

Fall 2025 Regime Transitions
M,W,F 12.50 pm-13.40 pm LEI 0207

Instructor: Anqi Yang

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Office Hours: Monday & Friday 10.40 am-11.40 am, or by appointment

Make an appointment: <https://calendly.com/anqiyang/officehours>

Syllabus

Course Description

Regime types and their transitions are among the most enduring and central questions in political science. In this class, we will introduce fundamental debates in the study of political regimes: How do political scientists conceptualize dictatorship and democracy and what are some of the subtypes? What are the origins of dictatorship and democracy? What factors account for their stability and transition?

A central theme of the course is the dynamics of regime stability and change. Why are some dictatorships remarkably durable while others collapse quickly? What explains democratic breakdowns, and under what circumstances do transitions to democracy succeed or fail? To address these questions, we will engage with diverse theoretical perspectives, ranging from structural to strategic and institutional approaches.

Throughout the semester, students will also examine empirical cases from different world regions, including Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. By situating theoretical debates in comparative contexts, the course encourages students to think critically about how general explanations interact with region-specific experiences. In doing so, the course not only provides an overview of the theories in regime transition, but also equips students with analytical tools to understand ongoing global challenges to democracy and authoritarian resurgence.

Grading

Participation (10%). Your participation will be assessed by both your attendance and your contributions to class discussions. Students with excused absence must submit documentation within one week of absence. Students who miss more than 30% (12 times) of the class will not be able to complete/pass the course.

Weekly Posts (10%). Please post two sets of questions you think that are worth further discussion in class based on the weekly readings (100 words minimum). This exercise helps you practice raising good and important questions. Your idea of the final paper can be developed from these weekly questions. It is due **each Wednesday 11:59 pm** on Canvas. Late posts and retrospective make-up are not accepted, but you can skip two weeks of your choice without penalty.

Presentation (5%). Once in the semester, you are asked to find a case from current news (can also be a historical case if you feel strong about it) and present how the theory (or theories) of the week's readings apply to your selected case. This exercise helps you develop analytical skills by examining theories using empirical evidence. The

presentation should be around 5 to 10 minutes. A sign-up sheet will be distributed at the beginning of the semester.

Quizzes (25%). There will be in total 5 pop-up quizzes.

Final (25%). Final takes place on **April 25th** during normal class hours through Canvas.

You need to bring your own device to the classroom and take the exam in person.

Office Hour (5%). Please come to my office hours to discuss your chosen topic of the final paper. While you can reach me throughout the semester, the initial meeting needs to take place **no later than week 11**.

Final Paper (20%). It can take the form of a research proposal or a research paper. The topic of the paper should tie back to one of the themes we have covered in this course, broadly defined, and cite at least **three readings** from the class. A clear research question and an argument (can take the form of a hypothesis) should be developed regardless of the form you choose. The length should be between 2000 to 3000 words. **Due: May 2nd 11:59 pm.** Late papers will be accepted through May 5th 11:59 pm with a deduction of 4 points each day delayed.

Extra Credit Assignment (2 extra points): In the latter half of the semester, we will organize several final paper workshops during Thursday sessions. You will receive 2 extra credits for the course if you present your idea of the final paper in class. Spaces are limited so first confirm first served. Requirements and details will be explained in class.

Grading Scale

A	94 or above	C-	70-73.99
A-	90-93.99	D+	67-69.99
B+	87-89.99	D	64-66.99
B	84-86.99	D-	60-63.99
B-	80-83.99	E	<60
C+	77-79.99	E1	Stopped attending
C	74-76.99	I	Incomplete

Course Schedule

(The instructor may adjust the reading materials during the semester as deemed appropriate. You will be notified in advance of any changes.)

Week 1 Introduction

Aug 22 Please read the syllabus.

Week 2 Overview, Conception, and Typology

Aug 25

Geddes, Barbara. 1999. "What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 115-44.

Coppedge, Michael, John Gerring, David Altman, Michael Bernhard, Steven Fish, Allen Hicken, Matthew Kroenig, Staffan I. Lindberg, Kelly McMann, Pamela Paxton, Holli A. Semetko, Svend-Erik Skaaning, Jeffrey Staton, and Jan Teorell. 2011. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: A New Approach." *Perspectives on Politics* 9 (2): 247-67.

Aug 27

Dahl, Robert A. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, Chapter 1.

Collier, David, and Steven Levitsky. 1997. "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research." *World Politics* 49: 430-51.

Aug 29

Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan A. Way. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. NY: Cambridge University Press, chapter 1.

Cheibub, José Antonio, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Raymond Vreeland. 2010. "Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited." *Public Choice* 143: 67-101.

Week 3 Democratic Backsliding & Erosion I

Sept 1 Labor Day, No Class.

Sept 3

Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2023. *Tyranny of the Minority: Why American Democracy Reached the Breaking Point*. New York: Crown.

Sept 5

Slater, Dan. 2013. "Democratic Careening." *World Politics* 65 (4): 729-63.

Week 4 Democratic Backsliding & Erosion II

Sept 8

Bermeo, Nancy. 2016. "On Democratic Backsliding." *Journal of Democracy* 27 (1): 5-19.

Sept 10

Gu, Yanfeng, and Zhongyuan Wang. 2022. "Income Inequality and Global Political Polarization: The Economic Origin of Political Polarization in the World." *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 27: 375-398.

Sept 12

Waldner, David, and Ellen Lust. 2018. "Unwelcome change: Coming to terms with democratic backsliding." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21: 93-113.

Recommended Books:

Bunce, Valerie J., Thomas B. Pepinsky, Rachel Beatty Riedl, and Kenneth M. Roberts. 2023. *Global Challenges to Democracy: Comparative Perspectives on Backsliding, Autocracy, and Resilience*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Haggard, Stephan, and Robert. Kaufman. 2021. *Backsliding: Democratic Regress in the*

Contemporary World. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Przeworski, Adam. 2019. *Crises of Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.

Week 5 Autocratic Durability

Sept 15

Rosenfeld, Bryn. 2021. *The Autocratic Middle Class: How State Dependency Reduces the Demand for Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, Chapter 1.

Menaldo, Victor. 2012. "The Middle East and North Africa's Resilient Monarchs." *The Journal of Politics* 74 (3): 707-722.

Sept 17

Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan Way. 2022. *Revolution and Dictatorship: The Violent Origins of Durable Authoritarianism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, chapter 1.

Brownlee, Jason. 2007. *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*. New York: Cambridge University Press, Introduction & Chapter 1.

Sept 19

Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, and Drica Frantz. 2014. "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transition: A New Data Set." *Perspectives on Politics* 12 (2): 313-331.

Recommended Book:

Dirus, Marcel. 2024. *How Tyrants Fall: And How Nations Survive*. London: John Murray.

Week 6 Democratic Consolidation

Sept 22

Schedler, Andreas. 2001. "Measuring Democratic Consolidation." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36 (1): 66-92.

Sept 24

Svolik, Milan. 2008. "Authoritarian Reversals and Democratic Consolidation." *American Political Science Review* 102 (2): 153-168.

Sept 26

Research Method Workshop

Week 7 Communism & Post-Communism

Sept 29

Greitens, Sheena Chestnut. 2016. *Dictators and their Secret Police: Coercive Institutions and State Violence*. Cambridge University Press, chapter 1 & 2.

Oct 1

Walder, Andrew G. 1988. *Communist Neo-Traditionalism*, chapter 1.

Oct 3

Research Method Workshop

Week 8 Violence & Authoritarianism

Oct 6

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

Oct 8

Slater, Dan. 2009. "Revolutions, Crackdowns, and Quiescence: Communal Elites and Democratic Mobilization in Southeast Asia." *American Journal of Sociology* 115 (1): 203-254.

Oct 10

Research Method Workshop

Week 9 Civil Society

Oct 13

Bermeo, Nancy. 2003. *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times: The Citizenry and the Breakdown of Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, chapter 1 & 2.

Oct 15

Kim, Sunhyuk. 2000. *The Politics of Democratization in Korea: The Role of Civil Society*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, chapter 1.

Oct 17 Homecoming, No Class.

Week 10 Inequality and Democratization

Oct 20

Boix, Carles. 2003. *Democracy and redistribution*. New York: Cambridge University Press, chapter 1.

Oct 22

Acemoglu, Daron, and James Robinson. 2006. *Economic origins of dictatorship and democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, chapter 1.

Oct 24

Ansell, Ben, and David Samuels. 2010. "Inequality and Democratization: A contractarian Approach." *Comparative Political Studies* 43 (12): 1543-74.

Slater, Dan, Benjamin Smith, and Gautam Nair. 2014. "Economic Origins of Democratic Breakdown? The Redistributive Model and the Postcolonial State." *Perspectives on Politics* 12 (2): 353-74.

Recommended Book:

Haggard, Stephan, and Robert R. Kaufman. 2016. *Dictators and Democrats: Masses, Elites and Regime Change*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Week 11 Waves & Diffusion

Oct 27

Huntington, Samuel P. 1991. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, Chapter 1.

Oct 29

Slater, Dan. 2025. "The Authoritarian Origins of the Third Wave." *Journal of Democracy* 36 (2): 118-129.

Gunitsky, Seva. 2014. "From Shocks to Waves: Hegemonic Transitions and Democratization in the Twentieth Century." *International Organization* 68 (3): 561-597.

Oct 31

Weyland, Kurt. 2009. "The Diffusion of Revolution: '1848' in Europe and Latin America." *International Organization* 63 (3): 391-423.

Miller, Michael K. 2016. "Democracy by Example? Why Democracy Spreads When the World's Democracies Prosper." *Comparative Politics* 49 (1): 83-104.

Week 12 Class Analysis

Nov 3

Rueschemeyer, Dietrich, Evelyn Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens. 1992. *Capitalist Development and Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chapter 1&2.

Nov 5

Luebbert, Gregory M. 1987. "Social Foundations of Political Order in Interwar Europe." *World Politics* 39 (4): 449-478.

Nov 7

Moore, Barrington, Jr. 1966. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. Boston: Beacon Press, Preface & Chapter 1.

Week 13 Historical Origins

Nov 10

Downing, Brian M. 1992. *The military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, chapter 1 & 2.

Nov 12

Capoccia, Giovanni, and Daniel Ziblatt. "The Historical Turn in Democratization Studies: A New Research Agenda for Europe and Beyond." *Comparative Political Studies* 43 (8/9): 931-968.

Nov 14

Berman, Sheri. 2019. *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe*. NY: Oxford University Press, chapter 1 & 18.

Week 14 Final Paper Presentation & Workshop (details TBA)

Week 15 Thanksgiving, No Class.

Week 16

Dec 1 Review, Q&A

Dec 3 Final Exam

Academic Integrity

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Conduct Code.](#)

Students Requesting Accommodations

Students with disabilities that may affect your performance in this class should request academic accommodations with the *Disability Resource Center*. It is your responsibility to share the accommodation letter and communicate directly with the instructor at the beginning of the semester (or as soon as the disability occurs).

Recording and Sharing Policy

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

COVID-Related Recommendations

In response to COVID-19, the following recommendations are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit one.ufl.edu for screening/testing and vaccination opportunities.

If you are sick, stay home. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 to be evaluated.

Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.

Campus Resources

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).

University Police Department: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information](#).

On-Line Students Complaints: [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).