“How Dictators Survive”: Syllabus

**Political Science 98T:**
**How Dictators Survive**

Meetings: Bunche 4276, Tue/Thur 10-11:30
Instructor: Eoghan Stafford
eoghanstafford@gmail.com
Office Hours: Bunche 3288, Wed/Thur 2-3

Why do some dictators fall from power – and even wind up jailed or dead – while others manage to hold on to power? The recent uprisings across the Middle East and North Africa posed this puzzle starkly. How did autocrats manage to stay in power in Morocco, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and other countries in the region, while leaders who ruled for decades were toppled in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, and while Syria has descended into a bloodbath as its ruler clings to power?

This course examines the wide range of threats to the power of dictators, the diverse strategies they employ to preserve their power and their regimes, and why some dictators prevail while others meet grim ends. With much of the world’s countries ruled by authoritarian regimes\(^1\), it is crucial to understand the motives of dictators and to make predictions about the behavior and future of these regimes. Understanding authoritarian leaders’ preoccupation with maintaining power can shed light on many questions. For example: Which authoritarian regimes are most prone to instability, civil war, and state collapse? When does political change in an authoritarian regime herald genuine reform, as opposed to a short-term tactic to manage opposition? How do the politics of authoritarian countries affect economic growth, poverty, and inequality in developing countries? What circumstances make it possible for ordinary citizens to bring down their rulers through peaceful protest?

Overall, we will consider four major questions throughout the course:

1) **What are the main threats to the power of dictators?**
2) **What explains the particular strategies dictators employ to maintain power?**
3) **How do those strategies affect their nations’ social and economic development and security?**
4) **What explains why some dictators stay in power for life while others are quickly deposed?**

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Questions about the causes and consequences of how dictators maintain power are lively topics of social science research, yet little consensus exists about how to answer them. For that reason, this topic provides exciting opportunities to learn new ways of thinking about contemporary global politics, to hone your skills for critically evaluating political theories in light of evidence, and to develop your own perspective about these issues.

Learning Objectives

During this course, you are expected to learn:

- major theories of authoritarian politics
- how authoritarian politics affects such diverse fields as diplomacy, development, and human rights advocacy
- the reasoning behind the comparative method and how to employ it to answer a social scientific question
- how to critically evaluate an author’s assumptions, evidence, and conclusions
- how to develop well-reasoned and evidence-based arguments about political issues

Requirements

1. Come to section prepared to discuss critically that week’s assigned readings. I will send out some questions on each week’s readings to give you an idea of what we will discuss.
2. Each week, write a summary (a short paragraph) of each of the assigned readings, due as a hard copy on Tuesdays.
3. Active participation in section. As examples of what I mean by active participation: explain the claim, logic, and evidence of the readings; critically evaluate the assumptions, strengths, and weaknesses of the readings; present your own answers to the week’s discussion questions; provide reasons to believe your answer, or the evidence you would need to determine if your answer is right; raise relevant discussion questions of your own; connect the readings to the major questions of the course; discuss points of agreement and disagreement between the authors we discuss that week as well as previous authors we have discussed; listen respectfully when others are talking; respond to other students’ comments and questions; refrain from using laptops, cell phones, and other electronic devices.
4. Write a 13-15 page research paper. I will give you some suggested topics, and you may also come up with your own, as long as I approve it. We will discuss different research methods throughout the course. You will submit a research proposal in Week 4, an outline of your paper in Week 6, and a draft of your paper
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in Week 8. You will also provide feedback on another student’s draft in Week 9. The final draft will be due at the end of Finals Week.

Grading

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Section Participation</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Response Papers</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
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<td>Outline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draft of Paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review of Classmate’s Draft</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
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Resources

Writing help: You may find tutors at the Academic Advancement Program (http://www.aap.ucla.edu; 1214 Campbell Hall). The Undergraduate Writing Center can provide guidance on writing papers (http://wp.ucla.edu/index.php/home; numerous locations: see website).

OSD: The Office for Students with Disabilities provides help with note taking and other services for students with permanent or temporary disabilities, including learning disabilities (http://www.osd.ucla.edu). Please let me and the OSD know if you need any help.

Other Policies

Academic Honesty: Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Using someone else’s arguments, ideas, or writing as your own is dishonest and disrespectful – you must provide adequate citations for any material you use that is not your own. There are serious and lasting consequences for those students who commit such offenses. Also, unless your paper is about sites like Wikipedia, such sites are not appropriate sources to be cited in class papers.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and counts toward your participation grade. Medical absences will be excused if you provide me with a doctor’s note. If you have a scheduled event that will conflict with class, please inform me by the end of Week 2. Such absences may be excused on a case-by-case basis. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from a fellow student on class discussions, lectures, and announcements.
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Emails: Please put “PS98T” in the subject line of your e-mail. I check e-mails regularly. I am happy to answer questions to clarify class materials or important technical issues. I will not respond to questions that are answered in the syllabus. Moreover, I urge you to use appropriate email etiquette when contacting me or any other instructor. If you have any questions about what is appropriate email etiquette, ask me. I email students on a weekly basis, so please make sure your email address is updated on MyUCLA.

Office hours: I strongly encourage students to come to office hours to talk about class materials. In addition you might not be familiar with how to do the readings in a political science course or how to write a political science paper. I can help you in my office hours with those questions as well.

Schedule

Many of the authors whose writing we will read in this course are professors at UCLA. I encourage you to meet with them and ask them questions about what you have read, other aspects of politics that interest you, and what it’s like to do social science research as a career. You might also consider taking courses they teach. I have put an asterisk (“*”) next to each author who teaches at UCLA.

WEEK 1: “Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown”: The Perils of Being a Dictator

Tuesday, January 5


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Thursday, January 7

*Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz. 2014. “Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set.” Perspectives on Politics 12(June): 313-331. Pages 320-322. (“Theoretical Application: Regime Type, Transition, and Leader Fate”)


Recommended:


WEEK 2: “With Friends Like These, Who Needs Enemies?”: Coups and Other Power Struggles Within a Regime

Tuesday, January 12

*Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz. 2015. “How Dictatorships Work.” UCLA. Book manuscript. Chapter 3: “A Look At the Forrest.” Pages 1-4 (introductory section) and 9-31 (“Competition within the Dictatorial Inner Circle” through “Characteristics That Influence the Credibility of Threats to Oust the Dictator”).

Thursday, January 14


**Recommended:**


**WEEK 3: “The Peasants are Revolting”: Protest, Revolution, and Civil War**

**Tuesday, January 19**


**Thursday, January 21**


Recommended:


WEEK 4: “Safer to Be Feared Than Loved”: Repression

Schedule an appointment for mandatory office hours this week to discuss paper proposal.

Tuesday, January 26

Paper proposal due.


Thursday, January 28


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**Recommended:**


**WEEK 5: “Bread and Circuses”: Redistribution, Development, and Corruption**

**Tuesday, February 2**


**Thursday, February 4**


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Recommended:


*Gelvin [2012] 2015. *Chapter 1: “A Revolutionary Wave?”* Pages 10-19 (“What was the state of the economy in the Arab world on the eve of the uprisings?”, “What benefits did Arab regimes originally promise their populations?”, and “Why and how did Arab regimes renege on the promises they made to their populations?”)


WEEK 6: Voting Without Democracy: Parties, Legislatures, and Elections

Schedule an appointment for mandatory office hours this week to discuss paper outline.

Tuesday, February 9

Paper outline due.


Thursday, February 11


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Brewer and Hunter 2006. Chapter 4: “Collecting Data With Multiple Methods” (pages 59-78).


**WEEK 7: “L’Etat: C’est Moi”: Personalization, Purges, and Coup-Proofing**

**Tuesday, February 16**


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Thursday, February 18


Recommended:


WEEK 8: “Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom”: Propaganda and Censorship

Tuesday, February 23

Paper draft due.


King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. 2014. “Reverse-Engineering Chinese Censorship through Randomized Experimentation and Participant

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Thursday, February 25


Recommended:


WEEK 9: “And Now For Something Completely Different”: Transitions to Democracy

Tuesday, March 1

Peer review of another student’s paper due.


Thursday, March 3


Recommended:


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WEEK 10: How to Make the World Less Awful: Implications for Promoting Democracy and Human Rights

Tuesday, March 8


Thursday, March 10


Recommended:


**FINALS WEEK:**

*Paper Due Friday of Finals Week*