

PS119 Nation-States and Democracy

Seminar Leader: Boris Vormann

Course Times: Tues & Thurs 10:45-12:15

Office Hours: By appointment

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Course Description

Why and how do political systems differ from one another? Which processes have led to the formation of distinct political regimes? And how do these historical variations affect politics today? In addressing these questions in a wide set of contexts, this course provides an introduction to key theoretical approaches and concepts in the comparative study of politics. The focus will be on core topics in political development such as state and nation-building, the role of the state in the economy, its relationship to civil society and processes of democratization. We will also look at different types of political regimes, electoral and party systems—and the ways in which they affect the structure, functioning, and social role of political institutions. We explore these topics from a comparative perspective in combining theoretical texts with case studies. By the end of the course, students will be able to understand important topics in domestic politics, grasp the diversity of political systems and regimes, and analyze current political developments.

Requirements

Reading material

- Class Reader (available at the library)
- Snyder, Timothy. 2017. *On Tyranny*. Penguin (978-1847924889; you must have your own copy of the edition with this ISBN!)

Class preparation

In preparation for class, read the texts thoughtfully and engage with their core argument. Take notes while reading and try to identify questions in advance: Why do the authors argue as they do? How do they raise and substantiate their claims? How does their line of argumentation relate to earlier readings and discussions in class?

Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected, as regular attendance is essential to the success of this course. There will be an attendance sheet for every session. Each absence beyond two (that is more than two absences from two sessions of 90 minutes without leave of absence from the seminar leader) will lead to the subtraction of 1 point from the overall final grade. Late arrival counts as an absence. If you miss more than 30 percent of the sessions (i.e. 9 absences) you cannot pass the class.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING 2021: Some students might need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Assignments, Grade Breakdown and Essay Deadlines

Oral

- **Classroom Participation (2*15%)** **30%** (of total grade)
This seminar involves thoughtful and active participation in class discussions and working groups. This includes a persistent reflection on current events related to the course's core themes. The classroom is a protected space and you should feel free to voice your arguments and comments. Please do not hesitate to address the seminar leader if you feel that this is not the case.
- **Case Study Presentation** **20%**
Each individual student will present their case study (which also is the focus of the final paper) and line of argumentation in a professional presentation during weeks 11-13.
 - Presentations will be **no longer than 15 minutes** (time is strictly limited) and will focus on the puzzle, research question, and main line of argumentation/potential conclusions.
 - Visualizations (e.g. power point) are optional but not mandatory.
 - The **Q&A period** for each presenter will be 10-15 minutes. He or she should be prepared to answer questions relating to their project's theme.

Written

All assignments must be submitted in print, please use Times New Roman pt 12, 1.5-spaced

- **Abstract (500 words, due Feb 25)** **5 %**
Consider this to be your elevator pitch—or your book cover blurb. What is your case and the main puzzle? What is the main question you seek to address in your research? What are the hypotheses (and potential lines of argumentation)?
- **Extended Introduction (1,000 words, due April 12)** **15%**
The introduction frames the puzzle and research question in more depth. It embeds them in existing literature and presents the (tentative) main line of argumentation in broad strokes. What have other authors argued about your theme? What are your hypotheses? Which material will you look at to make your case? Make sure to use Chicago citation style for your bibliography and in-text citation ([Chicago Style](#))!
- **Final Essay (3,500 words, due May 13)** **30%**
The final essay is due on May 13. It will consist of an introduction, main body (that develops and substantiates your argument), and a conclusion (as well as a bibliography). Use paragraphs and subheadings to clearly structure your text.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers and Academic Integrity

Late submission will be downgraded by 5 points, and by an additional 2 points per extra day. After four weeks of the deadline the essay cannot receive a grade of higher than C. A week thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Schedule

Week Beginning	Tuesday	Thursday
I. Introduction		
1 Feb 1	Preliminaries Calhoun, <i>Dictionary of the Social Sciences</i> [Handout 'On Grading']	***FINDING A PUZZLE*** Kakutani, <i>The End of Normal</i> Ziblatt & Levitsky, <i>How Democracies Die</i> [Handout 'Final Paper']
II. Actors, Institutions and Processes		
DEMOCRACIES IN COMPARISON		
2 Feb 8	Democracy in Theory Dahl, <i>On Democracy</i>	Parties and Electoral Systems Hague et al., <i>Comparative Government</i>
3 Feb 15	Separation of Powers Newton & Van Deth, <i>Constitutions/ Presidential and Parliamentary Govt.</i>	Federalism and Regionalization Keating, <i>Re-Thinking Sovereignty</i> Graefe, <i>Pol. Econ. of Min. Nationalism</i>
4 Feb 22	Authoritarian Rule Brooker, <i>Authoritarian Regimes</i>	***FRAMING A QUESTION*** Peer Review Session <u>Bring 500-Word Abstract in Print</u>
NATIONS AND NATIONALISM: DEFINING THE DEMOS		
5 Mar 1	Civic vs Ethnic Nationalism Renan, <i>What is a Nation?</i> Smith, <i>The Origins of Nations</i>	Nationalism by Necessity Gellner, <i>Nations and Nationalism</i>
6 Mar 8	Identity as a Political Instrument Hobsbawm, <i>The Invention of Tradition</i> Watch Aleida Assmann on Memory	The Role of Gender and Race McClintock, <i>No longer in a future haven</i> Watch Benedict Anderson on Nationalism
7 Mar 15	Why Nations (Still) Matter Calhoun, <i>Nations Matter</i>	***COMPARING CASES*** Ryan, <i>The Comparative Method</i>

DEMOCRATIZATION AND BACKSLIDING

8 Mar 22	Populism Müller, <i>What is Populism?</i>	Party Polarization Mickey et al., <i>Safe for Democracy?</i> Mounk, <i>The Undemocratic Dilemma</i>
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Spring Break
(March 29-Apr 5)

9 Apr 5	The Media: Epistemic Crisis Benkler et al., <i>Network Propaganda</i>	Civil Society and Discourses Brown, <i>Undoing the Demos</i>
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10 Apr 12	A Double Movement? Eichengreen, <i>The Populist Temptation</i>
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The End of Liberalism?
Weinman & Vormann, *Politics of Fear*
Submit 1,000-Word Introduction

COLLOQUIUM WEEKS: CASE PRESENTATIONS

11 Apr 19	1: 2: 3:	1: 2: 3:
12 Apr 26	1: 2: 3:	1: 2: 3:
13 May 3	1: 2: 3:	1: 2: 3:

III. Outlook

14 May 10	On Tyranny Snyder, <i>On Tyranny</i> , Lessons 1-10
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*****FINAL ESSAY DUE*****
Submit 3,000-word essay

Read
Snyder, *On Tyranny*, Lessons 11-20