

# S0323 Measuring Democracy and Autocracy

Course Times: Mon & Wed, 15:45 – 17:15

Seminar Leader: Dr. Seraphine F. Maerz

Email: [s.maerz@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:s.maerz@berlin.bard.edu)

Twitter: @SeraphineMaerz

Office: P98a, Room 0.03

Office Hours: Wed 14:30 – 15:30,

please book an appointment here: [www.calendly.com/seraphine-maerz](http://www.calendly.com/seraphine-maerz)

*Last update: 06.01.2019*

## Course Description

What is democracy and how can we measure it? What constitutes autocracy and how does it differ from democracy? Which data resources and methods can we use to assess democratization or – in turn – democratic backsliding and autocratization? In this course, we critically engage with the core literature and existing methodological approaches of measuring, comparing and categorizing political regimes. The course has a theoretical and applied component. By discussing several studies from democracy and autocracy research, the theoretical component of the course aims to provide a thorough understanding about the purposes and benefits but also challenges and drawbacks of comparing political regimes through time and across countries. During the applied sessions of the course, we will learn basic statistical techniques in R, a free software environment for statistical computing (<https://www.r-project.org/>). Based on this, we are able to actually work with the discussed regime classifications and measurements and learn how to assess the impacts of democratic and autocratic governance. The overarching goals of the course are to gain literacy in comparative and quantitative studies and to develop first programming skills in R which are of great use for working with quantitative methods in the social sciences in general.

We will be using [DataCamp for the Classroom](#) during our applied sessions, a great resource for free exercises and online tutorials by expert instructors for R. Please find our interactive DataCamp course website here and register for free with your BCB e-mail address (all registered course participants will be provided free access): <https://www.datacamp.com/groups/measuring-democracy-and-autocracy>

### Prerequisites

Basic knowledge of statistics and affinity for programming languages are recommended for this course.

### Attendance & Participation

**Students are expected to attend ALL classes.** If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to catch up on the missed material immediately. In addition to doing the readings, talk to me or one of your class mates about what you missed in class. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Please consult

the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence. Everybody is expected to participate actively in class.

### Readings

All **key readings** are mandatory and to be completed BEFORE class. The **additional readings** are optional and basis for students' presentations. **All texts are available in our shared Google classroom folder.** I reserve the right to make changes to the scheduled readings. I will alert you to any changes made in class and will post the updated syllabus/readings on Google classroom.

### Assignments

#### 1. Position papers

There are three position papers (2 pages each) to be written before the Spring Break (due date in the schedule below, questions are circulated a week in advance).

#### 2. Online Assignments on our interactive DataCamp course website

As part of the lab sessions, students will work in small groups on assigned online courses in R. Some online courses will be assigned as take-home exercises to be completed by Sunday of the resp. week.

#### 3. Presentation

Each student is expected to prepare a 15-minutes presentation on one of the additional readings (sign-up list will be circulated during our first meeting). The presentation should be well structured and professionally held (with slides). Ideally, the presentation focuses on the main arguments/findings of the selected reading (plus your own thoughts/critique about it) and puts them in the larger context of our course topics. Please also prepare 2-3 questions for discussion.

#### 4. Research project

Finally, every student conducts a 'small' research project on a question related to the measurement of political regimes. I will provide you with a template for this research project and we will discuss the requirements in more detail once we have mastered the basics in R (after the Spring Break). There will be also a workshop in which all students present preliminary results of their projects (10min each). Following each presentation, the project will be shortly discussed, and all students are expected to actively participate with questions and suggestions. The point of the discussion is to give the presenters constructive input that will help them in finalizing their analyses and in writing up the final version of the research project. During completion week, we will have two extra lab sessions to assist you with completing your research project in R. **The final version of the research project (2-3 pages, plus a clean R script) is due on May 17, 23:59 CET.**

### Computer Requirements

Throughout the applied sessions of the course, you learn basic coding and how to apply statistical techniques in R, a free software environment for statistical computing. Please bring a laptop to all sessions marked with a star (\*). Please make sure to install R (<https://www.r-project.org/>) and RStudio (<https://www.rstudio.com/>) before we begin using the laptops in class. If you do not have access to a laptop or have problems installing R and RStudio, let me know in the first week of the course.

### Academic Integrity

Academic community builds on original scholarly work and a constant exchange of ideas. It is therefore imperative to fully acknowledge one's use of other people's work, be it as a quotation or by paraphrasing it. Failure to acknowledge any source, also called plagiarism, leads to downgrading, and possible failure of the course if done repeatedly (see also the *Academic Integrity* clause in the student handbook). Please note that specialized software makes it extremely easy to discover plagiarism. Proper acknowledgement is done by citing the respective source, indicating the name(s) of the

authors or institutions and date of publication. A reference list at the end of your document then lists details of all citations, e.g. names, dates, title of publication, publisher. There are different citation styles. I recommend the widely used Harvard style, but you may use any other as long as you use it consistently.

### Policy on Late Submission of Papers

In line with the Student Handbook the following rules apply to late submissions of all assignments: submissions that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

### **Grade Breakdown**

- Position Papers (30%)
- Presentation (20%)
- Research Project (30%)
- Participation (20%) → participation in class and during lab sessions, online assignments

## Schedule

### Week 01

**Session 01 – Welcome: Outline of the course, discussion of the requirements and assignments**

**Session 02 – What is democracy? (I)**

- Key reading
  - ‘What democracy is ... and is not’ (Schmitter & Karl, 1991)
- Additional reading
  - ‘Democratization and public opposition’, Chapter 1 (Dahl, 1971)

### Week 02

First position paper due by Friday, 23:59 CET (upload to Google classroom)

**Session 03 – What is democracy? (II)**

- Key reading
  - ‘Democracy with adjectives: Conceptual innovation in comparative research’ (Collier & Levitsky, 1997)
- Additional reading
  - ‘Minimalist conception of democracy: A defense’ (Przeworski, 1999)

**Session 04\* – Lab: Introduction to R**

### Week 03

**Session 05 – Principles of measurement**

- Key reading
  - ‘Measurement validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research’

(Adcock & Collier, 2001)

- Additional readings
  - 'Increasing concept-measure consistency', Chapter 4 (Goertz, 2006)
  - 'Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics' (Sartori, 1970)

#### Session 06\* – Lab: Importing data in R

#### Week 04

#### Session 07 – How can we measure democracy?

- Key reading
  - 'Conceptualizing and measuring democracy: a new approach' (Coppedge et al., 2011)
- Additional reading
  - 'How (not) to measure democracy' (Boese, 2018)
  - 'Conceptualizing and measuring democracy: evaluating alternative indices' (Munck & Verkuilen, 2002)

#### Session 08\* – Lab: Cleaning data in R

#### Week 05

#### Session 09\* – Lab: Exploring existing measures of democracy

- Key reading
  - 'Varieties of democracy' (V-Dem), Democracy for all? V-Dem annual democracy report 2018, see here: <https://www.v-dem.net/en/> and Coppedge et al. (2018)
- Additional readings
  - 'Freedom of the world', Methodology, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/methodology-freedom-world-2018>
  - 'Polity IV project', <https://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>

#### Session 10\* – Lab: Descriptive statistics in R

#### Week 06

Second position paper due Friday, 23:59 CET (upload to Google classroom)

#### Session 11 – Democratization, democracy promotion

- Key reading
  - 'The power of prosperity: economic determinants' (Teorell, 2010)
- Additional reading
  - 'The effects of U.S. foreign assistance on democracy building, 1990-2003' (Finkel, Pérez-liñán, & Seligson, 2007)

- Session 12\* – Lab: Data preparation in R

#### Week 07

#### Session 13 – How can we measure democratization?

- Key reading
  - 'Measuring democratic consolidation' (Schedler, 2001)
- Additional reading

- 'Liberalization, transition and consolidation: Measuring the components of democratization' (Schneider & Schmitter, 2004)
- 'The inner Asian anomaly: Mongolia's democratization in comparative perspective' (Fish, 2001)

#### Session 14\* – Lab: Data preparation in R

### Week 08

#### Session 15 – Democratic backsliding, autocratization

- Key reading
  - 'State of the world 2017: autocratization and exclusion?' (Lührmann, Mechkova, et al., 2018)
- Additional reading
  - 'Comparing public communication in democracies and autocracies' (Maerz & Schneider, 2019)
  - 'De-democratization in Hungary: diffusely defective democracy' (Bogaards, 2018)

#### Session 16\* – Lab: Hypothesis testing in R

### Week 09

#### Session 17\* – What is autocracy?

- Key reading
  - 'The three pillars of stability: legitimation, repression, and co-optation in autocratic regimes' (Gerschewski, 2013)
- Additional reading
  - 'Competitive authoritarianism: Hybrid regimes after the Cold War' (Levitsky & Way, 2010), Chapter 2.
  - 'What do we know about democratization after twenty years?' (Geddes, 1999)

#### Session 18\* – Lab: Hypothesis testing in R

### Week 10

Third position paper due by Friday, 23:59 CET (upload to Google classroom)

#### Session 19 – Exploring existing typologies of autocracy

- Key reading
  - 'Autocratic breakdown and regime transitions: A new data set' (Geddes, Wright, & Frantz, 2014)
- Additional reading
  - 'Regimes of the world (RoW): Opening new avenues for the comparative study of political regimes' (Lührmann, Tannenberg, & Lindberg, 2018)
  - 'Authoritarian regime types revisited: Updated data in comparative perspective' (Wahman, Teorell, & Hadenius, 2013)

- A discreet critique of discrete regime type data' (Wilson, 2014)

Session 20\* – Lab: Working with political regime data sets in R (I)

Week 11 – NO “Measuring Democracy...” CLASSES

(we will have two extra lab sessions in completion week instead)

\*\*\* SPRING BREAK \*\*\*

Week 12

Session 21 – No classes (public holiday)

Session 22 – The performance of democratic/autocratic governance

- Key reading
  - ‘Social services to claim legitimacy: comparing autocracies’ performance’ (Cassani, 2017)
- Additional reading
  - ‘Comparing ecological sustainability in autocracies and democracies’ (Wurster, 2013)
  - ‘Authoritarian institutions and women’s rights’ (Donno & Kreft, 2018)
  - ‘Electoral authoritarianism and human development’ (Miller, 2015)

Week 13

Session 23\* – Lab: Measuring the performance of democratic/autocratic governance

Session 24 – No classes (public holiday)

Week 14 – Project Workshops

Session 25 – Project presentations (preliminary results)

Session 26 – Project presentations (preliminary results)

Week 15 – Completion Week

Session 27 – Extra lab session I (assistance for finalizing research project)

Session 28 – Extra lab session II (assistance for finalizing research project)

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