COURSE OVERVIEW

Why some countries have democratic political systems and others do not is a central question in political science. This course introduces students to the literature on democracies, autocracies and transitions from one regime type to the other. The course is organized around six overarching questions: 1) What is democracy and why should we care about it? 2) Are there economic, cultural, or social prerequisites for stable democratic regimes? 3) How are autocratic regimes organized and legitimized? 4) How does the political violence alter the prospects for democracy? 5) How do formal institutions contribute to the regime stability? and 6) Are attempts by western countries to promote democracy in other parts of the world likely to be effective?

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

The requirements are as follows:

- **Class participation and weekly submission of discussion questions – 35% of the final grade**
  You are expected to have done the required readings for the week before the class meets and to post two discussion questions to Courseworks by 9pm on the Tuesday before class.

- **Research Memo 1: Identifying a Research Question – due October 17th by 9am – 10%**
  You will write a short memo (800-1000 words) identifying a research question for your final paper and describing the question's the theoretical and substantive importance.

  You will write a short memo (800-1000 words) describing potential answers to your research question and discussing how you plan to use evidence to support your preferred answer. These memos will form the basis of a class discussion of research design on November 14th.

- **Presentation of research project in class – December 5th – 5%**

- **Research paper – due December 13th by 9am – 35%**
  Your research paper must contain a theoretical argument related to one of the themes of the course and must test that argument empirically. Research papers should be between 15 and 20 pages long. In a few cases, students considering a senior thesis will be allowed to submit a detailed research proposal instead of a paper.
The penalty for late assignments will be one grade per hour after the deadline (e.g. A- to B+).

LOGISTICS

There is no course reader for this class. All readings are available electronically through the class website on Courseworks (https://courseworks.columbia.edu/).

READINGS

Session 1 (9/5): Introduction

Session 2 (9/12): What is Democracy and What is it Good for?

Session 3 (9/19): Economic Prerequisites

Session 4 (9/26): Social and Cultural Prerequisites
Putnam, Robert D. 1993. Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy. Princeton,

Session 5 (10/3): Regimes and Political Violence


Session 6 (10/10): Authoritarian Government


Session 7 (10/17): Representation in Autocratic Regimes


Session 8 (10/24): The Birth and Death of Regimes I: Structural Conditions

Session 9 (10/31): The Birth and Death of Regimes II: Protest and Revolutions
(11/7): University Holiday

Session 10 (11/14): Constitutional Design & Discussion of Research Memos
(11/21): No Class

Session 11 (11/28): Foreign Intervention


Session 12 (12/5): Presentation of Research Projects