Problems of Democracy in Comparative Perspective:
A Graduate Seminar

Politics 210 • Spring 2016 • 62933
University of California, Santa Cruz
Prof. Benjamin L. Read
Syllabus

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Instructor’s web site: http://benread.net
Course web site: http://ecommons.ucsc.edu/
Course meetings: Merrill 134, Mondays, 5pm to 8pm
Office hours: Wednesdays noon to 2pm, and by appointment
Date of this syllabus: April 15, 2016. Subject to change; check websites for latest version.

Overview:

Democracy is among the most essential of political concepts, and a fundamentally contested one. Since the 1980s, scholars of comparative politics have given much attention to explaining why and when countries transition from authoritarianism and adopt democratic institutions. Yet even where this has taken place, regime change at the national level only sets the stage, leaving us with a set of deeper questions about what democracy really means in practice — how it plays out (or is undermined) throughout the state and at subnational levels, whom it includes and excludes, what options it opens and what possibilities it forecloses. These relate to, and give us points of entry into, long debates about the potential and the limitations of democracy in general.

This course engages with central concepts and works of political theory, but is empirical in overall orientation. The questions democracy poses are often universal, and many of its problems and flaws are manifest in “early democratizers” as well as in new democracies. Therefore, while the course aims for broad geographic scope, focusing on a variety of developing-world and post-authoritarian settings, it also includes studies of the United States and Europe.

We begin by examining core concepts such as democracy and representation; here and through the “quality of democracy” literature we begin a theme of identifying strengths and weaknesses in political arrangements. We then turn to the particular topics of colonial and authoritarian legacies, clientelism, and corruption, all of which are seen as vitiating democracy in one way or another. Finally, we examine democracy in particular sites and forms: parties and legislatures, cities and neighborhoods, and in institutions of direct participation.

This course is intended for graduate students in Politics and related social science disciplines, though it may be of interest to students in history, the humanities, and other fields. Highly motivated undergraduates with strong academic records are also welcome to request to take the course. There are no prerequisites for this seminar.

Assignments and ground rules:

• Actively help build an enthusiastic, far-ranging, thoughtful, critical and constructive discussion.
• Do the required readings prior to each class session and come prepared to contribute to the conversation. Acquire the readings well in advance of class so as to avoid logistical problems.
• Attend each class session unless unavoidable circumstances make it impossible to do so. Given that we have only ten class meetings, please plan to attend every one and do not schedule things that conflict with class.
• Present a reading occasionally, per arrangements that will be made collectively the week before. Participation and presentations together constitute 30% of the quarter grade.
• Write five reading responses, at least two pages and six hundred words each (30%). My web site has a page providing guidance for these. You may choose the weeks you wish to address, and the first week of class is fair game. On those weeks, turn in your response paper by 9 a.m. on the day of class, via email attachment (Word or PDF format).
• Students will also submit a final paper (40%). Please suggest a topic to me before Week 5. The paper should be at least 12 pages in length and turned in both via email and in hard copy; it should be work that you have written this quarter and not used in other classes for academic credit.
• The paper could be a literature review of one or two issues related to the course, drawing on a reasonably wide
selection of material. This could (for instance) explore theoretical, conceptual, and/or definitional questions.

- It could be a substantive/empirical paper on a relevant topic
- Other formats can be discussed.

**Academic integrity:**

- Excerpts from UCSC’s Policy on Academic Integrity for Graduate Students (http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/graduate_students/): “Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, research fraud, or facilitating academic dishonesty or as further specified in campus policies and regulations, including the Campus Policy on Research Integrity. ... In cases in which academic misconduct has been determined to occur, sanctions may include dismissal, suspension for a specified period, and notation of academic misconduct on a student’s transcript, including all external copies, for a specified period.”
- I take academic integrity very seriously and I expect all students to do the same.
- Concerning the use of sources in your writing, and understanding and avoiding plagiarism, the single most thorough (though it is concise) and illuminating discussion I know of is Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources: A Guide for Students*, 2nd edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2008). A copy will be available on eCommons. I strongly recommend that you obtain and read this inexpensive book, both for your own use and for your work as an instructor.

**Special accommodations:**

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit your Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me during my office hours in a timely manner, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. Contact DRC at 459-2089 (voice), 459-4806 (TTY).

**Note:**

This is a draft syllabus. For some books listed below I have yet to determine exactly which chapters will be assigned.

**Week 1: Introduction**  
**Monday, March 28, 2016**

Our goals in the first class session are as follows: Introduce the course; consider or reacquaint ourselves with various definitions and purposes of democracy; start to consider “problems” or questions related to democracy; discuss particular topics of interest to students; customize the syllabus. Bring questions, topics, or cases that you are thinking about.


**Further reading**

Week 2: Democracy: Concepts and Problems

Monday, April 4, 2016


Further reading

- Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, Informal Institutions and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), full text available on Cruzcat.

Week 3: Representation

Monday, April 11, 2016

- Mala Htun, Inclusion without Representation in Latin America: Gender Quotas and Ethnic Reservations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), chapters 1, 2, 3, 7, 8
- Ian Shapiro, et al. (eds.), Political Representation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), short introduction and chapter by Pettit

Further reading

Week 4: Quality of democracy

Monday, April 18, 2016


Further reading


Week 5: Clientelism

Monday, April 25, 2016

- Tina Hilgers (ed.), *Clientelism in Everyday Latin American Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), chapters 1 (Tina Hilgers), 8 (Eduardo Canel), 10 (Jonathan Fox) [available online via CruzCat]

Further reading


Week 6: Direct Participation

Monday, May 2, 2016

• Daniel Martinez HoSang, *Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), introduction, chapters 1 and 7, and conclusion; you may wish to read other chapters too [full text available on CruzCat](#)

• Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright (eds.), *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance* (London: Verso, 2003), these chapters:
  • 1, Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright, “Thinking about Empowered Participatory Governance”
  • 4, Archon Fung, “Deliberative Democracy, Chicago Style: Grass-roots Governance in Policing and Public Education”
  • 6, Jane Mansbridge, “Practice–Thought–Practice”


Further reading


Week 7: Cities and local democracy

Monday, May 9, 2016


Further reading

Week 8: Parties and legislatures
Monday, May 16, 2016

Further reading

Week 9: Colonial and authoritarian legacies
Monday, May 23, 2016
- Allen Hicken, Erik Martinez Kuhonta, and Meredith L. Weiss (eds.), *Party System Institutionalization in Asia : Democracies, Autocracies, and the Shadows of the Past* (Cambridge University Press, 2014) [chapters to be selected from this and other books]

Further reading
- Xinhuang Xiao and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Democracy or Alternative Political Systems in Asia: After the Strongmen* (Routledge Contemporary China Series, 2014)

Week 10: Corruption
Monday, May 30, 2016

Further reading
- Susan Rose-Ackerman, *Corruption: Causes, Consequences, and Reform*. Cambridge: CUP, 1999
