Course summary and objectives

This seminar is designed to introduce students to one of the most debated and researched topics in political science: democracy. Its appeal cross-cuts all subfields, and the primary goal of this seminar is to draw from Political Theory, American Politics, Comparative Politics and International Relation to equip students with the theoretical and empirical foundations for understanding, discussing and analyzing democracy. The seminar is divided into three parts. The first week introduces the concept of democracy with an overview of its definitions and varieties. The second part (weeks 2-7) looks at democracy as a dependent variable, and surveys the literature for various determinants of democracy. The third part (weeks 8-10) places democracy as an independent variable instead, and surveys the literature for various outcomes associated with democratic regimes and democratization.

Requirements

[A] 30% of your grade: All students (auditors and non-auditors) are expected to come to class fully prepared to participate actively in the discussion. This entails completing all required readings for the week, and thinking through them critically.

[B] 40% of your grade: All students are expected to write 4 response papers throughout the quarter. Two should be written during weeks 2-5. Two should be written during weeks 6-10. Response papers should be 2-3 single-spaced pages in length. An A-level response paper is a paper that brings all readings together thematically and responds to them critically. In other words, we are not seeking reading summaries, but instead an organization of the main puzzles, questions, and themes covered in the week’s readings and an analysis of the readings’ contributions (what have we learned?) and limitations (what remains to be done?). An A+ paper will, on top of that, propose a new research design for addressing one of these limitations. Turn in your response paper electronically to both instructors by 6pm the day before class.

[C] 30% of your grade: The final exam consists of a five-hour take-home final that will mimic the comprehensive exam. Details to follow.
PART I: DEFINING DEMOCRACY

Week 1 (January 10): Definitions, varieties, operationalizations

- Przeworski et al. 2000. Democracy and Development: Chapter 1

PART II: DEMOCRACY AS A DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Week 2 (January 17): Social and cultural origins


Week 3 (January 24): Modernization

Week 4 (February 7): Political Transitions: Game Change

- Root, Hilton L. “Tying the King’s Hands: Credible Commiments and Royal Fiscal Policy during the Old Regime” Rationality and Society 1(2): 240-258

Week 5 (January 31): Changing Media

Week 6 (February 14): Media


Week 7 (February 21): Inequality

- Acemoglu and Robinson. 2000. Why did the West Extend the Franchise? *QJE* 115(4)

PART III: DEMOCRACY AS INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

Week 8 (February 28): Democracy and Accountability

- Ferraz, C. and F. Finan. 2008. “Exposing corrupt politicians: the effects of Brazil’s publicly released audits on electoral outcomes.” *QJE* 123(2)

Week 9 (March 7): Democracy and Civil Conflict
• Mansfield and Snyder. 2005. Electing to fight: Chaps 1-5
• Fearon, James D. 2007. Iraq’s Civil War. Foreign Affairs

Week 10 (March 14): Democracy and Development/Growth

• Rodrik and Waciarg. 2005. “Do democratic transitions produce bad economic outcomes?” AER 95(2)