

# Dictators and Their Demise

Dr. Xu

Summer, 2019

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Class Hours: 10:15AM - 12:15PM MoTuWeThFr

Class Room: Willard Building 060

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## Course Description

This course provides a broad exploration about how non-democratic governments throughout the world rule. We examine: the conditions that give rise to authoritarianism; the variety of authoritarian regimes; the strategies authoritarian leaders use to stay in power; the consequences of different types of authoritarianism for outcomes such as economic growth and human development; and the domestic and international sources of authoritarian demise. The course covers cases of authoritarian rule in: Chile, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Malaysia, Mexico, and the former Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo or DRC). The course builds knowledge about the governments under which most people in the Global South lived during the 20th century. Even today, roughly half of the world's population lives under some form of non-democratic government. Yet almost all courses currently in the curriculum, particularly in the field of comparative politics, focus exclusively on democratic forms of government. This course therefore examines a new topic not currently offered in the curriculum.

In addition to learning about different types of authoritarian rule, students form an understanding of how common foreign policy tools, such as economic sanctions, foreign aid, and human rights shaming, are likely to affect domestic politics in these countries. This knowledge helps students critically evaluate foreign policy relationships between democracies, such as the United States, and dictatorships. Course materials cover theoretical approaches to the study of authoritarian rule, in-depth case studies (including novels, biographies, and documentary), and empirical research.

This course requires student presentations, weekly reading assignments, descriptive analysis of quantitative data in graphs, multiple written assignments, and a final take-home essay exam. Students develop analytic skills through the weekly written homework assignments in which they apply the broad theoretical concepts to analyze counterfactual situations from specific cases of authoritarian rule. Oral presentations develop inter-personal skills and require students to research specific cases of authoritarian rule currently in the news. This helps students critically evaluate current events. Finally, the written assignments require students to develop skills working with real data. Students collect and graphically present basic descriptive data about economic and human development in non-democratic countries: economic data, infant mortality, literacy,

and indicators of women's well-being. Using real world data to make international comparisons helps students develop skills to form and articulate complex arguments, and teaches them the basics of research design.

## Course Materials

Book chapters and articles are on CANVAS. A few readings have direct urls embedded in the syllabus.<sup>1</sup> I recommend you buy two books prior to May 20 (not on CANVAS):

- Mario Vargas Llosa (2000) *The Feast of the Goat* (Picador USA)
- Michela Wrong (2000) *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz* (Perennial)

## Course Requirement

Students are expected to: (a) attend all lectures; (b) read assigned materials before the start of each class; (c) complete two assignments; (d) complete an in-class presentation; (e) complete a final take-home exam.

## Course Structure and Grading

Final grades will be based on two 2-page assignments (20% of final grade each), one presentation (slides: 10% & an in-class slideshow presentation 10%), and one final take-home essay exam (40%).

**Lecture and Discussion:** Classes will be devoted to lecture and discussion. The purpose of discussion is to provide students an opportunity to clarify questions they have related to the readings and lectures, and to probe more deeply topics of particular interest. Lectures notes will be posted on CANVAS one day before each class.

**Two Assignments and One Presentation:** Details of the assignments will be posted on CANVAS.

**Exams:** For the final take-home exam you will be responsible for understanding the major arguments that are discussed in class lectures (including current events discussions) and in the required readings. The final take-home exam is due on June 5, the date assigned by the University.

I will use the following scale to calculate your course grade:

A+	96.5-100	B-	79-82.4
A	93-96.4	C+	75.5-78.9
A-	89.5-92.9	C	70-75.4
B+	86-89.4	D	60-69.9
B	82.5-85.9	F	59.9 and below

<sup>1</sup>Half a dozen or so readings are from the *Monkey Cage*, a feature of the *Washington Post*. This blog provides short articles by political scientists that are intended for a general audience. The articles are based on evidence from peer-reviewed articles published in political science journals. In the words of one of its founders, the *Monkey Cage* is intended as a place where "political scientists draw on their own expertise and the discipline's research to illuminate the news, inform civic discussion, and make some sense of the circus that is politics." The editors of the *Monkey Cage* are political scientists, not editorial staff or journalists employed by the *Washington Post*.

## Exam & Assignment Dates

Assignment 1: available online May 09; due May 13 (10:15 AM)

Assignment 1: available online May 17; due May 20 (10:15 AM)

Presentation Assignment: available online May 20; slides due May 27 (11:59 PM); Presentation in class May 28

Final Take-home exam: available online June 04; due June 05 (11:59 PM)

## Course Policies

### During Class

I understand that the electronic recording of notes will be important for class and so computers will be allowed in class. Please refrain from using computers for anything but activities related to the class. Phones are prohibited as they are rarely useful for anything in the course. Eating and drinking are allowed in class but please refrain from it affecting the course. Try not to eat your lunch in class as the classes are typically active.

### Attendance Policy

Participation (5% additional points). Attendance is not graded. There are occasional in-class quizzes, though, that can provide additional points to your overall grade. If you do miss class, you are expected to get notes from a fellow student – ‘private make-up lectures’ with the instructor will not take place.

### Policies on Grading, Incomplete Grades and Late Assignments

If an extended deadline is not authorized by the instructor or department, an unfinished incomplete grade will automatically change to an F after either (a) the end of the next regular semester in which the student is enrolled (not including summer sessions), or (b) the end of 12 months if the student is not enrolled, whichever is shorter. Incompletes that change to F will count as an attempted course on transcripts. The burden of fulfilling an incomplete grade is the responsibility of the student. The university policy on incomplete grades is located at ([Link](#)).

1. **The two assignments** is due at 10:15 AM (**a paper copy in person**) on the assigned date. **The presentation slides** should be **emailed** to the instructor at [xux112@psu.edu](mailto:xux112@psu.edu) by 11:59PM on May 27. **A digital copy of the answers to the final take-home exam** should be **emailed** to the instructor at [xux112@psu.edu](mailto:xux112@psu.edu) by 11:59PM on June 5. Late submission accrues a penalty of one letter grade (e.g. B becomes C+) each 24-hour period until the assignment is given to the instructor. After 96 hours, no late assignment is accepted. Students who arrive late to class (after 10:15 AM) cannot hand in assignments without accruing the late penalty.
2. There are no make-up exams unless you have a medical excuse provided by a physician or medical office. The date of the final exam is determined by the College Registrar.
3. Class participation can affect the course grade in marginal cases.

4. **Regrading Policy.** All requests for regrade should be filed within **one week** after I hand back your problem sets or exam books. For each problem that you want to request a regrade, you need to provide a one-page explanation for why you think your answers are correct / worth more points. Also, if you file a request for a particular problem, I will do a regrade for all the problems and adjust your total score accordingly. For points-adding errors, you don't need a page of explanation. In your problem sets and exam books, try not to leave blank space/pages. All the blank space/pages will be marked for future reference.

### **Academic Integrity and Honesty**

The Department of Political Science, along with the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, takes violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. Students uncertain about proper citation are responsible for checking with their instructor.

In an examination setting, unless the instructor gives explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in-class or take-home, violations of academic integrity shall consist but are not limited to any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not. Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity. In cases of any violation of academic integrity it is the policy of the Department of Political Science to follow procedures established by the College of the Liberal Arts.

### **Accommodations for Disabilities**

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

### **Educational Equity/Report Bias Statements**

Discrimination based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation is a violation of state and federal law and/or Penn State University policy and will not be tolerated. Harassment of any person (either in the form of quid pro quo or creation of a hostile environment) based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation also is a violation of state and federal law and/or Penn State University policy and will not be tolerated. Retaliation against any person who complains about discrimination is also prohibited. Any person who feels that he or she has been the subject of prohibited discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should contact Educational Equity via [the Report Bias webpage](#).

University Police Services, University Park: 814-863-1111.

Multicultural Resource Center, Diversity Advocate for Students: 814-865-1773.  
Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity: 814-865-5906.  
Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs: 814-865-0909.  
Affirmative Action Office: 814-863-0471

## Schedule

The schedule is tentative and subject to change. We may adjust the schedule due to time or interest.

### **Day 01 & 02 (05/06 & 05/07): Topic 1. What are dictatorships?**

(05/06) No readings; first day of class.

(05/07) Clark, Golder, & Golder. "Three Measures of Democracy." (154-166) CANVAS

### **Day 03 & 04 (05/08 & 05/09): Topic 2. How are dictatorship different from democracies?**

(05/08) Zakaria. "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy." (22-43) CANVAS

(05/08) Levitsky & Way. "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." (51-64) CANVAS

(05/09) Slater & Way. *Washington Post*. "Was the 2016 U.S. election democratic? Here are 7 serious shortfalls."

(05/09) Berman. *Washington Post*. "Populists have one big thing right: Democracies are becoming less open."

**Assignment 1: Dictatorship in the U.S.? Due in class on Monday, 05/13**

### **Day 05 & 06 (05/10 & 05/13): Topic 3. How do dictatorships come to power?**

(05/10) Geddes, Wright, & Frantz. *How Dictatorships Work*. "Autocratic Seizures of Power." (1-18) CANVAS

(05/13) Wright, Geddes, Frantz & Derpanopoulos. *Washington Post*. "Are Coups Good for Democracy?"

(05/13) Kendall-Taylor. *Washington Quarterly*. "The Global Rise of Personalized Politics." (7-17)

### **Day 07 & 08 (05/14 & 05/15): Are all dictators the same? How do they differ?**

(05/14) Clark, Golder, & Golder. "Credible Commitment Problems." (185-188) CANVAS

(05/14) Haber. "The Logic of Authoritarian Government." (2-23) CANVAS

(05/15) Geddes. "What Do We Know About Democratization?" (121-138) CANVAS

### **Day 09 & 10 (05/16 & 05/17): How do dictators rule? How do they stay in power?**

(05/16) Clark, Golder, & Golder. "Selectorate Theory." (331-344) CANVAS

(05/17) Geddes, Wright, & Frantz. *How Dictatorships Work*. "Power Concentration." (1-33) CANVAS

**Assignment 2: Median voters, inequality, and the prospects of democratization. Due in class on Monday, 05/20**

**Day 11 & 12 (05/20 & 05/21): Why do dictators have democratic-looking institutions?**

(05/20) Morgenbesser. *Behind the Facade: Elections under Authoritarianism...* (pp. 1-33) CANVAS

(05/21) Knutsen, Nygard & Wig. *Washington Post*. "You'd think dictators would avoid elections."

**Presentation Assignment:** Prepare for an 8-Minute presentation and practice your talk. You must send a digital copy of your slides to the instructor at [xux112@psu.edu](mailto:xux112@psu.edu) by 11:59PM on May 27 so that I can download it to the classroom's computer the next day.

**Day 13 & 14 (05/22 & 05/23): Are dictatorships good for economic growth and human development?**

(05/22) Olsen. "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development." (567-576) CANVAS

(05/22) Sen. "Famine and Other Crisis." in *Development as Freedom*. (160-188) CANVAS

(05/23) Demick. Letter from Yanji, "Nothing Left." *The New Yorker*, July 12, 2010, (44-49) CANVAS

(05/23) Subramanian. "The Inevitable Superpower" (66-78) CANVAS

**Day 15 & 16 (05/24 & 05/27): Dominant party rule in Mexico**

(05/24) Magaloni. *Voting for Autocracy*. (28-42, 44-55, 63-76) CANVAS

(05/24) Magaloni. *Voting for Autocracy*. (82-108, 117-131) CANVAS

(05/27) **Memorial Day, No Class**

**Day 17 & 18 (05/28 & 05/29): Trujillo's dictatorship in the Dominican Republic**

(05/28) In-class student presentations

(05/29) Vargas Llosa. *The Feast of the Goat*. Chapters 1-2, 5-9

(05/29) Vargas Llosa. *The Feast of the Goat*. Chapters 12-14, 18-22

**Day 19 & 20 (05/30 & 05/31): Personalist power in the former Zaire**

(05/30) Wrong. *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*. (70-85, 89-108, 112-130, 137-141, 195-215, 219-237)

(05/31) Wrong. *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*. (241-248, 251-267, 271-274, 293-309)

**Day 21 (06/03 ): Protests in dictatorships**

(06/03) Clark, Golder, & Golder. "Tipping models." (271-276) CANVAS

(06/03) Barany. "The Role of the Military." (28-38) CANVAS

(06/03) Chenoweth. *Foreign Policy*. "Think Again: Nonviolent Resistance."

### **Day 22 & 23 (06/04 & 06/05 ): Final Take-home Exam**

(06/04) The final take-home exam will be **available online at 12:00PM on June 04.**

(06/05) Exam due. A digital copy of your answers to the exam should be **sent to the instructor at [xux112@psu.edu](mailto:xux112@psu.edu) by 11:59PM on June 05.**

### **Further Reading**

*The Accusation: Forbidden Stories from Inside North Korea*, Bandi (North Korea)

*The Art of Political Murder*, Francisco Goldman (Guatemala)

*The Autumn of the Patriarch*, Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia)

*Blindness*, José Saramago (Portugal)

*The Collapse*, Mary Elise Sarotte (East Germany)

*The Comedians*, Graham Greene (Haiti)

*Dinner with Mugabe*, Heidi Holland (Zimbabwe)

*Dogeaters*, Jessica Hagedorn (Philippines)

*The Emperor*, Ryszard Kapuscinski (Ethiopia)

*Exit the Colonel*, Ethan Chorin (Libya)

*The Fear*, Peter Godwin (Zimbabwe)

*The Gun Dealer's Daughter*, Gina Apostol (Philippines)

*The Hunger Angel*, Herta Müller (Romania)

*"I Didn't Do It For You"*, Michela Wrong (Eritrea)

*In the Time of Butterflies*, Julia Alvarez (Dominican Republic)

*It's Our Turn to Eat: The Story of a Kenyan Whistle-Blower*, Michela Wrong (Kenya)

*Journey Into the Whirlwind*, Eugenia Semyonavna Ginzburg (Soviet Union)

*A Man of the People*, Chinua Achebe (Nigeria)

*The Man without a Face*, Masha Gessen (Putin, Russia)



*The Mantle of the Prophet*, Roy Mottahedeh (Iran)

*The President (El Señor Presidente)*, Miguel Ángel Asturias (Guatemala)

*Reading Lolita in Tehran*, Azar Nafisi (Iran)

*Sardines*, Nuruddin Farah (Somalia)

*Shah of Shahs*, Ryszard Kapuscinski (Iran)