Democracy and Democratization

Lecturer: Professor David Samuels
Department of Political Science
University of Minnesota, USA

Main disciplines: Political Science,
Political Economy

Dates: 24 – 28 July 2017
Course Credits: 10 pts (ECTS)
Limitation: 25 participants

Objectives
This course explores one of the oldest--and arguably the most important--question in comparative politics: What explains variation in political “regime type” - democracy and dictatorship - across time and space? What makes some political regimes durable while others are fragile? The course has no geographic focus and pays little attention to the question of the consequences of democracy or dictatorship. It focuses instead on defining and “measuring” democracy; the macro- and micro-political logics of regime change; the possibility of democratic “deepening” or consolidation; and the recent emergence of “hybrid” or “illiberal” democracies.

Specific requirements
All students must obtain and read this book in advance of the course, and in particular chapters 1-3, 5-6.

Course outline

Lecture 1: Political Philosophy and “Empirical Democratic Theory”
This lecture explores how social scientists have defined democracy, and how we distinguish between democracy and non-democracy. In particular it focuses on the principles of the “realist” or “minimalist” theory of democracy, and then contrasts these principles with other theories of democracy, and considers the conceptual, theoretical and empirical advantages and/or disadvantages of using the minimalist theory as a basis for comparative research.

Required Readings:

- Joseph Schumpeter, 1942. Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy. Ch. 21-22

Lecture 2: Research on Regime Change: Vague Theories + Messy Data = ???
This lecture explores the different ways scholars have measured the distinction between democracy and dictatorship, as well as “gradations” of each type of regime. We will compare and contrast “dichotomous” versus “continuous” measures, and assess the conceptual and theoretical challenges all empirical research confronts, and the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to “operationalizing” the distinction between democracy and dictatorship.

Required Readings:

- Michael Coppedge, 2013. Democratization and Research Methods, Ch. 2.
Lecture 3: The Class-Conflict Approach and Macro-Historical Analysis
This lecture introduces students to classic “macro-historical” approaches to explaining regime change. It first explains what we mean by “structuralism” in social science, explores how scholars consider the relationship between “structures” (whether ideational or material) and political “agency,” and compares and contrasts different approaches to understanding who the important actors are and why they fight for regime change. It asks under what conditions might democratization be considered a “mass” or “elite” project, and explores the relevance of such “classic” theories for understanding more recent cases of transition in non-western contexts.

Required readings:

Lecture 4: Modernization Theory - Democracy and Economic Development?
This lecture asks students to ponder the posited causal connection(s) between economic change and political change – to attempt to identify the precise hypotheses of modernization theory. It asks students to attempt to identify the theory’s causal arguments, weigh the available evidence for different time-periods and regions of the world, and consider where research on this question might head in the future.

Required Readings:
- Michael Coppedge, 2013. Democratization and Research Methods, Ch. 9.
Lecture 5: Democratization as Redistributive Threat from the Poor?
This lecture explores the recent shift away from modernization theory’s emphasis on the alleged political impact of growth in GDP per capita (“average” income) and towards the alleged political impact of different relative distributions (equal or unequal) of income or wealth. We explore the strengths and weaknesses of “redistributivist” theories of regime change, focusing on the median-voter theory itself and the purported connection between the relative mobility of a country’s economic assets and the likelihood of democratization.

Required Readings:


Lecture 6: Democratization as Threat of Expropriation from the State?
In this lecture we contrast Ansell & Samuels’ retort to redistributivist theories of regime change, focusing on the theoretical differences between “fear of redistribution” and “fear of expropriation.” The lecture will consider the core differences between “median voter” and “elite competition” models of democratization.

Required Reading:

- Ben Ansell and David Samuels. 2014. *Inequality and Democratization: An Elite-Competition Approach*. Chs. 1-3, 5-6
Lecture 7: Democratic Attitudes and Regime Change
This lecture explores the idea that mass political attitudes measured at the individual level are important sources of the emergence, survival, and/or quality of democracy, or all of the above. We start with classic arguments and explore how this approach has evolved over the years. In particular the lecture explores the relationship between core ideas of modernization theory and the importance of mass attitudes. We then consider the ways in which this research agenda has responded or adjusted to theoretical and/or methodological critiques.

Required Reading:


Lecture 8: International Factors
This lecture explores the main supra-national mechanisms alleged to be driving regime change, and then considers which is most convincing in terms of theory and evidence. It then attempts to weigh the relative importance of domestic versus supra-national factors, returning to the discussion of “endogenous” democratization and “waves” of regime change.

Required reading:

- Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way. 2006. “Linkage versus Leverage.” *Comparative Politics*
Lecture 9: Democratic “Consolidation?”
The lecture first explores the definition of a “consolidated” democracy, and questions whether any democracy ever fits that definition. It then asks on what basis we might confidently affirm that a democracy is “consolidated,” considering the importance of institutions, economic development and inequality, and other factors alleged to contribute to regime stability. In particular we focus on Przeworski’s claim that economic growth and inequality are unrelated to transitions to democracy but important for the durability of democracy.

Required readings:


Lecture 10: Illiberal Democracies - or a Reverse Third Wave?
In the final lecture we consider recent world events, and ask whether evidence suggests a “reverse” third wave is likely in the near future. Which democracies are the most vulnerable to collapse into full-blown dictatorship? Which democracies are likely to remain “stuck” as illiberal, rather than liberal democracies? What are the sources of “illiberalism” in contemporary democracies? Are different factors working “against” democracy today than in previous eras? What are the prospects for further erosion or consolidation of democracy around the world?

Required readings:

The lecturer

David Samuels is Distinguished McKnight University Professor of Political Science. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California at San Diego in 1998. His research and teaching interests include Brazilian and Latin American politics, US-Latin American relations, and democratization.


Professor Samuels has published articles in the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, and the *British Journal of Political Science*, among others. He has received funding from the National Science Foundation (in 1996 and 1999) and the McKnight Foundation (in 2001), and was awarded Fulbright Fellowships in 2004 and 2013.