

POP88264: Varieties of Authoritarianism
Hilary Term 2025

Instructor: Dr. Noah Buckley
Email: buckleno@tcd.ie
Office Hours: by appointment

Class will be held TBD

Module Description and Objectives

This graduate seminar provides an overview of how authoritarian regimes are structured and the different strategies that authoritarian leaders use to stay in power. Each week we will discuss a set of “varieties” of authoritarian rule or dynamics of these regimes. Much like democracies come in many shapes and forms, so do non-democracies. The goal of this module is to introduce you to the richness of styles and approaches that authoritarian leaders use to maintain their authority.

Assessment

Participation (20%)

Student attendance, participation, and discussion is crucial to this seminar. Students are expected to have read all required readings before class. You should plan on digging in deeply with each reading—you are advised to develop critiques of readings, connections between them, suggestions for improvement or future research, and to build links to other political science research before you arrive to discuss them with the group in class.

Students will be evaluated on the *quality* of their input in discussions. Asking questions, bringing evidence, explaining your views and thoughts, and debating issues of significance, relevance, research design, real-world applicability, accuracy, and other factors will be important in participating fully.

Response Papers and Presentation (30%)

Final essay (50%)

CLASS SCHEDULE

1. Autocracy and Autocratic Institutions

- Svolik, Milan. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. New York: Cambridge. Chapter 1.
- Gandhi, Jennifer, and Adam Przeworski. 2007. “Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats.” *Comparative Political Studies* 40(11): 1279-301.

- Wright, Joseph. (2008). “Do authoritarian institutions constrain? How legislatures affect economic growth and investment.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(2): 322–343.
- Bueno de Mesquita, B., Smith, A., Siverson, R. M., and Morrow, J. D. (2005). *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge: MIT Press. Chapter 2.

2. Personalism, Single-Party Rule, and Military Rule

Please read **each** of these:

- Geddes, Frantz, and Wright. “Military rule.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17, 147-162.
- Svobik, Milan. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. New York: Cambridge. Chapter 3 or 5 or both. Skip the game theory (“formal model”) stuff and appendices.

And (at least) **one** of these:

- Brownlee, Jason. 2007. “Hereditary Succession in Modern Autocracies.” *World Politics* 59(04): 595–628.
- Menaldo, Victor. 2012. “The Middle East and North Africa’s Resilient Monarchs” *Journal of Politics*. 74.3.
- Magaloni, Beatriz. 2008. “Credible Power-Sharing and the Longevity of Authoritarian Rule.” *Comparative Political Studies* 41(4): 715-741.

3. Hybrid Regimes and Electoral Authoritarianism

- Magaloni, Beatriz. (2006). *Voting for autocracy: Hegemonic party survival and its demise in Mexico*. Read the **introduction** and at least two chapters (your choice) of chapters 2-8.
- Levitsky, S., and L.A. Way. 2002. “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism.” *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 51-65.
- Schedler, Andreas. 2002. “The Menu of Manipulation.” *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2): 36–50.

4. When Autocracies Bite: Repression, Coercion, Violence

- Albertus, Michael, and Victor Menaldo. "Coercive capacity and the prospects for democratization." *Comparative politics* 44, no. 2 (2012): 151-169.
- Frantz, Erica, Andrea Kendall-Taylor, Joseph Wright, and Xu Xu. "Personalization of power and repression in dictatorships." *The Journal of Politics* 82, no. 1 (2020): 372-377.
- Kendall-Taylor, Andrea, Erica Frantz, and Joseph Wright. "The digital dictators: how technology strengthens autocracy." *Foreign Affairs* 99 (2020): 103.
- Greitens, Sheena Chestnut. *Dictators and their secret police: Coercive institutions and state violence*. Cambridge University Press, 2016. Selected pages.
- Blydes, Lisa. *State of Repression: Iraq under Saddam Hussein*. Princeton University Press, 2018. Selected pages.

5. Autocracy and Geopolitics

Please read these two:

- Gunitsky, Seva. "From shocks to waves: Hegemonic transitions and democratization in the twentieth century." *International Organization* (2014): 561-597.
- Weeks, Jessica L. "Autocratic audience costs: Regime type and signaling resolve." *International Organization* (2008): 35-64.

And then choose (at least) one of the following sub-topics to read:

Conflict

- Weeks, Jessica L. "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict." *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 106, no. 2, 2012, pp. 326–347.
- Colgan, Jeff D., and Jessica LP Weeks. "Revolution, personalist dictatorships, and international conflict." *International Organization* (2015): 163-194.

Sanctions

- Abel Escribà-Folch, Joseph Wright, Dealing with Tyranny: International Sanctions and the Survival of Authoritarian Rulers, *International Studies Quarterly*, Volume 54, Issue 2, June 2010, Pages 335–359, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2010.00590.x>
- Peksen, Dursun, and A. Cooper Drury. "Coercive or corrosive: The negative impact of economic sanctions on democracy." *International Interactions* 36.3 (2010): 240-264.

Aid and international organizations

- Wright, J. (2009), How Foreign Aid Can Foster Democratization in Authoritarian Regimes. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53: 552-571.
- Poast, Paul, and Johannes Urpelainen. "How international organizations support democratization: preventing authoritarian reversals or promoting consolidation." *World Pol.* 67 (2015): 72.