

SOSC 5680
Democracy and Democratization
Spring 2024

Instructor

Tao LI

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Office Hours: by email appointment; regular individual meetings to be arranged in the middle of the semester.

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Course Description

Democracy and democratization constitute central themes in political science and political economy, forming the bedrock for numerous other research topics. This course is designed to familiarize graduate students with both the foundational theories and the latest advancements in this field, enabling them to swiftly engage with cutting-edge research. The curriculum will explore the subject from both political science and economic perspectives. No specific background knowledge is required from students, as all relevant theories and methods will be introduced as needed throughout the course.

This course comprises a core theory section and a section on frontier research. The core theory portion covers regime type classifications and explores classical political science theories of democracy presented by key authors such as Lipset, Moore, Dahl, Huntington, and Tilly. Additionally, it delves into positive political economy theories advanced by North, Acemoglu, and Robinson. The course then shifts focus to the recent developments in both theoretical and empirical literature, concentrating on two pivotal strategies employed by dictators to delay democratization—authoritarian institutions (carrots) and repression (sticks) broadly defined. There is a particular emphasis on the latter, reflecting the current and anticipated trajectory of literature development. The interaction between these two strategies is also discussed.

If time permits, the course will extend its coverage to include discussions on the relationship between democracy and economic growth, as well as the international context of democratization.

Students are required to engage with a selected set of papers in a compelling manner, taking on the roles of both presenter and discussant during the course. Presenters have the flexibility to choose their presentation papers from the provided reading list. However, if a student wishes to present a paper not on the list, preapproval is required before commencing work on it. For each presentation, another student will be designated as the discussant, responsible for offering criticism of the presented paper. The presenter is then expected to respond to the critiques provided by the discussant. The presenter and discussant must share their presentation slides before the class. Both roles involve leading the discussion, and active participation is encouraged from all students, who are expected to have read the paper before the scheduled class.

Each student is required to formulate an empirical research design relevant to the course, with presentations scheduled for the final week. The projects will undergo evaluation, considering both the design and, if undertaken, its implementation (encouraged but optional). At a minimum, a design should span at least two pages, encompassing elements such as the research question, contributions to the existing literature, and a comprehensive outline of the empirical research approach. The process of developing research ideas will commence gradually, with brainstorming sessions initiated early in the semester.

At the end of the course, students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the key concepts and theories of democracy and democratization, to critically evaluate the relevant literature in the frontline research, and to develop their own research questions and research projects using appropriate research methods.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your final grade in the course will be based on your performance on the following:

- Class participation 20%
- Paper presentation/discussion 30%
- Research design 50%

Course Planning

Reading List will be provided in class

Week 1: Positive political Economics vs Political Science approaches to democratization

Week 1-2: What is and is not democracy. Many species of autocracy. Measuring regime types.

Week 3-4: Classical political science theories of democratization. Making sense of data.

Week 5-6: Positive Political Economist's approach

Institutions as commitment. Institutional roots.

A workhorse model.

State capacity model and evidence.

Week 7: pseudo democratic institutions

Week 8-11: Repression

Whom to repress?

Psychological channels: anger, fear, blame attribution.

Identifying the impacts of repression on attitudes, trust, behavior (voting, human capital investment, etc.).

The memories of repression (due to within-family transmissions)

Protest cascades

The leverage of security agency over its principal

Week 12: How carrots and sticks interact with each other.

Are repression (of regime dissidents) and cooptation (of regime adherents) through institutions substitutes?

Week 13: Other topics.

Democracy and economic growth

Democracy in an international setting