
Welcome and thank you for your interest in this seminar!

You can find the syllabus here: [Gov 94JW Syllabus Spring 2024_20240418.pdf](#)

This course might be right for you if you are interested in:

- Gaining exposure to politics, democracy, and governance in the global south, with a focus on issues like accountability, representation, political participation, advocacy and activism, civil society, corruption, and gender and identity
- Developing research skills, particularly in planning, research design and writing a research prospectus (especially useful if you think you might write a senior thesis)
- Completing iterated, draft-like progressive assignments with feedback from me from one draft to the next
- Learning how to efficiently read large amounts of social science research for this course and others
- A seminar-formatted class based largely on discussion of assigned readings

Class Sessions

Tuesdays, 3:45 PM - 5:45 AM

Location: TBD

Instructor

Julie Anne Weaver

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Course Description

This seminar explores how democracies operate on the ground in low- and middle-income countries today. What is the reality of how democracy works in practice versus how it is conceived and designed? What are Global South countries'™ major democratic challenges and successes? How does a country's™ income level impact, and in turn is impacted by, democratic participation? Main themes to be covered include overarching issues like representation, accountability, and state strength, as well as more specific areas of democratic practice such as participatory democracy, civil society and activism, corruption, managing diversity, and democratic backsliding.

Drawing on both theoretical and empirical social science research, the course explores these questions by blending theory and case studies drawn primarily from Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The course begins by reviewing the main ideals underpinning the establishment of democracy, considering questions of representation and accountability, as a foundation for later asking how those ideals are implemented in practice. We will also examine governance and the citizen-state relationship framed within the backdrop of state and institutional strength. From there, students will examine four challenges faced in the practice of democracy today: ensuring formal and informal participation in the political process; reducing corruption and clientelism; addressing inequality and diversity; and managing democratic backsliding. Throughout, the course considers how democratic practice is impacted by the

politics of international development and by international and domestic forces more widely.

A large focus of the course will be on developing students' skills in evaluating and conducting original social science research. Most weeks, in addition to the thematic content, part of the class meeting will cover a particular research skill or step in the research process. For the course's final project, students have the option of either submitting a detailed project prospectus or conducting the empirical analysis and reporting results. Students will submit progressive components of the research project, receiving individual written feedback at each phase that will then be incorporated into a final paper.

Though this is a research-focused seminar, students with an interest in policy are encouraged to register, as we will consistently engage in class with policy questions and analyze how high-quality research can and should inform policy decisions. Students may also choose policy-related inquiries as their research question for the final project.

While covering multiple geographic areas, students are welcome to focus their thinking throughout the term on a particular country and/or region. For example, students can choose to orient their reading responses to assessing that week's readings in terms of the implications for understanding democratic practice in their country/region of focus. And most students' final projects will focus on only one country, offering another chance to tailor the course to students' country/region of interest.