

Challenges to Democracy

Introduction

Mirko Wegemann

Universität Münster
Institut für Politikwissenschaft

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About me

Mirko Wegemann (he/him)

- Since October 2024: Research Associate in the Department of Comparative Politics (Prof. Daniel Bischof)
- Previously: PhD Candidate at the European University Institute in Florence
- Research interests
 - Political parties
 - Political communication
 - Political culture of gender roles

Tell me a bit about yourself...

A small survey:

<https://pingo.coactum.de/158171/>



Learning Outcomes

- Understanding of how we can define and measure democracy and backsliding

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- Overview of causes for democratic backsliding and potential solutions
- Developing your own original research questions
- Analysing current trends in democratization and democratic quality

Timetable I

- Week 1 Introduction
 - Week 2 Concepts
 - Week 3 Democracy - A Winning Formula?
 - Week 4 Field work
 - Week 5 Facilitators and Challenges to Democrati-zation
 - Week 6 Stretching the Rules of the Game
 - Week 7 Culture, Grievances and the Far-Right

Timetable II

- Week 8 Democratic Norms and Affective Polarization
 - Week 9 Global Crises
 - Week 10 Strengthening Institutions
 - Week 11 Participation
 - Week 12 Field trip to 'Demokratie-Update'
 - Week 13 Project and Wrap-Up Session

Every week, at least two readings (except for session 4, 12 and 13)!

Course Infrastructure

- Communication and literature via Learnweb (please check your mails, password: **ctd_2425**)
 - Literature research via ULB Münster, Google Scholar, or Web of Science
 - Access to most articles via the WiFi network of the University of Münster, from home via VPN
 - For an intro into the university library: Library Audiotour
 - Slides on my website

Requirements I

Workload

One ECTS point represents max. 30 actual hours of real workload by the student.¹

Example calculation:

$$\rightarrow 30 \times 7 = 210 \text{ hours}$$

Participation in the course:

$$1.5 \times 13 = 19.5 \text{ hours}$$

Preparation and follow-up of the course as well as development of exam performances:

$$210 - 19.5 = 190.5 \text{ hours}$$

¹ Recht.NRW

Requirements II

- Regular attendance and participation
 - Prior engagement with the session literature
 - Submit three questions on the literature in three different sessions
 - Podcast project
 - Term paper on your own research project

Requirements III

- *Studienleistungen*: Questions about the literature **and** podcast project
- *Prüfungsleistung*: Term paper

Partial requirements 1 |

Engagement with session literature and questions

For all sessions

- read and engage with the session literature in advance
- make notes
- raise questions whenever something remained unclear

Partial requirements 1 II

Engagement with session literature and questions

For three sessions of your choice

- develop three questions on the session literature (on one or more readings)
- questions should go beyond clarification questions; rather questions about the consistency of an argument, the chosen design or possible implications of the research
- each of the questions should be briefly elaborated
- submit on **Monday, 23:59 before the session**

Partial requirements 1 III

Engagement with session literature and questions

- in the session, we'll often do group work on the readings in which you serve as a moderator for your own question (so you need to show up!)
- submission not possible for sessions 1, 4, 12 and 13

Partial requirements 2 |

Podcast project

In the third and fourth session, you are asked to prepare a small podcast project in a group of 4-5 people

- in week 3, we will discuss and trace some recent patterns of democracy (e.g., how do different components of democratic quality develop?)
- based on this session, you are asked to develop a research question
- in the fourth week, the seminar will not take place in person; instead, you are asked to survey citizens on the street about their experiences with democracy (generally and tailored to your research question)

Partial requirements 2 II

Podcast project

- prepare either an audio file (like a podcast) or a presentation of max. **3 minutes**
- afterwards, we will discuss your projects and the experiences you made in the plenary

Partial requirements 3 |

Term paper

- if you need to submit a *Prüfungsleistung*, you are asked to submit a term paper by **March 31, 2025** at the latest
- length: **6,000 words** \pm 10 percent (excluding table of contents, bibliography, and cover page)
- Choose your own topic, develop research hypotheses and test them empirically
- Standard format of an empirical paper: Introduction (incl. research question and motivation), literature review, theory section (incl. hypothesis development), case selection and method, results, conclusion

Partial requirements 3 II

Term paper

- Pay attention to the correct citation style (guidelines, for example, here); Training on Citavi, for example, end of November by the ULB
- Submission as a .pdf-file

Plagiarism I

"The act of plagiarism is fulfilled when in written study and examination performances "texts of third parties are taken in whole or in part, literally or nearly literally, and presented as one's own scholarly work." This practice "not only contradicts good scientific practice, but it is also a form of intellectual theft and thus a violation of copyright."

IfPol: Resolution by the German Association of University Professors and Lecturers

Plagiarism II

There are different **types of plagiarism**

- Plagiarism of whole work
- Citation without proper referencing
- Translation plagiarism
- Self plagiarism
- Ghostwriting

In case there is any suspicion of plagiarism, we will check the submission with the plagiarism detection *Turnitin*.

Inclusion

We want to establish an open and inclusive culture in this seminar.

- Less relevant in English, but gender-sensitive language is used whenever possible in seminar communication
 - Studies on why it is useful to break the generic masculine: Stahlberg and Sczesny (2001) and Vervecken et al. (2013)
- You are welcome to share your pronouns.
- There is no place for racism, sexism, homo- or transphobia here.
- We learn together: all types questions are legitimate and welcomed, and knowledge gaps are no reason to feel ashamed.

Contact me

- After the seminar or during office hours (by prior email registration)
- Email: m.wegemann@uni-muenster.de
- Address
Institute of Political Science
Department: Comparative Politics
Room: 223, Scharnhorststr. 100
48151 Münster
- Feedback via Google Forms or by email

Any further questions?

What's happening around us? |

On the one hand...

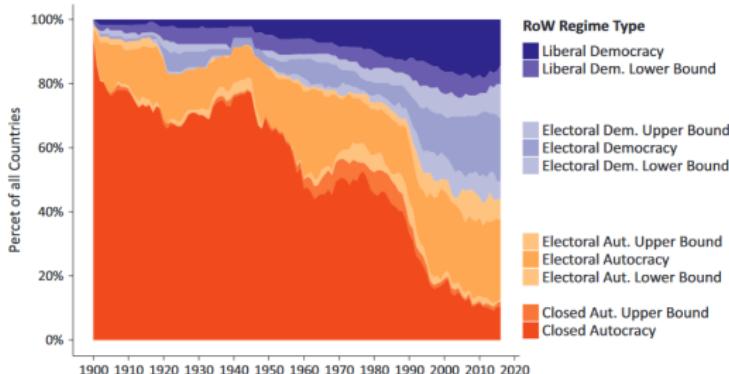


Figure: Regimes of the World 1900-2016 (Lührmann et al. 2018, p. 67)

Democracy is still a very popular regime type.

What's happening around us?

On the other hand...



Figure: Recent attempts on democratic institutions

But it has become threatened in recent years.

And how are people conceiving it? I



Figure: Majority of US citizens believe that democracy is under threat (CBS News)

A majority of US citizens are aware of the threat.

And how are people conceiving it? II

The root of the problem is, however, very differently defined.

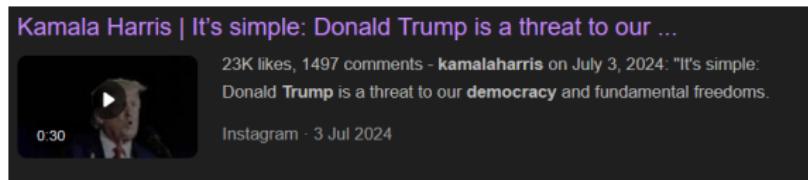


Figure: Harris' on the Risk for Democracy under Trump (Link)

And how are people conceiving it? III



Figure: 'Is Trump a Threat to Democracy?' asked to MAGA-Supporters (Link)

And how are people conceiving it? IV

...and while many share the perception, some wish for a different regime

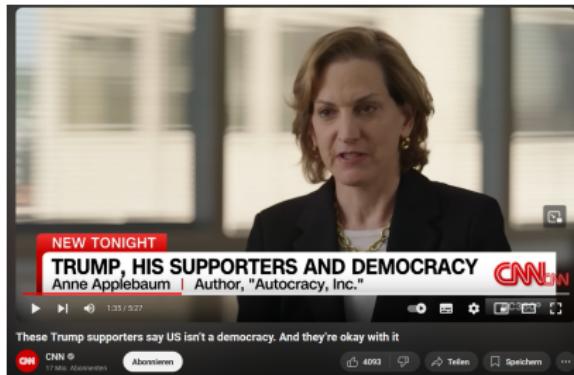


Figure: Is America a Democracy? (Link)

What will help us to understand the current situation?

- Democracy is not a static concept, its conceptualization evolves
- Democratic quality is gradual, not dichotomous
- Challenges to democracy have different origins
- Democracies can be further developed

A working definition of democracy

- dichotomous vs. gradual definitions
- minimalist vs. maximalist definitions
- electoral vs. liberal democracies
- tensions between democratic principles, like freedom vs. equality

An Insight into (some) Challenges to Democracy

After we have established some common understanding of how democracy is defined and how it has evolved, we will look at potential causes for democratic backsliding

- challenges from within:
 - supply side: for example, far-right actors
 - demand side: affective polarization, eroding norms
- challenges from the outside: global crises (like climate change)

Strengthening democracy

Several possible approaches

- militant democracy (cf. Svenja Ahlhaus' seminar on 'Political Regression and Militant Democracy')
- strengthening institutions
- bolstering support for democracy (e.g., better access to more meaningful political participation)

To prepare for next week... I

- Reading of the syllabus
 - Is there anything missing?
 - Do you have additional literature suggestions?
 - Do you have any further questions about the seminar requirements?

To prepare for next week... II

- Readings:

- Merkel, W. (2004). Embedded and defective democracies. *Democratization*, 11(5), 33–58.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340412331304598>
- Munck, G. L. (2016). What is democracy? A reconceptualization of the quality of democracy. *Democratization*, 23(1), 1–26.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2014.918104>

Optional: Sartori, G. (1970). Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics*. *American Political Science Review*, 64(4), 1033–1053. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1958356>

Thank you for your attention!
Any further questions?

Literature I

Lührmann, A., Tannenberg, M., & Lindberg, S. I. (2018). Regimes of the World (RoW): Opening New Avenues for the Comparative Study of Political Regimes. *Politics and Governance*, 6(1), 60–77.

<https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v6i1.1214>

Merkel, W. (2004). Embedded and defective democracies. *Democratization*, 11(5), 33–58.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340412331304598>

Munck, G. L. (2016). What is democracy? A reconceptualization of the quality of democracy. *Democratization*, 23(1), 1–26.

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Sartori, G. (1970). Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics*. *American Political Science Review*, 64(4), 1033–1053.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/1958356>

Literature II

Stahlberg, D., & Sczesny, S. (2001). Effekte des generischen Maskulinums und alternativer Sprachformen auf den gedanklichen Einbezug von Frauen. *Psychologische Rundschau*, 52(3), 131–140.

<https://doi.org/10.1026/0033-3042.52.3.131>

Vervecken, D., Hannover, B., & Wolter, I. (2013). Changing (S)expectations: How gender fair job descriptions impact children's perceptions and interest regarding traditionally male occupations. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 82(3), 208–220. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2013.01.008>