

# **Crisis of Democracy and Global Capitalism: the case of Brazil**

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## **Course Description**

The course aims to furnish students with recent analytical trends surrounding the tensions between capitalism and representative democracy and to apply these theoretical tools on the recent Brazilian political process. Tensions which usually have as empirical manifestations the emergency of polarized politics and, eventually, the election of outsiders and authoritarian leaders. Analytically, the focus will be on new developments steaming from the co-existence of an economic system based on private property and prices with a political system based on elections and parties. As it is well known, these tensions have been aggravated by the transformations that capitalism has undergone in its global format. The power of finance, large transnational conglomerates, and the breakdown of trade barriers to goods and services have undermined the ability of governments to make policy preferences of citizens prevail in the context of their domestic economies. Empirically, contemporary Brazilian politics is an exemplary case for studying the contradictions between global capitalism and democratic governance. A developing, peripheral country plagued by structural issues typical of latecomers, Brazil is today the result of an ongoing effort by elites and voters to deal with the dilemmas of an “inclusive development”. As we shall see, distributive conflicts, among and within leading classes and groups in their collective attempt to generate national wealth, caused by such an effort are dramatically aggravated by the decisive role played by non-voters – that is, private and public international financial capital – in the country’s domestic politics.

Two kinds of relations are supposed to emerge during our discussions: a) social inequality and the distribution of voters’ preferences among political parties, b) the degree of financial and commercial openness of the economy and the degree of domestic governmental autonomy to implement economic policies.

The course is divided into three parts. In the first, we will discuss the basics about the contemporary tensions between global capitalism and representative democracy. In the second, as a guide for applying theoretical tools and concepts, we will dive into the political economy of the current Brazilian crisis. Lastly, we will turn our attention and discussion to ideas and work proposals developed by the students. Proposals using the conceptual framework to understand cases other than the Brazilian one will be welcome (for a good sample of cases, see the January 2019 issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Social and Political Sciences*, *The Polarizing Politics: A Global Threat to Democracy*).

Except for the first meeting, every text selected for discussion during part one and two of the course will be presented by a student, having a colleague as discussant. During the third part, a similar dynamics will take place with students presenting their proposals and receiving feedback afterwards by a colleague, fulfilling the role of discussant.

### **Evaluation and Grades**

Evaluation of students' performance on the course and grades will depend on:

- 1) Classroom discussion (25%)
- 2) Classroom text presentation and discussion (25%)
- 3) Work Proposals presentation and discussion (25%)
- 4) Final paper (25%)

### **Readings and schedule**

#### **Part 1: Global Capitalism and Democracy**

##### **Apr 2**

Greetings and introduction session.

Reading: KUTTNER, R. 2018, *Can Democracy Survive Global Capitalism*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company (Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 7).

##### **Apr 9**

Readings: CROUCH, C. 2004, *Post Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (Chapters 1, 3 and 4).

STREEK, W. 2014, *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*. London: Verso. (Introd, and Chapter 2)

LEVITSKY, S. and ZIBLATT, D. 2018, *How Democracies Die*. New York: Crown (Introd. and Chapters 1, 3 and 4).

#### **Part 2: The Case of Brazil**

##### **Apr 16**

Readings: CAMPELLO, Daniela. 2015. *The Politics of Market Discipline in Latin America: Globalization and Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press (Chapters 1 and 5).

\_\_\_\_ and ZUCCO, Cesar. 2016. "Presidential Success and the World Economy". *The Journal of Politics*, 78(2):589-602.

### **Apr 23**

Readings: HAGOPIAN, F. 2019, The Political Economy of Inequality in Brazil. In Barry Ames (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Brazilian Politics*. New York: Routledge.

SAMUELS, D. and Zucco Jr., C. 2018, *Partisans, Antipartisans and Nonpartisans: Voting Behavior in Brazil*. New York: Cambridge University Press (Chapters 1, 4 and 7).

### **Apr 30**

Readings: POWER, T. and RODRIGUES-SILVEIRA, R. 2019, The Political Right and Party Politics. In Barry Ames (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Brazilian Politics*. New York: Routledge.

HUNTER, W. and POWER, T. 2019, Bolsonaro and Brazil's Illiberal Backlash. *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 30, number 1, pp. 68-82.

Introduction to students' presentation.

### **Part 3: Students Proposals**

**May 4** – Presentation Session n° 1

**May 11** – Presentation Session n° 2

**May 18** – Presentation Session n° 3

**May 25** – Presentation Session n° 4

**Jun 6** – Presentation Session n° 5

### **Complementary Readings (for those interested on the Brazilian case):**

AMES, B (ed.) 2019, *The Routledge Handbook of Brazilian Politics*. New York: Routledge.

KINGSTONE, P. and POWER, T. (eds.) 2008, *Democratic Brazil Revisited*. Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press.

SCHNEIDER R. 2007. *Latin American Political History: Patterns and Personalities*. New York: Westview Press. Pp: 208-226; 291-307; 412-428; 519-535.

SKIDMORE, T. 1988, *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil: 1964-1985*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.