

# Introduction to Politics

Professor Nicholas Tampio

Fordham University

Fall 2024

Class: Faber 668, TF 8:30-9:45 am

Office hours: Faber 665, TF 11:30-12:30 am

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What is democracy? Is it better than alternative regimes and, if so, why? Are countries around the world becoming more democratic or more autocratic? The aim of this course is to introduce students to the academic discipline of political science by considering how the different subfields of political science study democracy.

First, we review the history of democracy from the assemblies of Syria-Mesopotamia and ancient Greece, through the electoral bodies of the early modern era, up to the age of monitory democracy where civil society acts as a counterweight to the state. Second, we consider how political theorists debate whether the key activity of democracy is deliberation or participation and whether epistocracy, rule by experts, is better than democracy. Third, we consider how American politics scholars describe the threat to democracy posed by oligarchy, populist authoritarianism, respectability politics, and blind retrospection. Fourth, we look at how scholars of comparative politics identify the threats of competitive authoritarianism and fake news and consider the promising effects of accidents and opposition. Fifth, we consider how international relations scholars describe the threat to democracy posed by globalization, economic grievances, and the digital revolution. Finally, students write their own paper, and present as a group, reports on the state of democracy in China, Israel, Brazil, Hungary, South Africa, and India.

## Student learning objectives

- Learn about the methodologies and research foci of the main subfields of political science: political theory, American politics, comparative politics, and international relations.
- Learn how to analyze academic articles.
- Gain understanding on American and global debates about democracy, populism, authoritarianism, autocratization, global capitalism, and other political topics.
- Write and revise research papers.

## Books:

John Keane, *The Shortest History of Democracy: 4,000 Years of Self-Government—A Retelling for Our Times*, ISBN-10: 1615198962

## Course requirements:

(1) By 8:30 am on October 1, students will upload to Blackboard a 5–7-page paper on the contemporary political theory debate about whether the people (*demos*) are smart enough to rule (*kratos*). The paper should:

- Have a title that indicates the topic and thesis.
- Begin with a news story that shows the people acting foolishly.
- Summarize the epistocratic critique of democracy.
- Summarize the deliberative conceptions of democracy.
- Summarize the participatory conception of democracy.
- Discuss an example of the people acting wisely.
- End by indicating which of the three camps you are closest to and why.

Students will have a chance to revise the paper for up to a one letter grade improvement. The revised paper is due one week after I return the first draft with feedback, and the revised paper must begin with a paragraph summarizing changes.

(2) Students will be part of a group that leads discussion of an article. Students will make and present a 20-minute PowerPoint that explains the article. Students will upload these PowerPoints to a shared file on Blackboard before class. Provide a one slide biography of the author (where they teach, major publications, claim to fame [if any]). A good rule of thumb is to have a slide for each section of the article with a few quotes or images. Normally, articles will have sections explaining the research question, the methodology to answer it, the data to answer it, an interpretation of the data, and an explanation of why it matters to political science.

Many political scientists popularize their findings in podcasts, twitter threads, videos, or magazine articles; I recommend taking advantage of these resources to make sense of the argument. See, for instance, Daniel Treisman's [magazine article](#) about his APSR article. I also encourage you to look at the authors' datasets and citations and do your best figuring out the authors' methodologies (take advantage of the Internet). Please raise your own questions and objections to the article. Your group will lead discussion of the article.

(3) The midterm will be on how scholars of American politics and comparative politics research democracy. I will predistribute possible questions, and students will have one hour to answer two questions.

(4) The final exam will be on how scholars of international relations research democracy. I will predistribute questions, and students will have one hour to answer two questions.

(5-6) Students will write their own 10-12-page-research paper and present as a group a 30-minute presentation on the state of democracy in different countries. Students will read 4-6 newspaper articles; 4-6 recent political science articles about the country, including from the Journal of Democracy; and data visualizations from the [Varieties of Democracy](#) project. The paper should describe the history of democracy in the country; the promising democratic elements; the worrisome autocratic elements; and where things seem to be going. Give it a catchy title, open with a recent story in the news, give each section an informative subheading, cite 1 or 2 sources each

paragraph, cite quantitative and qualitative data, use internal citation—e.g. (Walter 2021, 421)—and Chicago or MLA bibliography style.

(7) Class participation. College students show up on time, have done the reading beforehand, are ready to ask questions and contribute to the discussion. I also think it's good to dress up on days you present.

Please sign up to present on an article and a country here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hpN6rBZt25Tz33p3BauDQy2iRLkSMHjmrflhIqFg8uE/edit>

### **Grade distribution:**

First paper	10
Article presentation	10
Midterm	20
Final exam	20
Research paper	20
Research presentation	10
Class participation	10

### **Class schedule**

1. August 30 – Introduction to course. What is democracy?
  - John Keane, *Shortest History*, Introduction
  - Newspaper articles about democracy

### **The history of democracy**

2. September 3 – What is assembly democracy?
  - John Keane, *Shortest History*, Part One
3. September 6 – No class. I'll be in Philadelphia at the American Political Science Association Conference.
4. September 10 – What is electoral democracy?
  - John Keane, *Shortest History*, Part Two
5. September 13 – What is monitory democracy?
  - John Keane, *Shortest History*, Part Three

### **Political theory on democracy**

6. September 17 – What is the epistocratic critique of democracy?
- Tom Nichols, “[How America Lost Faith in Expertise: And Why That's a Giant Problem](#),” *Foreign Affairs*, 2017.

September 20 – What is deliberative democracy?

- Jane Mansbridge, James Bohman, Simone Chambers, Thomas Christiano, Archon Fung, John Parkinson, Dennis F. Thompson and Mark E. Warren, “A systemic approach to deliberative democracy”

7. September 24 – What is participatory democracy?

- John Dewey, “Creative Democracy”
- Nicholas Tampio, “[Treat People as Citizens](#),” *Aeon*, 2017.

8. September 27 – First paper due. Conversation.

#### **American politics on democracy**

9. October 1 – 1<sup>st</sup> threat to American democracy: oligarchy

- Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page, “[Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens](#),” *Perspectives on Politics*, 2014.

10. October 4 – 2<sup>nd</sup> threat to American democracy: populist authoritarianism

- Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, “[Trump and the Populist Authoritarian Parties: The Silent Revolution in Reverse](#),” *Perspectives on Politics*, 2017.

11. October 8 – 3<sup>rd</sup> threat to American democracy: respectability politics

- Hakeem Jefferson, “[The Politics of Respectability and Black Americans' Punitive Attitudes](#),” *American Political Science Review*, 2023.

12. October 11 – 4<sup>th</sup> threat to American democracy: blind retrospection

- Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels, *Democracy for Realists*, Chapter 5, Blind Responsiveness.

#### **Comparative politics on democracy**

13. October 15 – 1<sup>st</sup> threat to democracy: competitive authoritarianism

- Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way. 2002. "Elections Without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 51-65.

14. October 18 – 2<sup>nd</sup> threat to democracy: fake news

- Mathias Osmundsen, et al., "Partisan Polarization Is the Primary Psychological Motivation behind Political Fake News Sharing on Twitter," *American Political Science Review*, 2021.

15. October 22 – One good sign: accidents

- Daniel Treisman, "Democracy by Mistake: How the Errors of Autocrats Trigger Transitions to Freer government," *American Political Science Review*, 2020.

16. October 25 – Another good sign: moderate opposition

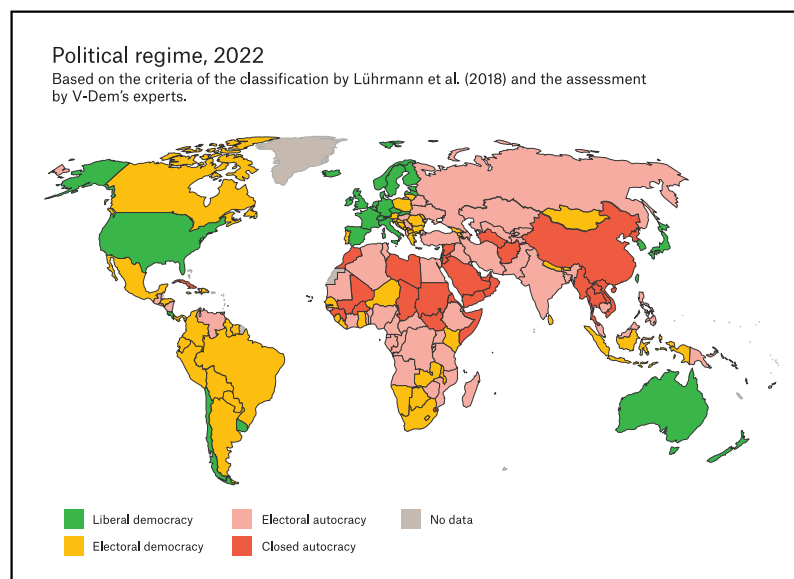
- Laura Gamboa, "Opposition at the Margins: Strategies against the Erosion of Democracy in Colombia and Venezuela," *Comparative Politics*, 2017.

17. October 29 – Midterm

### International relations on democracy

18. November 1 – 1<sup>st</sup> threat to democracy around the world: global capitalism

- Helen Milner, "Is Global Capitalism Compatible with Democracy? Inequality, Insecurity, and Interdependence," *International Studies Quarterly*, 2021.



19. November 8 – 2<sup>nd</sup> threat to democracy around the world: economic grievances and the rise of populism

- Sheri Berman, "[The Causes of Populism in the West](#)," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2021.

20. November 12 – Benjamin Schvarcz of Bar-Ilan University will lead a discussion on "Democracy's Current Predicament Seen Through the Concept of Stasis"

- Professor Schvarcz will give a talk on “A Jewish Civil War? Israel’s Constitutional Crisis” in Dealy Hall 102 from 2:30-4pm. Please plan to attend if you can.

21. November 15 –This class will be dedicated to discussing the Varieties of Democracy project and preparing for the group presentations.

- [Democracy Report 2024: Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot](#)

#### Case studies

- 22. November 19 – Hong Kong
- 23. November 22 – Israel
- 24. November 26 – Argentina
- 25. December 3 – Hungary
- 26. December 6 – South Africa
- 27. December 10 – India

Final exam (online): Tuesday, December 17, 2024	9:30-10:30 AM
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