The literature on democratization of political regimes has grown exponentially over the past several decades. This interest in political science has grown in large part as a response to real-world events: during the so-called “third wave of democratization” that began in the 1970s, the number of countries with democratic regimes more than doubled to a peak around 2010. However, according to the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute, 2019 was the first year since 2001 when democracies constituted only a minority of political regimes in the world; we are now firmly in a “third wave of autocratization.” Yet the autocracies of today look very different from those of the past, given a longstanding global normative context that encourages democratically elected governments. In recent years, an enormous number of “hybrid” electoral authoritarian regimes have developed in new and seemingly durable forms, leading scholars to question the initial theoretical paradigm of democratization that assumed full-fledged democracies as the outcome. Despite all of this scholarly scrutiny, we still possess inadequate knowledge of the dynamics causing the onset of democracy and different regime outcomes, and a great deal of disagreement persists among scholars concerning the best way to define democracy.

This is a theory- and reading-intensive course intended to provide political science graduate students with a solid background in the study of comparative democratization. One of the course objectives is to prepare those PhD students who plan to write in the democratization subfield in the Comparative Politics comprehensive exam. Hence, a major goal is to familiarize you with the key debates and concepts on this growing field and to think critically about the literature in this area. As such, with the partial exception of the final paper for the class, the assignments for this course will consist primarily of critical “think pieces” concerning literature on the reading list, rather than intensive investigations of particular case studies in which you are especially interested. Nonetheless, I encourage you to bring any case knowledge you possess into the class discussions and papers, and to use it in making arguments about the democratization literature. Indeed, I will require that you always ground your written arguments in some empirical examples (even if you are not a specialist on specific cases).
In this course, we begin by considering some controversies in defining democracy and the prominent theoretical schools of thought in explaining the emergence of democratic regimes. We will then move to examine specific factors complicating democratization processes: post-conflict situations, economic crises, natural resource dependence, civil society, and informal institutions. Next, we spend a few weeks examining sources of reversal from democracy and contemporary forms of authoritarianism, as well as the contemporary role of populism in shaping political regimes. This is followed by two weeks on international democracy and autocracy promotion, and one week on the very current impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on both democracies and autocracies. We end the course with a critical reflection on what we know about democratization and the future of democracy in the world.

Because of the time limits of the course, we will restrict ourselves to certain topics. Like the comparative democratization literature more widely in our discipline, the course focuses largely on transitions towards and away from democratic rule in countries that have relatively recently been ruled by authoritarian regimes, rather than the problems of insufficient democratic practices in countries that long ago established democratic regimes (although, in the current context of rising populism, nationalism, and the COVID-19 pandemic’s impacts on longstanding democracies, we will draw comparisons at times). While I attempt to bring examples from as many diverse areas of the world as possible in our seminars, the examples I raise will often be drawn from the experiences of the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, which is my area of regional expertise. I welcome you to participate in class discussion and to raise interesting examples or counter-examples from any countries with which you may be familiar.

One glaring omission in this year’s course is any concentrated focus on formal democratic institutional design, due to time constraints and the likelihood that you have studied or will study these questions in other political science courses. However, questions related to the roles of formal institutions will undoubtedly come up frequently in discussion, and I have listed a large number of suggested readings on institutional design and effects in the “recommended readings” for Week 3. I also encourage students to take other courses in the department that do include significant material on democratic institutions; we have several that do so.

We are forced to breeze through extremely important and complicated topics of discussion. However, it is my hope that this brief introduction to several topics will whet your appetite to read and learn more about democracy and authoritarianism around the world.

First Nations Land Acknowledgement

UBC’s Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.
**Course Assignments and Evaluation**

1) **Weekly online reading responses** (due each week on Canvas by beginning of class) (15 percent):

- Each class (starting in Week 1!), you must submit a brief online written response on the course Canvas site, in which you react to the week’s readings. This post should be no more than a few paragraphs and certainly no longer than 500 words, and the online format allows all of your classmates to read it. The post is to be submitted on the Canvas course site discussion board that is located in that week’s course module section of the site. Do not agonize over its elegance, since you will receive credit as long as you submit a response that refers to all of the readings at least briefly. You may submit your response any time prior to class but you must submit it by the start of class (not after class), or you will not receive credit for it. You must at least briefly mention all of the required readings and your reactions could include affirmation, criticism, or simply questions about some of the readings for the week. These responses will demonstrate to me that you have prepared for our discussion and will provide a participation avenue more suited to those students who experience discomfort speaking in class. Ideally they will also help you to formulate some points to raise in class.

- These responses are marked on a pass/ fail basis. As long as you submit your comment on time and mention all of the required readings, you will receive full credit for that week; if you do not, you will not receive credit. **You are not expected to submit a response on the week in which you present and submit a critical response paper on the readings, and you are permitted to skip two additional weeks of the term without notice or penalty.**

- The discussion board is located on UBC’s Canvas online learning platform: go to [https://canvas.ubc.ca](https://canvas.ubc.ca) and log in with your UBC CWL. You should find the Poli 516A course site there and find the discussion board forum for the particular week we are discussing.

2) **Short critical reading paper** (5-7 pages, double-spaced) (15 percent).

- The paper is to be based on your reading and analysis of the required readings for a particular week on the syllabus (Weeks 2-10). This paper is meant to be a critical response to the body of readings for the week – not merely summarizing, but considering the merits and flaws of the readings and establishing how they relate to one another. There should be only very minimal summary of the readings in your paper: only as much as necessary to make your points in response. If you have relevant knowledge and experience on a certain region of the world, please do put it to work in assessing how accurate the authors’ arguments are, and/ or how they apply to regions beyond the author’s purview.

- At the start of the term, you will sign up for a week in which to submit a paper (the same week as your presentation; see below); papers are **due to me by email at the start of class** that week.

3) **Seminar presentation and leading discussion on the readings for one week** (15 percent).

- On the same week in which you write a short paper, you will be responsible for making a brief presentation on the readings at the beginning of the week’s seminar. This
presentation should be 20-30 minutes in length and highlight key themes and debates among the readings, criticisms that you had of them, and questions that you wish the class to discuss during the seminar. You may be presenting with one other classmate (depending on how many students are in the class), and should coordinate with that person to ensure adequate coverage of the reading topics without significant duplication (each presenter may have 20 minutes to present). Then, during the course of the seminar that week, I will expect you to participate very actively to help guide and generate discussion. I will undoubtedly also have my own topics I wish to raise for discussion, but you will play a large role in shaping the week’s discussion. You will be asked to sign up for your presentation during the first day of class on September 13.

4) **Term Paper and Proposal (Proposal 5 percent (pass/fail), due October 15; Paper 30 percent, due December 15).** These assignments may be submitted to me via email by midnight. Please feel free to hand them in earlier!

- In this paper, you may carry out either an original empirical research analysis on a topic engaging with the democratization literature, or a critical literature review of a specified area of the democratization literature. Ideally, try to choose a paper topic that will help you with your own longer-term research agenda (MA thesis, PhD qualifying paper or dissertation proposal… hint hint!).

- For an original research paper, the key will be to make the task feasible to complete as a course paper, for which you will likely have limited time available. You are welcome to use any social science methods (qualitative case study/ies, statistical analysis, or others), but you will need to define the scope narrowly enough to be able to complete it during the term. This may be, for instance, a small element of a topic you are considering for your PhD thesis, or a trial version of what you will hone for your MA thesis.

- For a critical literature review, you may choose a key debate, conceptual definition, or the “state of the field” in some substantive area. The paper should survey the literature in this area and forward an argument about gaps, puzzles, shortcomings, progress in theoretical understanding or lack thereof in the literature. The paper should certainly include empirical examples, whether from multiple countries or focusing on just one, to ground the analysis. If you have an interest in the politics of a particular country or region, you may organize the paper around one or several case studies, as long as the case studies respond in some way to a theoretical question in the democratization literature.

- **The proposal** should consist of a 3-page (double-spaced) outline of your proposed question/puzzle and description of how you will go about your analysis (including draft titles of sections of the paper). Identify sources of data and/or proposed case studies, and methods to be used. In addition (beyond the 3 pages), you should include a preliminary reference list of literature you plan to cite. Due to me via email by midnight on Friday, October 15.

- **The paper** should be 20-25 pages (double-spaced, plus references) long, and is due via email by midnight on Wednesday, December 15.

5) **Class Participation (20 percent):**

- Your class participation mark will be based on attendance and the quality of your in-class contributions to discussion. The success of a seminar course depends fundamentally on active and thoughtful participation by all students. Hence, there is a heavy weight placed
on this aspect of your work in the course. I wish to make clear that I do not consider quantity of speaking, but instead the quality of comments. Also, I know that some people initially might have difficulty speaking out in class, but hopefully you will gradually overcome this fear.

- I will send each student an email message halfway through the term to give them a sense of how they are doing with participation and how they may try to improve if necessary.

**Summary of Key Due Dates**

- **Mondays, start of class**
  - Deadline for short papers for students presenting, via email;
  - Deadline for weekly comments on readings on Canvas

- **October 15, midnight**
  - Deadline for term paper proposals, via email

- **December 15, midnight**
  - Deadline for full term paper, via email

**Course Canvas Site**

I have created a modest, pared-down Canvas site for the course with some key informational elements. I will post key announcements about course logistics as they arise throughout the term via the Canvas “Announcements” function. Please set your Canvas account to allow these announcements to be sent to you via email as well so that you don’t miss them! On the site you can find:

1. A link to download this syllabus.
2. A link to access the online readings (direct to the course section on the Library’s LOCR site described below).

**Course and University Policies**

**COVID-19 Indoor Masking Policy**

Provincial Health Orders and UBC policy now mandate that non-medical masks must be worn in all indoor public spaces on campus. These spaces include classrooms, hallways, residence halls, libraries, and common areas. For our in-person meetings in this class, it is important that all of us feel as comfortable as possible engaging in class activities while sharing an indoor space. Non-medical masks that cover our noses and mouths are a primary tool for combating the spread of COVID-19. There may be students who have medical accommodations for not wearing a mask. Please maintain a respectful environment as outlined in the UBC Respectful Environment policy discussed below. Students who wish to request an exemption to the indoor mask mandate must do so based on one of the grounds for exemption detailed in the PHO Order on Face Coverings (COVID-19). Such requests must be made through the Centre for Accessibility (Vancouver campus), as discussed below.
**Academic Integrity and Responsibility**

The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply when the matter is referred to the Office of the Dean. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences. A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University’s policies and procedures, may be found in the UBC Calendar: Student Conduct and Discipline.

**Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

Academic accommodations help students with a disability or ongoing medical condition to overcome challenges that may affect their academic success. Students requiring academic accommodations must register with the Centre for Accessibility (previously known as Access & Diversity). The Centre will determine that student's eligibility for accommodations in accordance with Policy 73: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities. Academic accommodations are not determined by your instructors, and instructors should not ask you about the nature of your disability or ongoing medical condition, nor request copies of your disability documentation. However, I may request that you provide a letter from the Centre for Accessibility to confirm any course accommodations you request.

**Illness, Absence and Late Assignment Penalties**

If you are sick, it is important that you stay home. Complete a self-assessment for COVID-19 symptoms here: https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en. In this class, the marking scheme is intended to provide flexibility so that you can prioritize your health and still succeed. If you miss a class session due to illness, you will not lose marks for failure to attend the session.

If you are feeling ill and cannot attend class for your presentation date, please email me and any fellow co-presenting students right away. If you arrive for class and you are clearly ill, we will make alternate arrangements with you. It is better to email ahead of time and not attend.

If you are sick leading up to a paper deadline, please contact me. If you miss a submission deadline for marked coursework for the first time (assignment, exam, presentation, participation in class) and the course is still in-progress, please submit a Student Self-Declaration to me as soon as you are able, so that I can evaluate your in-term concession request and we can develop a revised plan. Any concessions that will result in a change to the student record will be referred to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for evaluation. If this is not the first time you have requested concession or classes are over, please consult the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies’ webpage on academic concession, and then contact me where appropriate.
If I (the instructor) am feeling ill: If I am unwell, I will not come to class. I will make every reasonable attempt to communicate plans for class as soon as possible (by email, or through Canvas announcement). Our classroom will remain available for you to sit in during the class time slot. In this instance, I may ask you to do an activity together or read something in place of class time. If I am well enough to teach, but am taking precautions to avoid infecting others, we may hold the class online. If this happens, you will receive an email or Canvas announcement informing you how to join the class.

For any late paper submissions that are not due to illness or personal/family emergencies, I will deduct a late penalty of 3% per business day.

Reach Out And Ask For Help If You Need It

University students encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. During the COVID 19 pandemic, this is particularly widespread and acute. We are all struggling at least from time to time in this period and often our goal is just to survive the next day or week. If you run into difficulties and need assistance, I encourage you to contact me by email and we can talk. I will do my best to support your success during the term. Since I am not trained as a counsellor myself, this support potentially includes identifying concerns I may have about your academic progress or wellbeing through Early Alert. With Early Alert, faculty members can connect you with advisors who offer students support and assistance getting back on track to health and success. Only specialized UBC advisors are able to access any concerns I may report, and Early Alert does not affect your academic record. For more information about Early Alert, visit earlyalert.ubc.ca. For information about addressing mental or physical health concerns, including seeing a UBC counselor or doctor, visit students.ubc.ca/livewell. But I am here to talk whenever you need it.

Respectful University Environment

UBC recognizes that “the best possible environment for working, learning and living is one in which respect, civility, diversity, opportunity and inclusion are valued.” The full UBC Statement on Respectful Environment for Students, Faculty and Staff can be found at http://www.hr.ubc.ca/respectful-environment/files/UBC-Statement-on-Respectful-Environment-2014.pdf. Students should read this statement carefully and take note of both the protections and the responsibilities that it outlines for all members of the UBC community. Students should also review the Student Code of Conduct, at: http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,750,0

This course values frank discussion, healthy debate, and the free and respectful exchange of ideas. Students are welcome to voice and defend their views, which may differ from those of other students or of the instructor. This may be experienced somewhat differently (for better or worse) in an online class format, and we are all adapting. However, disrespectful behavior, including bullying and harassment, will not be tolerated. I as instructor will be professional and respectful in all exchanges with students, and students will exercise similar professionalism and respect in their interactions with each other and with the instructor.
If you have any concerns about the class environment, please raise them with me. You also have the options of contacting the Head of the Political Science Department, UBC’s Equity and Inclusion Office (http://equity.ubc.ca), or the UBC Ombudsperson for Students (https://ombudsoffice.ubc.ca/).

**Resources in Cases of Discrimination, Harassment, or Sexual Assault**

UBC is committed to equity (including but not limited to gender equity) and fostering a safe learning environment for everyone. All people should be able to study, work, and learn in a supportive environment that is free from sexual violence, harassment, and discrimination. UBC’s Policy #3 on Discrimination and Harassment defines harassment as: “unwanted and unwelcome attention from a person who knows, or ought to know, that the behaviour is unwelcome. Harassment can range from written or spoken comments to unwanted jokes, gifts, and physical assault, and may be accompanied by threats or promises regarding work or study opportunities and conditions. Harassment can be either a single incident or a series of related incidents.” Such behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated at UBC. If you have a concern about harassment or discriminatory treatment that is not sexual assault, you may turn to the UBC Equity and Inclusion Office. The Equity and Inclusion Office is committed to fostering a community in which human rights are respected and equity and diversity are integral to university life.

If you or someone you know has experienced or been threatened with sexual assault, you can find confidential support and resources at the UBC Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO), and the AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre. The SVPRO is a safe place for students, faculty, staff who have experienced sexual violence, regardless of where or when it took place. This includes any attempt or act of a sexual nature without your consent. All gender identities, expressions and sexualities are welcome. The SASC is an all-genders service that serves the UBC-Vancouver campus community and is committed to creating a safer campus community, free from sexualized violence. Their work is informed by feminism, anti-oppression and recognition of intersectionality.

Resources are available at:

**UBC Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office**
6363 Agronomy Road, ROOM 4071  
Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1T2  
Tel 604-822-1588  
https://svpro.ubc.ca

**Sexual Assault Support Centre, (SASC)**  
249M, Student Union Building, UBC  
604-827-5180  
sasc@ams.ubc.ca  
http://amssasc.ca

**Equity and Inclusion Office**  
2306 – 1874 East Mall (Brock Hall)  
604.822.6353
Reading Requirements

The attached reading list is separated into two portions: required and recommended readings. You must read the required list each week. The literature on democratization is growing extremely large, so it is difficult to get away with reading less and having a competent knowledge of the subject. PhD students should keep in mind that this list encompasses many of the readings on the general and democratization reading lists for the comparative politics comprehensive exam, so it is worth reading them carefully now to have less to digest later! Some weeks have a heavier reading load, while some have less. If you are interested in pursuing any week’s topics further, I strongly encourage you to look at the recommended readings.

You can find all required readings on the syllabus (and some of the recommended readings) electronically through the UBC Library Online Course Reserves (LOCR) site. Go to https://courses.library.ubc.ca, and log in with your UBC CWL to access the online readings for the course. You will be able to access pdf versions of each journal article and book chapter listed as a required reading through that service. You will need to log in with your UBC CWL to access the library readings.
Week-by-Week Schedule of Topics and Readings:

PART I: DEFINING DEMOCRACY AND UNDERSTANDING ITS IMPACT

Week 1, September 13: Orientation and Introduction -- What is a “Democratic” Regime? How Far Can/ Should it Extend?

Required Readings:


Phillips, Anne, “Must Feminists Give Up on Liberal Democracy?” Political Studies 40, no. 5: 68-82. (14 pgs)


Recommended Readings:


Huntington, Samuel P. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), Chapter 1 (pp. 3-30).


**PART II: THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO DEMOCRATIZATION**

**Week 2, September 20: Structural Approaches to Democratization (Preconditions School)**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Week 3, September 27: Actor-Based Approaches (Transition and Consolidation School)**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


Diamond, Larry, *Developing Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), Ch. 3 (pp. 64-116).


Tilly, Charles, Chapter 3 (pp. 51-79) of *Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).


**Recommended readings especially on institutional design debates** (we have skipped this due to time constraints!):


Linz, Juan and Arturo Valenzuela, eds., *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*, volume 1: Comparative Perspectives, Ch. 3 by Sartori.


PART III: FACTORS AFFECTING THE SUCCESS OF DEMOCRATIZATION

Week 4, October 4: Difficult Contexts – Economic Crisis, Natural Resource Dependence, and Post-Conflict Situations

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


** LONG PAPER PROPOSALS DUE BY MIDNIGHT, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 5 **

** NOTE: NO CLASS ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 11 DUE TO THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY **

** Week 5, October 18: Civil Society and Informal Institutions **

Required Readings:


Helmke, Gretchen and Steven Levitsky, “Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda,” Perspectives on Politics 2, no. 4 (December 2004): 725-40. (15 pgs)


Recommended Readings:


**PART IV: SOURCES OF REVERSAL FROM DEMOCRACY**

**Week 6, October 25: Paths To and From Authoritarianism**

**Required Readings:**

Levitsky, Steven and Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) (read whole book if possible, but especially Chapters 1, 2, and 8 and some case study chapters).


**Recommended Readings:**


Week 7, November 1: Contemporary Authoritarian Practices

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Week 8, November 8: Populism – Threat To or Version of Democracy?

Required Readings:
Introduction and Ch. 1, pp. 1-32. (32 pgs)

Recommended Readings:

PART V: INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES ON DEMOCRATIZATION

Week 9, November 15: International Democracy Promotion

Required Readings:


**Recommended Readings:**


**Week 10, November 22: International Autocracy Promotion**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Week 11, November 29: COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Democracy and Authoritarianism**

**Required Readings:**


Recommended Readings:


PART VI: CONCLUSION

Week 12, December 6: Summing Up What We Know and The Future of Democracy

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


