Backsliding into Authoritarianism
(MA course)

Instructor

Radoslaw Markowski
University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Warsaw
rmarkowski@swps.edu.pl
& Department of Political Science, CEU
MarkowskiR@ceu.edu

Classes

Feb 13, Feb 20, Feb 23, Mar 6, Mar 9, Mar 13, Mar 20, Mar 23 (double class), Mar 27

Course Description

Introduction
The period of universal acceptance of democracy as the most preferred political regime type is certainly over. Several dozen countries in the world today are considered by major ranking institutions as not free. A new – a decade or so - phenomenon seems rightly to attract our attention. Increasing number of ‘partly free’ countries indicates that we witness decline in the quality of democracy in many countries or even its outright breakdowns. The course offers an in-depth look at these new phenomena and aims at evaluating the scope and intensity of these developments. It combines theoretical approaches with speculative-analytical works and purely empirical analyses. It starts with a brief overview of what constitutes democracies, its liberal type in particular, next we move to discuss its problems and challenges and then focus on non-democratic and authoritarian developments, its causes, manifestations and consequences. Detailed attention on populism, its multiple manifestations as well as the features of new authoritarianism is justified because of a clear (ab-)use of the former concept. We conclude with a very up-to-date debates about the quality of democracy and democratic citizens.

Learning outcomes
As a result of the course, students are expected to understand and be able to interpret on their own the complex developments of contemporary regime changes around the world. The reading assignments should allow students to generate rational, methodologically sound arguments, enabling them to openly discuss, compare and defend their ultimate opinions and knowledge about the phenomena covered. The class activity, in particular students’ presentations of the selected readings should train them in effective appearances in public. Finally, the ultimate choice of the topic and the final essay itself are expected to enhance students’ ability to correctly choose literature, deliberate methodological issues and also improve their ability to use abstract concepts in socio-political reality.
Course Requirements and Assessment

(1) Active class participation, which means: intellectual presence at the class meetings - comments, questions – 30% of the grade
(2) Class presentation of a selected topic(s), selected by students and sent to the instructor and course participants no later than 24 hours before class presentation – 30%
(3) Final paper; topic of the final paper to be agreed with the instructor at least three weeks prior to its final submission – 40%

Topics

Topic 01: Liberal democracy: its "travelling capacity" problems and challenges


Topic 02: Economic foundations of Democracies

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 15-87

Topic 03: Parties and Voters in the age of Populism

Akkermann, Agnes, Cas Mudde & Andrej Zaslove. 2014. ‘How Populist are the People? Measuring populist Attitudes in Voters’. *Comparative Political Studies* 47(9): 1324-53  

Topic 04: Non-Democratic Political Regimes. Orthodoxy and Innovations

Topic 05: In between – democratic exit: fate or choice?

Topic 06: Populism – conceptual overstretch

Topic 07: The role of religion
Fish, M.S. 2002. 'Islam and Authoritarianism', World Politics, 55: 4-37

Topic 08: New Authoritarianism or Authoritarian Clientelism?
Dresden, Jennifer & Marc Morje Howard. 2016. 'Authoritarian backsliding and the concentration of political power', Democratization, 23 (7): 1122-1143

Topic 09: Threat to democracy? Citizens perspective
Foa, Roberto & Yascha Mounk. 2016. 'The democratic disconnect', Journal of Democracy, 27(3): 5-14

Voeten, Erik. 2017. 'Are people really turning away from democracy?' Journal of Democracy, web exchange
Additional (Recommended) readings:


