Oberlin College

Politics 268: Democracy in Comparative Perspective

Fall 2013
King 127
MWF 2:30-3:20pm

Professor Frieda Fuchs
Office: King Bldg, 301-B (Sociology Dept.)
Office Hours: Monday 3:30p-4:30pm (or by appointment)
Email: ffuchs@oberlin.edu

Course Description:

This course is intended to provide students with the conceptual skills needed to comprehend the global resurgence of democracy in light of the scholarly literature and contemporary debates on the subject. We will examine the various meanings that political scientists have assigned to the term democracy; the strengths and weaknesses of democracy vis-à-vis authoritarian regimes; the historical and socio-economic preconditions of democracy; the distinction between functional and genetic theories of democracy; the differences between liberal and illiberal democracies; and the issues and problems specific to democratic transitions and consolidation.

A variety of theories of democracy will be critically examined and tested against cases from Latin America (Chile, Mexico), Eastern and Southern Europe (Poland, Italy), Asia (India, the Philippines), and Africa (Senegal, South Africa). Special attention will be paid to the relationship between democracy and factors such as economic development, social classes, and political culture, and religion. Relying on Samuel Huntington’s *The Third Wave* (1991) as a guiding framework, we will compare and contrast in depth two “third wave” transitions to democracy (Chile, Poland). These case studies will be used to illustrate: 1) how international and domestic factors (e.g., religious leaders, political elites, and organized pressures from below) shape democratic transitions; 2) types of democratic transitions (i.e., transformations, transplacements, replacements); 3) and the unique challenges that new democracies face (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 a week after the due date. Writing assignments will not be accepted in e-mail form—hard copies only! Typing guidelines: 12 pt., double-spaced, numbered, and stapled pages with standard one-inch margins. Papers with
serious grammatical errors or many spelling mistakes will be returned for editing. Please keep electronic backup and hard copies of all written assignments for your records.

To ensure active participation, students will be designated on a rotating basis to report on a study question or a specific aspect of the reading or to prepare notes for interactive class exercises. Students may also be asked to take pop quizzes or in-class writing assignments if I feel that the class is not keeping up with the readings or participating enough. I also reserve the right to call on students during class discussions.

**The use of laptops in class is not permitted.** Kindly refrain from eating (beverages are fine), yawning, stretching, talking among yourselves, or other distracting behavior—use common sense. More than 3 unexcused absences will lead to a 10% lowering of grade. Missing your presentation in the second half of the class will result in a 25% drop in grade.

**Materials (Required):**

For purchase (Oberlin Bookstore). The materials listed below have also been placed on Reserve (Mudd Library, 1st floor, circulation).

All other readings listed in the syllabus are available on Blackboard (see BB “Required Readings” link).

Films and Documentaries:

All items listed below (with the exception of A Death for Peace) have been placed on Reserve (Mudd Library, 1st floor, circulation)

- The Take [2004] (dir. A. Lewis, N. Klein) [Screening Mon, 9/16: 8 p.m., King 127]
- Herod’s Law [1999] (dir. Luis Estrada) [Screening Mon., 10/29: 8 p.m., King 127]
- A Death for Peace - Mahatma Gandhi and the Impossible Quest [2005] (dir. Arnaud Mandagaran) [Watch by Wed., 11/6; see Blackboard (readings week 9) for link]

Course Requirements and Grading:

- Attendance, Participation, Blackboard (25 percent) (see course schedule for Blackboard posting due dates)
- Quiz (15 percent) [Mon., 9/30]
- First Essay (4-6 pages) (15 percent) [Fri., 10/18]
- Student Presentations (10 percent) [see weeks 10-12]
- Second Essay (5-7 pages) (15 percent) [Wed., 12/6]
- Final Exam (in-class) (20 percent) [Fri., 12/20: 2-4 p.m.]

Blackboard [BB]:

In order to encourage continuity and participation in the classroom, I will be assigning six required Blackboard postings throughout the semester. Depending on the week, students will be required to respond to a broad question related to a film/documentary or our class readings and will not be formally graded on the postings. However, the length (typically 2 to 3 paragraphs) and quality of your postings will be taken into account in determining the final grade (with quality more important than length). All postings will be due by 9 p.m. on the dates specified in the syllabus and must be posted on BB [see Weekly Blog link]. This will ensure that I have sufficient time to read them. I will also use the Blackboard Weekly Blog link to post documentary clips, newspaper articles, etc. related to our weekly readings.

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

I expect students to treat each with respect and to be tolerant of political viewpoints or positions with which they may disagree. I strongly encourage you to visit me during office hours if you need extra help with the readings and writing assignments; would like feedback on your performance; or to discuss any issues of concern.

Students with Disabilities:

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

COURSE SCHEDULE

PART I: CONCEPTS AND THEMES:

WHAT DEMOCRACY IS AND IS NOT? IS DEMOCRACY THE BEST SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT? CAN WE MEASURE DEMOCRACY?

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION

(9/4-9/6)

Wed., 9/4: Course introduction
-Introduction, review of the syllabus, class requirements, etc.

Fri., 9/6: Is democracy the best system of government?
-Review Syllabus and check out Blackboard Website for our class


**WEEK 2: THE MINIMALIST DEFINITION OF DEMOCRACY**
(9/9-9/11-9/13)

*Mon., 9/9: Huntington’s three waves*


*Wed., 9/11-Fri., 9/13: Schumpeter’s minimalist conception of democracy; the prerequisites of democracy*


**WEEK 3: THE VARIOUS MEANINGS OF DEMOCRACY**
(9/16-9/18-9/20)

*Mon., 9/16: Participatory vs. electoral democracy*


*Mon, 9/16, 8pm: Documentary Screening--*The Take* (King 127)*

*Tue., 9/17: Blackboard Posting 1, due by 9pm!*

*Wed., 9/18: Is civil disobedience good for democracy?*

-Discussion of *The Take*


*Fri., 9/20: The economic meaning of democracy*

WEEK 4: LIBERAL VS. ILLIBERAL DEMOCRACY  
(9/23-9/25-9/27)

*Sun., 9/22: Blackboard Posting 2, due by 9pm!

Mon., 9/23: The Political and cultural meaning of democracy

Wed., 9/25: Dahl’s concept of polyarchy as a yardstick for measuring democracy

Fri., 9/27: Illiberal democracies and competitive authoritarian regimes

WEEK 5: COMPETITIVE AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES  
(9/30-10/2-10/4)

Mon., 9/30:

*Mon., 9/30: Quiz (in-class/45 minutes)*

Wed., 10/2-Fri., 10/4: Electoral democracies vs. authoritarian and competitive authoritarian regimes


WEEK 6: MEASURING DEMOCRACY : CASE STUDIES  
(10/7-10/9-10/11)

*Sun., 10/6: Blackboard Posting 3, due by 9 p.m.*

Mon., 10/7: Case study 1: Senegal


Wed., 10/9: Case study 2: Mexico

*Fri., 10/11: Comparing Mexico and Senegal*

**PART II: THE PRECONDITIONS OF DEMOCRACY**

**WEEK 7: THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL PRECONDITIONS OF DEMOCRACY (10/14-10/16-10/18)**

Mon., 10/14-Wed., 10/16: *The rise of liberal democracy in the West*


*Fri., 10/18: The social preconditions of democracy*


*Fri, 10/18: First Essay, due by 2:30pm!*

**Fall Break (10/19-10/27)**

**WEEK 8: CULTURAL AND GENETIC THEORIES OF DEMOCRACY (10/28-10/30-11/1)**

Mon., 10/28: *What have we learned so far? (review the Lipset reading)*

*Tue., 10/29: 8pm: Screening of the film Herod’s Law*

Wed., 10/30: *What is amoral familism?*


*Thurs., 10/31: Blackboard Posting 4, due by 9 p.m*
Fri., 11/1: Amoral familism as an obstacle to democracy


Discussion of the film *Herod’s law*

**WEEK 9: GENETIC VS. FUNCTIONAL THEORIES OF DEMOCRACY**
(11/4-11/6-11/8)

**Mon., 11/4: Does political culture matter?**

-Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, pp.103-120, 139-166.

**Wed., 11/6: The role of political elites and national identity**


Documentary: *A Death for Peace-Mahatma Gandhi and the Impossible Quest* (2005), dir. Arnaud Mandagaran (watch on youtube; for link, see Blackboard, readings week 9)

*Thur., 11/7: Blackboard Posting 5, due by 9 p.m.*

Fri., 11/8: Explaining the Indian paradox


**PART III:**

*THE THIRD WAVE OF DEMOCRACY: HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES*

**WEEK 10: THIRD WAVE TRANSITIONS FROM AUTHORITARIANISM TO DEMOCRACY: FIRST CASE STUDY- CHILE: TRANSITION THROUGH TRANSFORMATION**
(11/11-11/13-11/15)

**Mon., 11/11: Democracy’s third wave: why, when, and how**

Wed., 11/13-Fri., 11/15: *The Chilean case*


**WEEK 11: SECOND CASE STUDY-Poland: Transition through Transplacement**

(11/18-11/20-11/22)

**Mon., 11/18: The Chilean case: concluding discussion**

--Concluding Discussion, Valenzuela and Constable, *Nation of Enemies*


**Wed., 11/20: Poland—Background**

-Guest Lecture on Poland


**Fri., 11/22: The Polish case**


**WEEK 12: SECOND CASE STUDY: Poland**


**Mon., 11/25:**

-Student Presentations: Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution*.

**Wed., 11/27:**

-Concluding discussion, Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution*

**Fri., 11/29:**

No class—Thanksgiving Break
WEEK 13: COMPARING TRANSITION PROCESSES  
(12/2-12/4-12/6)

Mon., 12/2: Comparing authoritarian breakdowns

- Concluding Discussion: Applying Huntington’s 5 causes of authoritarian breakdown to Chile and Poland; Huntington, Third Wave, pp. 280-290 (review pp. 46-108).

Wed., 12/4: Chile after Pinochet

*Documentary Screening, The Judge and the General (King 239)

Fri., 12/6: Comparing transformations, transplacements, and replacements

*Fri., 12/6: Second Essay, due at 2:30 p.m.


- Heraldo Muñoz, The Dictator’s Shadow, pp. 209-241 (Blackboard)


WEEK 14: DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION: PRAETORIANISM AND THE “TORTURER” PROBLEM  
(12/9-12/11-12/13)

Mon., 12/9: Praetorianism and the torturer problem


*Tue., 12/10: Blackboard Posting 6, due 9 p.m.

Wed., 12/11: The torturer problem: case studies


Fri., 12/13: **Overview of course: what have we learned?**

-Huntington, *The Third Wave*, pp.290-316

*Friday, Dec. 20, 2-4pm: Final Exam*
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<td>Documentary Screening: The Take (8pm/King 127)</td>
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