

PS119 Nation-States and Democracy

Seminar Leader: Boris Vormann
Course Times: Mon & Wed 14:00-15:30
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 (you must have your own copy of the edition with this ISBN!)

- Class Reader (available at the library)
- Dahl, Robert. 1989. *Democracy and its Critics*. Yale University Press (ISBN 978-0300049381)
- Mahbubani, Kishore. 2018. *Has the West Lost It?* (978-0141986531)
- Snyder, Timothy. 2017. *On Tyranny*. Penguin (978-1847924889)

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) 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 class you cannot pass.

Assignments, Grade Breakdown and Essay Deadlines

Oral

- **Classroom Participation (2*10%)** **20%** (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** **30%**
Each student group will workshop **one comparative case study in the sessions during weeks 12 and 13.**
 - For your fellow students to prepare for the workshops, you will have to **post relevant reading material one week before the workshop takes place at the very latest**
 - The workshop itself will include a **presentation element (no longer than 15 minutes)**
 - In the workshop, you should (1) work out the most important factors contributing to the respective crisis of liberal democracy in your case and compare that particular case to other scenarios we have encountered in the class. A second part of the workshop (2) should explore effects populists (in office) have had on democratic institutions and practices in your respective case.

Written

- **Mid-term essay (2,000 words)** **20 %**
The Mid-term essay is to be submitted in print (Times New Roman pt 12, 1.5-spaced) on Wednesday, Oct 23. Late submissions will be penalized (see below). It is supposed to address **one of the following questions** in an essay (with an introduction, main body, and conclusion):
 - Is nationalism conducive to democracy?
 - Is democracy the best way of organizing today's societies?
 - Which institutions ensure democracy and in how far are they currently imperiled? Choose meaningful cases to make your argument.

- **Final Essay (3,000 words)** **30%**
The final essay is due on Wednesday, December 11 (see late submission policy below). Questions will be distributed on Nov 20.

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. 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 III Academic Misconduct.

Schedule

Week Beginning	Monday	Wednesday
I. Introduction		
1 Sept 2	Concepts and Approaches Calhoun, <i>Dictionary of the Social Sciences</i> Hague et al., <i>Comparative Government</i>	The Comparative Method Ryan, <i>The Comparative Method</i> ***Select Case Study Group***
II. Actors, Institutions and Processes		

NATIONS AND NATIONALISM IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

2 Sept 9	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>
3 Sept 16	Identity as a Political Instrument Hobsbawm, <i>The Invention of Tradition</i> Guibernau, <i>Belonging</i>	Nationalism and Modernity Greenfeld, <i>Nationalism and Modernity</i>
4 Sept 23	The Role of Gender and Race McClintock, <i>No longer in a future haven</i> Watch Benedict Anderson on Nationalism	Why Nations (Still) Matter Calhoun, <i>Nations Matter</i>

STATES AND DEMOCRACY

5 Sept 30	The Sources of Modern Democracy Dahl, <i>Introduction and Part I</i>	Adversarial Critics Dahl, <i>Part II</i>
6 Oct 7	A Theory of the Democratic Process Dahl, <i>Part III</i>	Problems in the Democratic Process Dahl, <i>Part IV</i>
7 Oct 14	Limits and Possibilities of Democracy Dahl, <i>Part V, Chs. 15-18</i>	Minority Domination Dahl, <i>Part V, Chs. 19-21</i>
8 Oct 21	Toward a Third Transformation Dahl, <i>Part VI</i>	***MID-TERM ESSAY DUE*** Authoritarian Rule Brooker, <i>Authoritarian Regimes</i>

Fall Break (Oct. 28-Nov. 3)

DEMOCRATIZATION AND BACKSLIDING

9 Nov 4	Party Polarization Mickey et al., <i>Safe for Democracy?</i> Mounk, <i>The Undemocratic Dilemma</i>	***NO IN-CLASS MEETING*** Civil Society and Discourses Brown, <i>Undoing the Demos</i>
10 Nov 11	Populism Müller, <i>What is Populism?</i>	The Media: Epistemic Crisis Benkler et al., <i>Network Propaganda</i>
11 Nov 18	A Double Movement? Eichengreen, <i>The Populist Temptation</i>	***FINAL ESSAY QUESTIONS*** From a Global Point of View Mahbubani, <i>Has the West Lost it?</i>

COMPARING CASES

12 Nov 25	Group 1 The EU in Crisis	Group 2 Russia and Eastern Europe
13 Dec 2	Group 3 India	Group 4 Brazil

III. Outlook

14 Dec 9	On Tyranny Snyder, <i>On Tyranny</i> , Lessons 1-10	***FINAL ESSAY DUE*** Conclusions Snyder, <i>On Tyranny</i> , Lessons 11-20
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