/2:

Mon., 2/27: Dahl’s Concept of Polyarchy


*Tue., 2/28, Blackboard Posting 2, due 6 p.m.

Wed., 2/29: Illiberal Democracies


*Wed., 2/29: Film Screening Herod’s Law

Fri., 3/2: Case Study: Mexico

Discussion of the Film Herod’s Law


PART II: THE PRECONDITIONS OF DEMOCRACY

WEEK 5: HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL PRECONDITIONS
3/5-3/7-3/9:

Mon., 3/5:

*Quiz (in-class/45 minutes)

Wed., 3/7: The Historical Preconditions of Democracy


Fri. 3/9: The Social Preconditions of Democracy


**WEEK 6: CULTURAL PRECONDITIONS**
3/12-3/14-3/16

**Mon., 3/12:** Does Political Culture Matter?

*Tue., 3/13, Blackboard Posting 3, due 6 p.m.*

**Wed., 3/14:** Amoral Familism as an Obstacle to Democracy

**Fri., 3/16:**

**WEEK 7: THE ROLE OF SEQUENCES, NATIONALISM, AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP**
3/19-3/21-3/23:

**Mon., 3/19:** The Paradox of Indian Democracy


**Wed., 3/21:** The Role of Political Leadership


*Wed., 3/21: First Paper Due*

**Fri., 3/23:**
PART III: UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT THIRD WAVE OF DEMOCRACY: HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

WEEK 8: TRANSITIONS FROM AUTHORITARIANISM TO DEMOCRACY. FIRST CASE-STUDY: CHILE. TRANSITION THROUGH TRANSFORMATION
4/2-4/4-4/6:

Mon., 4/2: Explaining the Third Wave

Huntington, The Third Wave, pp.31-72

Wed., 4/4:

Huntington, The Third Wave, pp.72-124

Fri., 4/6: Background: Chile

Huntington, The Third Wave, pp. 124-142.


WEEK 9: FIRST CASE STUDY/CHILE: TRANSITION THROUGH TRANSFORMATION
4/9-4/11-4/13:

Mon., 4/9:


*Tue., 4/10: Blackboard Posting 4, due 6 p.m.

Wed. 4/11:

Student Presentations, Valenzuela and Constable, A Nation of Enemies, chapters 5-8.

Fri., 4/13:

Student Presentations, Arturo Valenzuela and Pamela Constable, A Nation of Enemies, chapters 9-12

WEEK 10: SECOND CASE STUDY/POLAND: TRANSITION THROUGH TRANSPLACEMENT  
(4/16-4/18-4/20)

Mon., 4/16: Background: Poland


Wed., 4/18:


Fri., 4/20:


WEEK 11: THIRD CASE STUDY/EGYPT: TRANSITION THROUGH REPLACEMENT  
4/23-4/25-4/27:

Mon., 4/23:


Wed., 4/25:


Fri., 4/27:

Singerman, *Avenues of Participation*, pp. 132-172, 244-272.
WEEK 12: DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION (II): PRAETORIANISM AND CONTEXTUAL PROBLEMS
(4/30-5/2-5/4)

Mon., 4/30: Praetorianism or the Problem of the Military in Politics

Huntington, *The Third Wave*, pp.231-253


*Mon., 4/30: Second Paper Due*

Wed., 5/2: Contextual Problems


Peter M. Siavelis, “Chile: The Unfinished Transition,” in *Constructing Democratic Governance in Latin America*, eds. J. I. Dominguez and M. Shifter (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp. 278-305 (Blackboard)


*Wed., 5/2: Film Screening: The Judge and the General*

Fri., 5/4:

Discussion: Chile: The Judge and the General

WEEK 13: DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION: THE “TORTURER” PROBLEM
5/7-5/9-5/11:

Mon., 5/7:


*Tue., 5/8: Blackboard Posting 5, due 6 p.m.*
Wed., 5/9:


Fri., 5/11: Overview of course: What have we learned?

*Wed., May 16, 7-9 p.m.: Final Exam (consult registrar for location)*

**Important Dates:**

- Wed., 2/15: Film Screening--*The Take*, 8 p.m. (King 239)
- Tue, 2/21: Blackboard Posting #1, 6 p.m.
- Tue., 2/28: Blackboard Posting #2, 6 p.m.
- Wed., 2/29: Film Screening--*Herod's Law*, 8 p.m. (King 239)
- Mon., 3/5: Quiz
- Tue., 3/13: Blackboard Posting #3, due 6 p.m.
- Tue., 4/10: Blackboard Posting #4, due 6 p.m.
- Mon., 4/30: Second Paper, due 6 p.m.
- Wed., 5/2: Film Screening--*The Judge and the General*, 8 p.m. (King 239)
- Tue., 5/8: Blackboard Posting #5, 6 p.m.
- Wed., 5/16: Final, 7-9 p.m. (Room, TBA)