

Introduction to Comparative Politics

POL 102 | Fall 2027 | Department of Political Science

Instructor: Clemente T. Sánchez

Class Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 PM - 3:20 PM | Location TBD

Recitation Time: Fridays (Various times—please attend your registered section) | Locations TBD

Office Hours: Thursdays 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (or by appointment) | E53-418

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1 Course Description

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of the comparative study of politics as a distinctive subfield within political science. Some questions we will address include: What is the relationship between democracy and economic development? How does ethnic diversity affect the provision of public services? Why do states vary in their capacity to monopolize violence? During the semester, we will trace the origins of the subfield to the post-WWII United States and understand how comparative politics has evolved since then. We will also review contemporary examples of scholarship in the subfield to understand some current methodological strategies. This course is aimed at **both political science majors and students without prior exposure to political science**.

By the end of this course, you will be able to identify potential explanations for why some states are more stable than others, why some countries have democratized, and how different institutions shape electoral competition across the world. Moreover, by studying other countries, you will also have gained deeper insight into what makes the United States different from, but at the same time similar to, other advanced democracies. Learning about politics in other contexts will make you a more informed citizen, a better consumer of news and political messaging, and a more critical observer of your own democracy. In your own professional life, you might be asked to weigh in on puzzling social phenomena occurring in contexts with institutions different from ours. By being able to analyze politics from a comparative perspective, you will be able to provide the necessary context to your coworkers, bosses, employees, clients, or students. In addition, the skills that you will exercise throughout this course, such as analyzing current events through theoretical lenses and engaging in public speaking, will be of use well after you have completed the course.

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites for this course.

Course Materials: All course material will be available on Canvas.

1.1 Learning Objectives

By the end of this term, students will be able to:

- Explain what distinguishes comparative politics from other subfields within political science.
- Apply the methodological and theoretical tools of comparative politics to analyze contemporary social phenomena.
- Identify the foundational work in comparative politics.
- Describe how the field has changed in the last three decades.

1.2 What to Expect

This class will have two components. First, during lectures, I will guide the class through key arguments and traditions within comparative politics. While the readings will be referenced, the main point of the lectures will not be to summarize them, but rather to contextualize them and provide the necessary background information to understand their significance. Although student participation during lecture time is not only appreciated but also encouraged, the size of the class and its introductory nature prevent us from implementing a seminar-style discussion approach. Still, lectures will very much involve active learning. While each week will have both required and optional readings, **students are only expected to be familiar with the former**. Some optional readings might be referenced by the instructor or the TAs, but, as the label indicates, they are truly optional.

Second, students will be divided into smaller groups and assigned to recitations. These will rely more actively on discussion and debate. The teaching assistants will run most recitations in a seminar style, and you will be expected to have done the readings in advance and come prepared for in-depth discussion as a group. Moreover, as the schedule notes, some of these recitations will revolve around specific exercises, such as the mock election week. For this reason, as the guidelines state, participation is not only expected but required. The combination of lecture time, during which I will provide the necessary scaffolding to understand the readings, and seminar-style recitations, where you will discuss arguments and methods in depth, is intended to maximize learning during the course. Consistent with the intended learning outcomes of the course, some of the readings with which we will engage this semester can be a little “antiquated” (I prefer to call them “classics”). Nevertheless, much like you need historical context to understand Shakespeare or Homer, so too do you need it to understand the significance of what was being published within comparative politics in the 1960s and 1970s.

2 Course Expectations and Policies

2.1 Attendance and Participation

I expect that students will attend lectures and recitations. If you cannot make it to one session, please reach out in advance. Additionally, I expect students to take an active role during class time. As stated in the assessment section below, part of your grade will be based on attendance and participation. The reason for this policy is that in-person participation from students is fundamental for this class to work. Both lectures and recitations include substantive portions that will be debate-

and discussion-based, and without the involvement from everyone in the classroom, the intended learning outcomes will not be achieved. I believe every student has something valuable to say, and when voices are silent, the whole class misses out on a richer learning experience. Furthermore, class participation is a form of public speaking. During your professional career, you will be asked to speak in front of others. Use this class as a safe space to practice this skill.

2.2 Collaboration

Students are encouraged to study together and strategize on the best ways to approach the readings as a group. Sometimes the best way of understanding a confusing argument or paper is by asking your friends or classmates about it. However, other than the case studies, the assignments in this class are individual. Therefore, I ask students to try to limit their discussions on those individual assignments as much as possible. I am interested in your ideas and your knowledge of the literature, not someone else's. Please consult the academic integrity statement for further details.

2.3 Policy on the Use of Technology

No laptops, tablets, phones, or any other electronic devices will be allowed during class time. Exceptions to this policy can be granted based on needed academic accommodations from Student Disability Services. I apologize in advance if this conflicts with your note-taking systems, but research has shown that students learn much better when they write things down using pen and paper. It will feel weird at first, but trust me: over time you will find the absence of a machine built to draw your attention freeing. While we all use laptops and tablets for our work and our daily routines, I aim to create a space where our attention can be focused on class material. If you want to have the readings with you, print them or the notes you took while reading. Turn off your electronics when you come to class and enjoy an hour and a half without competing pulls on your attention.

2.4 Late Assignments and Rescheduling Oral Exam

The deadlines for assignments have been chosen for pedagogical purposes: each assignment helps you to develop skills and engage with content from particular units of the course. Several of the assignments are also timed so that you come to recitation prepared for in-person discussion. For these reasons, you should aim to complete all assignments on time; late assignments can also pile up, making the class more stressful for you. I understand, however, that this course is not the only thing on your plate. If you need an extension on one of your assignments, you can automatically get one for 24 hours by filling out [this form]. I will grant one no-questions-asked extension per semester. For other extensions, or if you need to reschedule the oral exam, please talk to me. Unexcused late assignments automatically lose one-third of a letter grade (A to A-, etc.) for each day late.

2.5 AI Policy

The use of AI tools is ONLY permitted for light editorial tasks like proofreading and formatting citations. They may not be used for generative tasks like writing, coming up with arguments, or organizing your text. When you use AI tools, you must cite their use in a separate statement and specify how you have used them. Moreover, I reserve the right to request an impromptu meeting after class to discuss an assignment in greater detail if I suspect that there has been an inappropriate use of artificial intelligence or other breaches of course policies.

Becoming a thoughtful and effective political scientist requires reflecting on your past experiences and applying research-based principles and practices to solve new and often messy problems. Learning and growth require productive struggle, and AI, by removing the struggle, stunts your growth. This also applies to struggling with old papers and essays. These are rites of passage in an intro course, and I do not want you to be robbed of them. AI's responses are not your answers, and therefore they do not reflect your understanding. Delegating the hard work of learning will not allow you to grow into an independent and savvy thinker, and submitting AI output as your own is a clear breach of academic integrity. Yes, staring at a blank page can be daunting. But it can also be freeing. Every single "classic" piece that we will be reviewing this semester started as a blank page. Embrace it and exercise your critical thinking skills.

2.6 Inclusivity Statement

MIT values an inclusive environment, and so do I. I hope to foster a sense of community in this classroom and consider this to be a place where you will be treated with respect. I welcome individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations, and any other visible and non-visible differences.

All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. The study of politics can sometimes be polarizing. I do not shy away from disagreement; on the contrary, I encourage it. However, all arguments and discussions in this class must be conducted in an environment of mutual respect. I will make myself personally responsible for enforcing this principle. If you believe this standard is not being upheld, please feel free to speak with me or send me an email.

2.7 Academic Integrity Statement

In this course, I will hold you to the high standard of academic integrity expected of all students at the Institute. I do this for two reasons. First, it is essential to the learning process that you are the one doing the work. I have structured the assignments in this course to enable you to gain a mastery of the course material. Failing to do the work yourself will result in a lesser understanding of the content, and therefore a less meaningful education for you. Second, it is important that there be a level playing field for all students in this course and at the Institute so that the rigor and integrity of the Institute's educational program are maintained.

Violating the **Academic Integrity** policy in any way (e.g., plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, cheating, etc.) will result in official Institute sanction. Possible sanctions include receiving a failing grade on the assignment or exam, being assigned a failing grade in the course, having a formal notation of disciplinary action placed on your MIT record, suspension from the Institute,

and expulsion from the Institute for very serious cases. Please review the [Academic Integrity](#) policy and related resources (e.g., working under pressure; how to paraphrase, summarize, and quote; etc.) and contact me if you have any questions about appropriate citation methods, the degree of collaboration that is permitted, or anything else related to the Academic Integrity of this course.

2.8 Special Accommodations and Disability Support Services

If you need disability-related accommodations, I encourage you to meet with me early in the semester, either after class or during office hours. If you have not yet been approved for accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services at sds-all@mit.edu. I look forward to working with you to assist with your approved accommodations.

2.9 Mental Health

As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating, and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may impact your ability to attend class, concentrate, complete work, take an exam, or participate in daily activities.

If you feel like you are struggling, I encourage you to reach out to [Student Support Services](#) (S3). You may consult with them in person in Building 5-104 or at 617-253-4861. For urgent or after-hours concerns, please contact MIT Police.

3 Grading and Assessment

Class participation and active intellectual engagement are paramount. To that end, this course combines different types of assignments that are meant to ensure that students engage with the assigned readings. Additionally, I include periodic assessments of progress at key moments throughout the semester. The table below summarizes each of the assessment instruments that will be utilized in this course, as well as their relative weights for your final grade and their due dates.

Component	Weight	Deadline	Description
Participation	20%	-	Attendance and participation across lectures and recitations.
Case study I	10%	9/24	Three-page case study of state failure.
Mid-term report	20%	10/14	Six-page report on two contrasting cases of breakdown of democracy.
Case study II	10%	11/19	Three-page case study of institutional design.
Final report	20%	12/3	Six-page report on a contemporary event or peer review of a recent paper.
Oral exam	20%	12/14	Oral exam covering the contents from Units II-V.

3.1 Case study I

Your first assessment this semester will be a three-page case study of state failure. I will provide a list of instances of civil wars or other such cases that students can study. After students sign up for them, I will group them into pairs. With your classmate, your main objective will be to leverage the main concepts from Unit II to explain some of the main reasons for this case of state failure. You will be asked to make reference to specific arguments made by the authors that we have engaged with in this section.

This assignment aligns with the main intended learning outcomes of Unit II and the course. By leveraging the concepts of state formation, strength, and failure to explain an instance of civil war or armed conflict, students learn to apply the methodological and theoretical tools of the discipline to understand contemporary phenomena. Moreover, this assignment also encourages students to review the readings and familiarize themselves with foundational works in comparative politics. Your case study will be graded based on a rubric that will be posted on Canvas two weeks before the assignment is due.

3.2 Mid-term report

Your mid-term assignment will be to draft a six-page report where you will be applying some of the skills that you have exercised in Units I-III to understand two historical cases of the breakdown of democracy. I will post a list of potential cases that students can choose from, alongside a few recommended readings that provide more information about these cases. Students will be asked to choose one case from Africa and one case from Latin America. You have two options when tackling this assignment.

- a. As the Scholar, your task is to write an essay on the latent and proximate causes of democratic breakdown in these two historical cases. In your conclusion, you should reflect on what these cases tell us about the nature of democracy itself, as well as the need to prioritize minimalist or maximalist definitions of democracy. You should write your essay addressing an audience of comparative politics scholars.
- b. As the Policymaker, your task is to write an executive report on the latent and proximate causes of democratic breakdown in these two historical cases. In your conclusion, you should provide policy recommendations for current decision-makers on potential measures that could be implemented to reduce the risk of democratic breakdown in the future. You should write your report addressing an audience of stakeholders and interested decision-makers.

The mid-term report is aligned with the intended learning outcomes of Units I-III, as well as those of the course. By examining two distinct cases, students are exposed to one of the main differentiators between comparative politics and the rest of the discipline. Furthermore, in both the Scholar and Policymaker modes, students are expected to rely on foundational works in the discipline to examine democratic breakdown in these contexts. At the same time, by examining the background conditions that lead to democratic failure, students are encouraged to assess whether their cases fit within theories of modernization and the economic foundations of democracy. Finally, by engaging in either an academic-first or policy-first exercise, students are exposed to tasks that they might have to carry out once they graduate. Your report will be graded based on a rubric that will be posted on Canvas two weeks before the assignment is due.

3.3 Case study II

Your third assessment this semester will be a three-page case study of institutional design. Much like the previous case study, I will post a list of potential countries that students can study. After students sign up, I will group them into pairs. With your classmate, your objective is to provide an overview of the institutions of this country based on the frameworks that we will review in Units IV-V (up to Session 16). You will contrast the institutions of this country with those of the United States.

This assignment aligns with the main intended learning outcomes of Units IV-V and the course. By leveraging frameworks of comparative institutional design, students learn to apply the methodological and theoretical tools of the discipline to understand differences across countries. Additionally, this assignment encourages students to review the readings and familiarize themselves with foundational works in comparative politics. Your case study will be graded based on a rubric that will be posted on Canvas two weeks before the assignment is due.

3.4 Final report

Your final written assignment will be to draft a six-page report where you will be applying some of the skills that you have exercised throughout Unit VI and this entire course. As with the mid-term report, you have two options when tackling this assignment.

- a. As the Scholar, your goal is to write a peer review report based on one of the readings from this unit. In it, you will address the editor of the fictitious Journal of Contemporary Comparative Politics (JCCP) and suggest acceptance or rejection of the paper based on how novel the argument is compared to the foundational works that we reviewed earlier in the semester. You will be writing in character as an anonymous reviewer and will be expected to be polite and constructive in your criticisms.
- b. As the Policymaker, your goal is to write a report on a recent election or major event in a country of your choosing. You will be asked to rely on the concepts and theoretical framework of one of the readings from this unit to go beyond a normal journalistic account and provide potential explanations for what happened. You will be writing in character as a World Bank analyst addressing stakeholders from that country and will thus be expected to be neutral and unbiased in your assessment.

This assignment is directly connected with the main intended learning outcomes of the course. By providing a critical-yet-constructive assessment of a recent paper in light of foundational works, you will be displaying your knowledge of comparative politics as a distinct subfield within political science. Alternatively, by analyzing events using concepts and theories of recent research, you will be analyzing social phenomena through the lens of comparative politics. Your report will be graded based on a rubric that will be posted on Canvas two weeks before the assignment is due.

3.5 Oral exam

The purpose of the oral exam is not to induce stress, but rather to have an instance where I can assess each individual student and how far they have come in the semester. I will try to make this as close to a relaxed conversation as possible, and I will be joined by your TAs to help facilitate the

conversation. There will be no other students present. The oral exam will cover the main themes of Units II-V. I will not ask specific details about a particular reading. Rather, questions will be broad enough to allow you to formulate your own response and allow space for follow-ups. For example, one question could be *What are some advantages and disadvantages of presidentialism when compared to other forms of government?* In that particular case, my priority is not whether you cite specific arguments made by Linz. What I care about is that you demonstrate that you can utilize the concepts and theories that we have discussed throughout the semester to engage with the question. Moreover, I will allow students to pass on one question without any penalty.

You may be wondering: What is the point of an oral exam? Here is my reasoning for including this as the final assessment for the class. An oral exam such as this allows me to spend time with each individual student and assess their progress without having to rely on any intermediaries. In that way, I can assess not only the performance of students, but also my own performance as an educator and the instructor of this course. Furthermore, public speaking is like a muscle: it has to be exercised. Though an instance such as this might seem stressful, it is important to be able to articulate complex ideas in a dynamic, real-time environment for your professional and intellectual life after this course. Finally, by asking students to utilize the theoretical tools developed this semester to engage with broad questions, this assignment directly aligns with one of the main intended learning outcomes of the class. Your performance in the oral exam will be graded based on a rubric that will be posted on Canvas a week before the first exam dates.

4 Course Schedule

4.1 What is Comparative Politics?

This unit will introduce you to what comparative politics is, where it comes from, and how it operates. Aside from describing the main themes of this class and logistics, we will discuss the origins of the subdiscipline and its foundational empirical contribution: the comparative method.

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- *Identify the origins of comparative politics in the context of the post-war United States foreign policy.*
- *Describe the distinctiveness of the comparative method as a tool to identify causal relationships.*

Session 1 - Introduction and overview (Sept 7)

We will go over the expectations, discuss some logistical details, and present some common themes of the course.

- No required reading.

Additional optional readings

- If this is your first political science course, I recommend you read Amelia Hoover Green's excellent [How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps](#), which provides tips on how to approach some of the readings in this class.

Session 2 - The emergence of a new discipline (Sept 9)

We begin by reviewing a report from **Loewenstein** to the American Political Science Association in which the nature of a nascent area within political science, what was then referred to as ‘comparative government,’ is described. This historical document serves to help us comprehend what the original purpose of comparative politics was: to understand foreign constitutions and institutional arrangements to advance American foreign policy objectives. Then, we move to **Lijphart**’s description of the comparative method, which for decades was the empirical workhorse of comparative politics. This session, as a result, provides a picture of the means and ends of comparative politics as it was first conceived.

- Loewenstein, K. (1944). “Report on the research panel on comparative government.” *American Political Science Review*, 38(3), 540-548.
- Lijphart, A. (1971). “Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method.” *American Political Science Review*, 65(3), 682-693.

Additional optional readings

- Laitin, D. (2000). “Comparative Politics: The State of the Subdiscipline.” *APSA Meeting*.

No recitation this week

4.2 State Formation, Failure, and Administration

This unit will unpack the primary object of study of comparative politics: the state. What is it? Does it even exist as an independent institution? Why are some states strong, while other states are weak? Aside from addressing these questions, we will address the fact that violence and civil wars persist even in contexts where states are present. Finally, we will also be discussing what makes up the ‘stuff’ of the state: bureaucracies and bureaucrats. We will tackle the ideal form of bureaucracy, and how oftentimes reality falls short of that ideal.

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- *Define what states are, and identify common explanations of why some states are stronger than others.*
- *Examine violence in urban and rural peripheries across the developing world as a case of state failure.*

Session 3 - What are states and where do they come from? (Sept 14)

Much of what we do in comparative politics involves studying and comparing different states. In order to do that, we need to first understand what states are, and whether they are independent of other social structures like class. We rely on the works of two well-known political sociologists for this purpose. **Weber** provides us with the classic definition of the state as a legitimate monopoly of violence within a territory. **Skocpol** discusses the degree to which this institution is autonomous or dependent on other forces.

- [Excerpts] Weber, M. (1919). “Politics as Vocation”. From Owen, David, Tracy B. Strong, and Max Weber. *The vocation lectures*. Hackett, Indianapolis.

- Skocpol, T. (1979). “The Potential Autonomy of the State” from *States and Social Revolutions*, pp. 24-33

Additional optional readings

- Mann, M. (1984). “The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results.” *European Journal of Sociology* 25(2): 185–213.
- Hanson, J. K. & Sigman, R. (2021). “Leviathan’s latent dimensions: measuring state capacity for comparative political research.” *The Journal of Politics*, 83(4).

Session 4 - Strong states, weak states (Sept 16)

Weber defines the state as an organization that monopolizes violence within a territory. Yet many states fail to meet that standard. Why are some states stronger than others? This session presents the canonical explanation for state building, which revolves around **Tilly**’s bellicist hypothesis: war made the state, and the state made war. This theory emerges from the historical cases of Western Europe. How well does it travel outside of it? **Herbst** provides a description of what happens when states emerge from a top-down process of colonization, rather than a horizontal competition for territory and revenue.

- Tilly, C. (1985). “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime.” In *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge University Press: 169–87
- Herbst, J. (2000). *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press: pp. 3-31.

Additional optional readings

- Skowronek, S. (1982). *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877–1920*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Introduction.
- Mazzuca, S. (2021). *Latecomer State Formation*. Yale University Press. Pp. 1-47.

Recitation 1: State formation in Europe and abroad (Sept 17)

- Pick a country or a region outside Europe and do some cursory research on the development of the state.
- Discussion during recitation will revolve around whether the bellicist hypothesis is useful to understand state building outside of Europe.

Session 5 - How political violence and conflict persist (Sept 21)

Unfortunately, civil wars have been a constant in the last two centuries. As a direct challenge to the monopoly of violence of a state, internecine conflicts tell us a lot about legitimate and illegitimate domination. **Gurr** provides a traditional account of civil war as driven by grievances and the idea of ‘relative deprivation.’ Yet, as **Fearon and Laitin** explain, many contexts with preexisting grievances do not turn into civil wars. These two readings illustrate a broader debate within the discipline about whether civil wars are caused by deeply held antagonisms, or whether they are in reality the product of opportunistic players looking to improve their position.

- Gurr, T. R. (1970). "Relative Deprivation and the Impetus to Violence." In *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton University Press.
- Fearon, J. D., & Laitin, D. D. (2003). "Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war." *American Political Science Review*, 97(1), 75-90.

Additional optional readings

- Kalyvas, S. (2001). "'New' and 'Old' Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?" *World Politics* 54: 99-118.
- Collier, P. & Hoeffler, A. (2004). "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56(4): 563-595.

Session 6 - Weberian and non-Weberian bureaucracies (Sept 23)

At the end of the day, states are made up of people. And modern states are organized as bureaucracies: formalized organizations of individuals whose primary occupation is 'government.' **Weber** again provides us with the canonical conceptualization of what a bureaucracy is and what bureaucrats do. **O'Donnell**, by contrast, provides us with a description of what the state and bureaucracy often looks like in practice. Pay special attention to his conceptualization of 'brown areas' as places where the state is mostly absent, even in countries with strong national states.

- [Excerpts] Weber, M. (1921). "Bureaucracy" in *Economy and Society*. Berkeley: UC Press: 956-1005.
- O'Donnell, G. (1993). "On the state, democratization and some conceptual problems: A Latin American view with glances at some post-communist countries," *World Development*, vol. 21(8), pages 1355-1369

Additional optional readings

- Evans, P., & Rauch, J. E. (1999). "Bureaucracy and growth: A cross-national analysis of the effects of 'Weberian' state structures on economic growth." *American Sociological Review*, 64(5), 748-765.
- Ang, Y. Y. (2017). "Do Weberian bureaucracies lead to markets or vice versa? A coevolutionary approach to development." In *State Building in the Developing World*, Miguel Centeno, Atul Kohli and Deborah Yashar, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Recitation 2: A case study of state failure (Sept 24)

- *Your three-page case study is due before recitation.*
- Discussion in recitation will revolve around your findings and contrasts across cases.

4.3 Modernization and Democratization

Democracy and democratic institutions make up a substantial amount of what comparative politics scholars have studied and study to this day. What is democracy? Where does it come from? How does it fail? This unit will go over some common answers to these questions. We will discuss what differentiates democracies from autocracies, explore the connection between economic growth and democracy, and analyze the transitions from autocracy to democracy and vice-versa.

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- *Describe common definitions of democracy and categorize countries into democracies and autocracies.*
- *Evaluate the directionality of the relationship between economic performance and democracy.*

Session 7 - Types of political regimes (Sept 28)

Minimalist conceptions of democracy tend to stress the role of competitive elections as the defining feature of democracy, while maximalist conceptions of democracy stress the importance of social rights and civic culture. In *Polyarchy*, **Dahl** provides a middle ground and in doing so defined the mainstream position within comparative politics. However, it would be a mistake to understand autocracy as simply the absence of democracy. For this, **Linz**'s distinction between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes is useful, and provides us with the analytical tools to understand contemporary autocracies.

- Dahl, R. (1971). "Democratization and Public Opposition." In *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale, pp. 1-16.
- Linz, J. J. (1975). Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. In the *Handbook of Political Science*.

Additional optional readings

- Schmitter, P. C., & Karl, T. L. (1991). "What democracy is... and is not." *Journal of Democracy*, 2(3), 75-88.
- Schumpeter, J. (2003). *Capitalism, socialism, and democracy*. Extract from the Democracy Sourcebook.

Session 8 - Modernization theory and its critics (Sept 30)

At its core, modernization theory states that the changes brought about by urbanization and growing economic complexity lead to shifts in social structure that are conducive to democracy. Here, **Lipset** presents us with the canonical, slightly optimistic view that economic change leads to democratization. In contrast, **Huntington** provides a useful counterargument in that economic and social change lead to instability, and, in the absence of strong political structures to channel this instability, this can lead to breakdown. Who is right?

- Lipset, S. M. (1981) "Economic Development and Democracy," in *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- [Excerpts] Huntington, S. P. (1968). "Political Order and Political Decay," in *Political Order in Changing Societies*. Yale University Press.

Additional optional readings

- Wolfinger, R. (1972). "Why Political Machines Have Not Withered Away and Other Revisionist Thoughts," *Journal of Politics*.
- Bates, R. (1974). "Ethnic Competition and Modernization in Contemporary Africa." *Comparative Political Studies*, pp. 457-84.

Recitation 3: Minimalist vs maximalist definitions of democracy (Oct 1)

- Discussion during recitation will revolve around different definitions of democracy.
- Do you think that minimalist definitions are preferable? Or should we adopt maximalist definitions?

Session 9 - So, does growth lead to democracy? (Oct 5)

The debate between Lipset and Huntington occurred mostly in the realm of theory. What does the data say? Does growth actually cause democracy? The empirical debate between those who argued in the positive and those who argued in the negative lasted around ten years, and in many ways it is still ongoing. **Przeworski and Limongi** famously argued for an “exogenous democratization” hypothesis, where the correlation between growth and democracy is a mere statistical artifact. In contrast, **Boix and Stokes** criticize the former for their categorization of countries, and argue that more flexible categorizations show evidence of “endogenous democratization,” one in which growth does lead to democracy.

- Przeworski, A. and Limongi, F. (1997) “Modernization: Theories and Facts.” *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 2, pp. 155-183
- Boix, C. and Stokes, S. (2003) “Endogenous Democratization.” *World Politics*, Vol. 55, No. 4, pp. 517- 549.

Additional optional readings

- Ross, M. L. (2001). “Does oil hinder democracy?” *World politics*, 53(3), 325-361.
- Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S., Robinson, J. A., & Yared, P. (2008). “Income and democracy.” *American economic review*, 98(3), 808-842.

Session 10 - Theories of regime transitions (Oct 7)

The readings in this unit have thus far focused on macro conditions for the emergence and survival of democracies. Yet the actors that bring about democratization and autocratization are curiously absent. Not anymore. **Karl** presents a summary of the ‘transitology’ literature that emerged in the 1980s and 90s. In her account, the balance of power between reformers, hardliners, civil society, and opposition parties ends up defining the resulting transition and democratic regime. Conversely, **Stepan** presents a historical case of the reversal from democracy to autocracy. His case study reveals the importance of contingency and political leadership in key defining moments that lead to the breakdown of a democracy. While these readings focus mostly on Latin American cases, they are useful for understanding regime transitions across the world.

- Karl, T. L. (1990). “Dilemmas of democratization in Latin America.” *Comparative Politics*, 23(1), 1-21.
- Stepan, A. (1978). “Political Leadership and Regime Breakdown: Brazil,” in Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Latin America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, pp. 111-137.

Additional optional readings

- Huntington, S. P. (1991). "Democracy's third wave." *Journal of Democracy*, 2(2), 12-34.
- Bratton, M., & Van de Walle, N. (1994). "Neopatrimonial regimes and political transitions in Africa." *World politics*, 46(4), 453-489.

Recitation 4: Democratic breakdown in Latin America vs Africa (Oct 8)

- Choose two cases of democratic breakdown, one from Latin America and one from Africa. Do some preliminary research on the similarities and differences between these two cases.
- Use this opportunity to select cases that you might be interested in exploring for your mid-term report.
- Discussion in recitation will revolve around macro vs immediate causes of democratic breakdown.

No class on Oct 12 (Fall break)

Six-page mid-term report is due (Oct 14)

No recitation this week

4.4 Comparative Institutional Design

Democracies vary widely in how they are organized. This unit deals with many typologies: of forms of government, of territorial organization, and of legislatures and judiciaries. Across all of these forms of organization, however, there is one constant: how we choose to organize our institutions deeply impacts our politics. These choices affect the frictions (or absence thereof) between branches of government, shape how easy it is to reform the law, and define the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats. There are no easy choices.

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- Categorize democracies according to their institutional forms.
- Appraise different institutional choices and form an opinion about them based on their effects.

Session 11 - Horizontal and vertical distribution of power (Oct 19)

The United States is a federal and presidentialist democracy. But most democracies are not. This session will be spent understanding variation along these two axes. First, **Shugart** provides an overview of the different forms of government: presidentialism, parliamentarism, and semi-presidentialism. These forms of government vary in the degree to which they concentrate power in ways that are not immediately obvious. Second, **Stepan** provides a description of the different types of federalism, which themselves differ from centralized political systems. In turn, horizontal and vertical forms of distributing power interact in often surprising ways.

- Shugart, M. S. (2006). "Comparative executive-legislative relations." *The Oxford handbook of political institutions*, 344-365.
- Stepan, A. C. (1999). "Federalism and democracy: Beyond the US model." *Journal of Democracy*, 10(4), 19-34.

Additional optional readings

- Lijphart, A. (1999). "Executive-Legislative Relations: Patterns of Dominance and Balance of Power." In *Patterns of democracy: Government forms and performance in thirty-six countries*. Yale University Press.
- O'Donnell, G. A. (1998). "Horizontal accountability in new democracies." *Journal of Democracy*, 9(3), 112-126.

Session 12 - Presidentialism: good or bad? (Oct 21)

Essays in favor of and against presidentialism have been written since *The Federalist Papers*. We will go over a somewhat recent incarnation that revolved around the question of whether presidentialism leads to the breakdown of democracy or not. **Linz** presents a strong case that the lack of 'safety valves' in presidential democracies makes them particularly susceptible to inter-branch conflicts, which can devolve into regime crises. However, **Mainwaring and Shugart** argue that this need not be the case, and that Linz's critique of presidentialism conflates it with other characteristics of presidential democracies that are not necessarily a product of this particular institutional choice.

- Linz, J. J. (1990). "The perils of presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy*, 1(1), 51-69.
- Mainwaring, S., & Shugart, M. S. (1997). "Juan Linz, presidentialism, and democracy: a critical appraisal." *Comparative Politics*, 449-471.

Additional optional readings

- Horowitz, D. L. (1990). "Presidents vs. parliaments: Comparing democratic systems." *Journal of Democracy*, 1(4), 73-79.
- Linz, J. J. (1990). "Presidents vs. parliaments: The virtues of parliamentarism." *Journal of Democracy*, 1(4), 84-91.

Recitation 5: Who won? (Oct 22)

- Recitation will be organized as a debate session around the question of whether the United States should transition into a parliamentary democracy or not.

Session 13 - Legislators and judges (Oct 26)

While the Executive might seem like the more exciting of the three branches of government, the other two do not lack for variation. **Lijphart** goes over the wide variation in ways of organizing the legislative branch. The most common distinction, that between unicameral and bicameral Congresses, can be consequential in terms of speeding up, or slowing down, the pace of legislation. On the other hand, **Hirschl** describes the growing role of courts in politics, which had been a topic often ignored by traditional comparative politics scholars.

- Lijphart, A. (1999). "Parliaments and Congresses: Concentration Versus Division of Legislative Power." In *Patterns of Democracy* (pp. 187-203). Yale University Press.
- Hirschl, R. (2004). "Introduction." In *Towards Juristocracy: The Origins and Consequences of the New Constitutionalism* (pp. 1-16). Harvard University Press.

Additional optional readings

- Tsebelis, G. (2002). *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*. Princeton University Press. Introduction.
- Helmke, G. (2002). "The logic of strategic defection: Court-executive relations in Argentina under dictatorship and democracy." *American Political Science Review*, 96(2), 291-303.

Session 14 - Politicians or bureaucrats: who wins? (Oct 28)

Aside from the three traditional branches of government, contemporary polities often have a so-called 'fourth branch' that is made up of unelected bureaucrats who are in charge of the actual implementation of policies. Traditional models of political science conceptualize politicians as 'principals' and bureaucrats as 'agents' tasked with following the former's orders. However, oftentimes the interests of these two actors are not aligned. **Geddes** presents an overview of this dilemma from the principal's perspective. Why would politicians invest in strengthening the effectiveness and autonomy of the administrative apparatus? In turn, **Brehm and Gates** present the dilemma from the agents' point of view. How do bureaucrats react to orders from politicians, who sometimes direct the former to do things that they don't want to do?

- Geddes, B. (1994). *Politician's dilemma: building state capacity in Latin America*. University of California Press. Chapter 1.
- Brehm, J. O., & Gates, S. (1997). *Working, shirking, and sabotage: Bureaucratic response to a democratic public*. University of Michigan Press. Chapter 1.

Additional optional readings

- McCubbins, M. D., & Schwartz, T. (1984). "Congressional oversight overlooked: Police patrols versus fire alarms." *American Journal of Political Science*, 165-179.
- Tandler, J. (1997). *Good Government in the Tropics*. United Kingdom: Johns Hopkins University Press. Pp. 1-20.

Recitation 6: Designing an ideal political system (Oct 29)

- Students will be divided into groups. The first half of the recitation will be spent designing their ideal political system based on the previous weeks.
- The second half of the recitation will be an assessment of how well that political system would address a potential crisis.

4.5 Elections, Parties, and Cleavages

Modern democracies are organized around elections and political parties. In principle, electoral systems provide the rules under which parties can dispute specific offices. However, in reality political actors shape the institutions that define democracy, often to their own advantage. This unit explores how and when this happens, as well as provides an overview of the different forms of organizing elections and party systems across democracies. Finally, we zero in on the main characters of democracy: voters. We first discuss why they support the parties they support, and how this is often shaped by electoral rules. Then, we examine why some individuals vote and others do not.

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- *Explain how electoral rules shape the number of parties and the behavior of voters.*
- *Assess to what degree institutions are themselves the product of actors seeking to maximize their position.*

Session 15 - Electoral systems (Nov 2):

Electoral rules structure the elections that define our representative democracies. While there are almost no two countries with the same exact set of electoral rules, these can be generally grouped into a few categories. As **Norris** explains, the most common electoral systems are proportional representation, first-past-the-post majoritarian systems, or mixed systems that combine elements of both. She further notes that these rules aim to maximize different desirable qualities, from representation to direct accountability. On the other hand, **Htun** examines how electoral rules affect the representation of voters beyond their political views. In this case, the author explores how different arrangements seek to reflect the demographic heterogeneity of a population in its elected representatives.

- Norris, P. (1997). "Choosing electoral systems: Proportional, majoritarian and mixed systems." *International Political Science Review*, 18(3), 297-312.
- Htun, M. (2004). "Is gender like ethnicity? The political representation of identity groups." *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(3), 439-458.

Additional optional readings

- Dunleavy, P., & Margetts, H. (1995). "Understanding the dynamics of electoral reform." *International Political Science Review*, 16(1), 9-29.
- Carey, J. M., & Shugart, M. S. (1995). "Incentives to cultivate a personal vote: A rank ordering of electoral formulas." *Electoral Studies*, 14(4), 417-439.

Session 16 - Parties and party systems (Nov 4)

What are political parties, and how do they interact with each other? Parties play an important role in structuring competition for elected office, yet what happens inside of them is not always clear. **Katz and Mair** present an overview of different types of parties, from the elite-driven parties of the 19th century to the mass parties of the 20th century. Then, **Sartori** presents an overview of the different party *systems* that exist across democracies. These can vary from just a few parties to dozens of them among the most fragmented systems.

- Katz, R. S., & Mair, P. (1995). "Changing models of party organization and party democracy: The emergence of the cartel party." *Party Politics*, 1(1), 5-28.
- Sartori, Giovanni. (1976). "A Typology of Party Systems" in *The West European Party System*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 316-349.

Additional optional readings

- Mainwaring, S. (1998). "Party systems in the third wave." *Journal of Democracy*, 9(3), 67-81.
- Kitschelt, H. (2006). "Movement parties." *Handbook of Party Politics*, 1, 278-290.

Recitation 7: Mock elections (Nov 5)

- Recitation will be dedicated to a mock election to compare results depending on the electoral rules.

Session 17 - How electoral systems affect parties and vice-versa (Nov 9)

Political parties and electoral systems interact to define one another. As **Duverger** famously argued, majoritarian electoral rules will tend to reduce the (local) number of parties, while higher magnitude districts and proportional representation will increase the number of parties. At the same time, as **Boix** points out, the causality does not run in just one direction. As the author explains, when traditional parties feel like newcomers will obtain a plurality of the votes, they can move to reform the electoral system to increase proportionality, thus ensuring their own survival in the long term.

- [Excerpts] Duverger, M. (1963). *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*. New York: John Wiley and Sons. Book II: Chapter 1, parts 1-2.
- Boix, C. (1999). "Setting the rules of the game: the choice of electoral systems in advanced democracies." *American Political Science Review*, 93(3), 609-624.

Additional optional readings

- Colomer, J. M. (2005). "It's parties that choose electoral systems (or, Duverger's laws upside down)." *Political Studies*, 53(1), 1-21.
- Clark, W. R., & Golder, M. (2006). "Rehabilitating Duverger's theory: Testing the mechanical and strategic modifying effects of electoral laws." *Comparative Political Studies*, 39(6), 679-708.

No class on Nov 11 (Veterans Day)

No recitation this week

Session 18 - Social cleavages and vote choice (Nov 16)

Parties and electoral systems do not exist in isolation. Rather, they exist within broader cleavages that structure divisions within society. As a result of massive social changes in the 19th and 20th centuries, the main cleavages shifted from cities vs rural areas to capital vs labor, and continue to change today. **Lipset and Rokkan** present the canonical account of how these changes in cleavage structures are reflected in the linkages between parties and voters. In turn, **Posner** examines contexts outside the developed world to understand why ethnic identities are activated in some contexts but not in others. As a result, both readings provide us with accounts of how these broader structures affect the political choices that voters make at the ballot box.

- Lipset, S. M., & Rokkan, S. (1967). "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments." In Peter Mair (ed.) *The West European Party System*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 91-111.
- Posner, D. N. (2004). "The political salience of cultural difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are allies in Zambia and adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review*, 98(4), 529-545.

Additional optional readings

- Inglehart, R. (1971). "The silent revolution in Europe: Intergenerational change in post-industrial societies." *American Political Science Review*, 65(4), 991-1017.
- Kitschelt, H. (2000). "Linkages between citizens and politicians in democratic polities." *Comparative Political Studies*, 33(6-7), 845-879.

Session 19 - When do people vote? (Nov 18)

Social cleavages and their activation can be useful to understand why groups of voters support specific parties. However, they are less useful at explaining why individuals decide to participate in elections to begin with. In this context, **Gerber et al.** examine why individuals vote if they are very unlikely to change the outcome of an election. The authors point to our deep desire to be liked and to conform to social norms as a crucial explanation for why some individuals vote and some do not. Moreover, they do so utilizing experimental tools that, while novel at the time, have become more common in the last decade, as the next unit will illustrate. In turn, **Kasara and Suryanarayan** move outside the developed world to examine whether the relationship between wealth and turnout holds across contexts, finding wide variation that reflects the different valuations of the act of voting.

- Gerber, A. S., Green, D. P., & Larimer, C. W. (2008). "Social pressure and voter turnout: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment." *American Political Science Review*, 102(1), 33-48.
- Kasara, K., & Suryanarayan, P. (2015). "When do the rich vote less than the poor and why? Explaining turnout inequality across the world." *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3), 613-627.

Additional optional readings

- Brady, H. E., Verba, S., & Schlozman, K. L. (1995). "Beyond SES: A resource model of political participation." *American Political Science Review*, 89(2), 271-294.
- Singh, S. (2011). "How Compelling is Compulsory Voting? A Multilevel Analysis of Turnout." *Political Behavior*, 33(1), 95-111.

Recitation 8: A case study of institutional design (Nov 19)

- *Your three-page case study is due before recitation.*
- Discussion in recitation will revolve around your findings and contrasts across cases.

4.6 Contemporary Topics in Comparative Politics

In this unit, we will review a few contemporary topics that are active in comparative politics today. Earlier in the semester we got a sense of the origins and development of the subfield over the last few decades, yet we lacked a clear picture of what comparative politics research looks like now. As the readings assigned in each of the weeks below demonstrate, the field has followed the rest of the discipline in its turn towards causal identification and individual-level analyses. Yet common threads can still be teased out when we look back at what we have learned in this semester. As you make your way through each of the papers, pay attention to how these recent works in the field differ from (or are similar to) the "classics" that we reviewed in the previous units. The specifics

of each empirical strategy are less relevant here; try to focus mostly on their main approach and their argument. Is comparative politics still defined by the comparative method?

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- Explain how recent works in comparative politics differ from the foundational works reviewed at the beginning of the semester.
- Utilize the concepts from contemporary works to analyze recent events across different contexts.

Session 20 - Clientelism, brokers, and the politics of poverty (Nov 23)

This semester has focused a lot on formal institutions and how they shape the incentives that actors have within a political system. We turn now to a prevalent informal institution across the developing world: clientelism. Comparativists usually understand this to mean a relationship whereby politicians obtain the conditional support of voters through transfers of goods. This can mean buying votes, but also political support more broadly. Traditional approaches to clientelism focused mostly on politicians as the main actors and how they either could or could not monitor voters—if you are curious about that debate, consult the additional readings. However, recent work has moved beyond this original debate. **Auerbach and Thachil**, for example, focus on the agency that voters have and how participating in clientelistic relationships can benefit them. By conceptualizing brokers as competing for the support of clients, we move beyond prior conceptualizations of these voters as ‘victims’ of local politicians. On the other hand, **Holland** provides us with a conceptualization of non-enforcement of the law as a good that politicians can dole out to supporters. In that sense, we expand our view of what clientelism can look like. As you read through these papers, consider how they challenge or support some of the discussions we had in the sessions on political behavior and the state as the monopoly of violence.

- Auerbach, A. M., & Thachil, T. (2018). “How clients select brokers: Competition and choice in India’s slums.” *American Political Science Review*, 112(4), 775-791.
- Holland, A. C. (2015). “The distributive politics of enforcement.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(2), 357-371.

Additional optional readings

- Stokes, S. C. (2005). “Perverse accountability: A formal model of machine politics with evidence from Argentina.” *American Political Science Review*, 99(3), 315-325.
- Nichter, S. (2008). “Vote buying or turnout buying? Machine politics and the secret ballot.” *American Political Science Review*, 102(1), 19-31.

No class on Nov 25 (Thanksgiving)

No recitation this week

Session 21 - Race and ethnicity from a comparative perspective (Nov 30)

Continuing with the role of informal institutions, we now turn to the role of race and ethnicity as a major animating force of politics. Here, **Kramon et al.** ask if migrating to cities reduces the salience of ethnicity, finding that while individuals become less attached to their own ethnic groups, they also become more distrusting of other groups. On the other hand, **Lee** addresses an ongoing

debate in the discipline around the relationship between ethnic diversity and public goods provision. While the canonical view predicts that increases in diversity lead to a decrease in the capacity to coordinate, the author argues that in reality this is due to a prevalence of weak groups in diverse settings. When group strength is isolated from diversity, the traditional relationship does not hold. As you read through these papers, consider how they relate to discussions in the modernization theory week, as well as what we discussed about the role of social cleavages.

- Kramon, E., Hamory, J., Baird, S., & Miguel, E. (2022). "Deepening or diminishing ethnic divides? The impact of urban migration in Kenya." *American Journal of Political Science*, 66(2), 365-384.
- Lee, A. (2018). "Ethnic diversity and ethnic discrimination: Explaining local public goods provision." *Comparative Political Studies*, 51(10), 1351-1383.

Additional optional readings

- Scacco, A., & Warren, S. S. (2018). "Can social contact reduce prejudice and discrimination? Evidence from a field experiment in Nigeria." *American Political Science Review*, 112(3), 654-677.
- Wang, Y. (2022). "Blood is thicker than water: Elite kinship networks and state building in imperial China." *American Political Science Review*, 116(3), 896-910.

Session 22 - The politics of environmental protection (Dec 2)

Climate change and environmental degradation are significant challenges in terms of public policy. But they are also profoundly *political* problems because they affect who gets what and when. The ability to engage in extractive activities can lead to a significant windfall in profits, which creates the incentives for politicians to control access to them. In line with that, **Sanford** finds that democratization and increases in electoral competition across the developing world have led to increases in deforestation, as politicians have an incentive to liberalize access to forests to keep a competitive edge. On the other hand, much like access is guided by political concerns, so is protection. In that regard, **Mangonnet et al.** find that national executives are much more likely to demarcate land as protected areas when local politicians belong to opposing parties. The resulting picture from these two papers is that of liberal extraction for your allies, and restrictive protection for your enemies. As you read through these papers, consider how they challenge the discussions we had in the sessions on democracy about the promises and perils of free and fair elections.

- Sanford, L. (2023). "Democratization, elections, and public goods: the evidence from deforestation." *American Journal of Political Science*, 67(3), 748-763.
- Mangonnet, J., Kopas, J., & Urpelainen, J. (2022). "Playing politics with environmental protection: the political economy of designating protected areas." *The Journal of Politics*, 84(3), 1453-1468.

Additional optional readings

- Xu, A. Z. (2025). "Bureaucratic packing in the Brazilian Amazon: how political competition drives deforestation." *The Journal of Politics*, 87(4), 1350-1364.

- Harding, R., Prem, M., Ruiz, N. A., & Vargas, D. L. (2024). "Buying a blind eye: Campaign donations, regulatory enforcement, and deforestation." *American Political Science Review*, 118(2), 635-653.

Recitation 9: Discussion of final report (Dec 3)

- *Your six-page final report is due before recitation.*
- Students will be divided based on whether they selected the Scholar or Policymaker option for their final report. Discussion in recitation will revolve around your assessment of the event or paper.

Session 23 - Understanding democratic backsliding at home (Dec 7)

Democratic breakdown nowadays rarely takes the form of military juntas and *coups d'état*. Rather, what we see is a much slower and piecemeal process of erosion by popularly elected leaders who chip away at horizontal controls of their own power. Moreover, these processes are not limited to developing countries. Rather, they now affect developed and underdeveloped democracies alike. For our final class, we are turning our attention to the United States to analyze domestic processes of democratic backsliding, leveraging comparative politics frameworks. Ironically, this turns the original impetus of comparative politics as described by Loewenstein on its head. **Graham and Svolik** provide us with the microfoundations to understand why violations of democratic norms are tolerated by voters. As the authors explain, very few voters are willing to prioritize their views on democracy over their policy positions, especially in polarized settings. Furthermore, **Goldstein** describes an instance of a populist leader seeking to increase their grip over the administrative state. By analyzing the behavior of individual bureaucrats in this setting, we bring stories of backsliding and resistance to it to a human level. As you read through these papers, consider how they speak to the debate over the advantages and disadvantages of presidentialism, as well as our discussions of the proper relation between politicians and bureaucrats.

- Graham, M. H., & Svolik, M. W. (2020). "Democracy in America? Partisanship, polarization, and the robustness of support for democracy in the United States." *American Political Science Review*, 114(2), 392-409.
- Goldstein, D. A. (2024). "Reversals of capacity: Norms, culture, and institutional disruption." *The Journal of Politics*, 86(2), 749-765.

Additional optional readings

- Kyriacou, A., & Trivin, P. (2026). "Populism and the rule of law: The importance of institutional legacies." *American Journal of Political Science*, 70(1), 104-119.
- Jacob, M. S. (2025). "Citizens as a democratic safeguard? The sequence of sanctioning elite attacks on democracy." *American Journal of Political Science*, 69(2), 455-470.

No class on Dec 9 (Reading period)

No recitation this week

Final exam (Dec 14)