

POLS 4930/5930  
Special Topics: Democratic Erosion  
McGannon Hall 122 (Please meet in conference room)  
R 4:15-7pm  
Spring 2019

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The 2016 presidential election represents a watershed moment in American political history; a real estate tycoon with no prior military or political experience assumed the highest mantle in American society -- the American presidency. Almost immediately, political commentators wondered whether President Donald Trump would respect the norms of the office, abide by constitutional restraints placed on presidential powers, and divorce himself from key conflicts of interest arising from his sprawling real estate empire. More importantly, some scholars and commentators wondered whether Trump represented and continues to represent an existential threat to American democracy due to perceived autocratic-tendencies.

Since 2016, other Western democracies have also experienced dramatic shifts in their political systems due to the meteoric rise of populist movements, which harness broad public support due to concerns over economic malaise, growing anti-migrant and anti-refugee sentiments, and the increasing salience of “us-versus-them” identity politics. Recent estimates suggest that populist parties, on both the left and right, now reliably win about one in six seats in Western European parliamentary elections. Coupled with the growing populist tide in Western Europe, trends in 2018 further created uncertainty over the “state” of democracy worldwide: Jair Bolsonaro -- a far-right candidate championing past periods of military rule -- captured the presidency in Brazil; Aung Sang Suu Kyi -- a Nobel Peace Prize laureate -- refused to condemn the actions of Myanmar’s military against its Rohingya religious minority; President Nicolas Maduro further entrenched his personalist regime in Venezuela through widely disputed elections; and Turkey continued its clamp down on media outlets and political opposition to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Will these trends continue in 2019? In particular, will we continue to witness dramatic shifts away from postwar establishment liberalism -- with its emphasis on pluralism, multiculturalism, and multilateralism -- to popular movements opposed to these principles? Or, will challenges to democracy become more “uneven” and inconsequential, with more setbacks than advances?

In this course, we explore the causes, consequences, and implications of democratic erosion and democratic backsliding in a comparative and historical perspective, with a focus on better understanding our own unique political moment. To this end, this course is meant to allow students to critically and systematically evaluate the risks to democracy in today’s era of globalization, financial crises, and the rise of “us-versus-them” identity politics. Is American democracy really under threat? What about democracy in the West, or the world, more generally? If democracy is indeed under threat, what can we do about it? And if it’s not under threat, why are so many of us so worried that it is? This course aims to help answer these questions by exploring competing definitions and theories of democratization as well as other substantive themes tied to democratic reversal, such as the use and abuse of democratic institutions, populism and demagoguery, propaganda, disinformation, and the media, polarization, scapegoating, and resistance, which are all timely variables to consider when thinking about the “health” or “vibrancy” of democracy in the world today.

This course is not intended as a partisan critique of any particular politician, political party, or popular movement in the US or elsewhere. Instead, it is designed to provide an opportunity for you to engage, critically and carefully, with the claims you have doubtlessly already heard about the state of democracy domestically and abroad; to evaluate whether those claims are valid; and, if they are, to consider strategies for mitigating the risk of democratic erosion here and abroad. Readings will address both empirical and normative questions, and will be gleaned from a combination of academic and media sources.

On a side note, this course is a timely experiment (sounds like an exercise in totalitarianism). During the 2017-18 academic year, faculty at 20 universities taught elements from the same syllabus at roughly the same time. It continues in 2018-19. Students in this course will share a blog space with students taking the course at other universities. Students are expected to comment not only on their own classmates' blogs, but on blogs written by students at these other participating universities to broaden critical discussions and debates concerning democratic erosion. Have fun with the course! It's intended to provoke a variety of debates and dilemmas confronting us as students and citizens in an increasing interconnected world. I like to think of this course as a seminar that goes beyond just covering historical and theoretical puzzles, to one that actually requires us to apply theory to practice through critical reflections of current events and our own unique political moment.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This course has a number of interrelated objectives:

1. Introduce students to some of the most pressing issues and debates in discussions on democratic consolidation, democratic reversal, illiberal democracy, authoritarian creep, snowballing effects, and authoritarian persistence;
2. Allow students to engage in informed debates about issues concerning the erosion of democracy both inside and outside of the US;
3. Familiarize students with the basic epistemological underpinnings of social science, especially the logic and methods of causal inference and case comparison; and
4. Enable students, through readings, discussions, and assessments, to deepen their knowledge of specific cases and form the analytical skills they need to evaluate and deconstruct claims of democratic erosion or backsliding, and to present their views in both verbal and written forms.

## **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

There are no required textbooks in the course. All required readings are provided free of charge by the instructor, typically through Blackboard. These readings are listed in the Course Schedule and can be accessed through the course website for each class meeting. It is essential, as a result, for you to diligently access and keep up with the required readings on your own.

## **COURSE ASSESSMENTS**

Your grade is based on the following: Participation (20%); Contributions to Cross-University Blog (10%); Reflection on Political Event (10%); Country Case Study (20%); Midterm (20%); Final (20%).

### Participation (20 points)

This seminar relies on healthy and vibrant class discussions. Class attendance, thus, is essential for our discussions and required in order for you to do well in the course. Participation is recorded (+ or -) each class period based on class discussion (thoughtful comments, active participation, etc.). Attendance is also recorded and constitutes a portion of your overall participation grade. You can miss one class, no questions asked, with no penalty. In the absence of exceptional circumstances, all

subsequent missed classes will be reflected in your participation score. Do not expect to do well in the course if you do not regularly attend.

### Contributions to Cross-University Blog (Posts & Comments) (10 points)

Over the course of the semester you are required to write **two** blogposts (3.5 points each) for a cross-university blog, accessible [here](http://democratic-erosion.com/blogs) (democratic-erosion.com/blogs). You will need to create an account for this cross-university blog. I encourage you to write down your username and password, since retrieving one or both is accompanied by lag periods with the website. There are instructions for posting your blogs on the website and the document posted on Blackboard. Please pay attention to the formatting requirements for the blog posts.

For each post, you need analyze some recent or current event (a) in the US and (b) in your assigned case study (see below) through the lens of materials we have read and discussed in class. Posts should be short -- between 800 and 1,200 words -- and you have free reign for deciding what current event you wish to frame or structure your blogposts around.

**1. Blog Post on the US:** Analyze a recent or current event *in the US* through the lens of materials we have read and discussed in class; deadline: **Due February 21, 2019.**

**2. Country Case Blog Post:** Analyze a recent or current event *in your assigned country* through the lens of materials we have read and discussed in class; deadline: **Due March 28, 2019.**

Your blogs are accessible to the public, and you should write for a broad (and potentially non-academic) audience: short, punchy sentences devoid of jargon are preferred to long, meandering ones, and short paragraphs are preferable to long ones. In both blog posts, you must cite any information you include and you are encouraged to directly link your blogs to the major themes, puzzles, debates, and discussions in seminar (with citations included).

You are also responsible for commenting on **three** blog posts written by other students enrolled in the class. Two of these comments must be made on a blogpost from a student enrolled at one of the other participating universities (you will be able to see university affiliations on the website). Comments should be short as well -- no longer than 300 words -- but, again, should be analytical rather than merely descriptive or opinionated (your comments must go beyond "I agree," or "you're totally right about Putin!"). Although the blog is accessible to the public, only students enrolled in the course will be able to post or comment. These three comments must be completed by **April 4, 2019** and each comment is worth 1 point for a total of three points.

### Reflection on Political Event (10 points)

You are tasked with attending a political event of your choice in the St. Louis region or elsewhere. The type of event you attend is up to you: it could be a protest, a pro- or anti-Trump rally, a town hall meeting with local or state representatives, a Board of Aldermen meeting, a DACA rally, etc. We will share possibilities for these events at the beginning of the semester.

After attending the political event of your choosing, you will then write an 800-1,200-word blog post reflecting on your experience, again drawing on major themes, puzzles, debates, and discussions we have in seminar (with citations included) where relevant. The deadline for attending the event is **February 21, 2019**. The deadline for submitting the blog post is **February 28, 2019**. More instructions are provided in class.

### Country Case Study Assignment (20 points)

The major research component of the course is a 15-page country case study assessing the state of democracy in a specific country, due on **April 25, 2019** (graduate students enrolled in the course are expected to develop a 20-page paper). The reports are part of a larger project ([Democratic Erosion Dataset](#)) led by the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M and the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor as the major client. A team of Master's students at TAMU will use the reports that you and other students across the country write to build and code a large dataset on democratic erosion. Data contained in the case studies produced by students in class and at other participating universities in 2019-19 will be added to v3 of the Democratic Erosion Event Dataset, and you will be recognized for your contributions. The original version was created using case studies from students who took the course in the 2017-18 academic year (covering 65 countries between 2008 and 2018)<sup>5</sup>. Please follow the link above to get more details about this specific project. Democratic Erosion's current client, the DHL, craves these data for its Human Rights & Democracy Fund. This means the qualitative account/narrative on your country case study project will be coded later and presented to a policy audience (more than just me or your fellow classmates).

You will select a case from a predetermined list in class on **January 31, 2019**. Illustrating the collaborative nature of the course, cases are distributed across students and universities to maximize geographic coverage; students who prefer to cover a specific country will be given the chance to voice that preference, and we will do our best to accommodate these interests. More instructions, including the key components you are required to address as well as suggested page intervals, will be provided at the beginning of the semester. Your overall report should address the following questions about your assigned country:

1. Is your country at risk of democratic erosion?
2. What are the causes of democratic erosion in your country?
3. What are the consequences of democratic erosion in your country?
4. What has been done to prevent further erosion or foster a transition back to democracy?
5. Have these strategies worked?
6. What are the implications of your case for democratic erosion/consolidation worldwide?

Along with submitting a final copy of your case study, you will also give a 10- to 15-minute presentation on your case in class during the second to last week of the semester. Your presentation should be analytical rather than descriptive, and should focus on assessing the risks, causes, and consequences of democratic erosion in your specific case study. This presentation is figured into the overall grading rubric for the assignment and more instructions are provided in class.

### Midterm (20 points) & Final (20 points)

There are two exams in the course: a midterm and a final exam, each worth 20 points. Both exams will test your knowledge of major themes, puzzles, and debates in the lectures and readings, with some type of "synthesis" as it relates to the readings and major course topics. The midterm exam covers the first half of the course and is scheduled for the first half of class on **March 7, 2019**. The final exam (not cumulative) covers the second half and is scheduled during finals week (see the Course Schedule). Both exams are essay, and a preview/review is provided beforehand.

Please make sure you arrive on time on exam days. Makeup exams are only allowed if you contact me in advance and present proper documentation excusing your absence (vacations are not excused absences). All make-up exams must be scheduled within one week of an exam being administered. You cannot take the midterm or final exam on a different date than what is specified in the Course Schedule.

## GRADING

Your overall grade for the course is comprised of the following:

Cross-University Blog	10 points
Reaction to Political Event	10 points
Participation	20 points
Country Case Study	20 points
Midterm	20 points
<u>Final</u>	<u>20 points</u>
Total Points	100 points

Final grades are assigned according to the following grading scale:

93-100 = A
90-92 = A-
87-89 = B+
83-86 = B
80-82 = B-
77-79 = C+
73-76 = C
70-72 = C-
60-69 = D
Below 60 = F

Success in the course requires performing well on all assessments; you cannot do well if you just pass the final exam but do not come to class on a regular basis. Students are advised to keep graded assignments and copies of submitted work until they receive their final grades in the course. I will entertain any questions or concerns regarding grades within one week of the return of an assignment -- I do not engage in end-of-semester grade bargaining.

## COURSE POLICIES & REQUIRED STATEMENTS

### Course Website & Technology

Students are required to access the course website on Blackboard regularly. Lecture outlines, study guides, grades, web links, and other supplemental materials are only made available through this forum. If you do not have a copy of Microsoft Office, you can download a free version at: [www.slu.edu/its/new-to-slu/free-office-365-for-slu](http://www.slu.edu/its/new-to-slu/free-office-365-for-slu). There is also a cross-university site you need to access regularly: [www.democratic-erosion.com](http://www.democratic-erosion.com). You will need to create an account for the cross-university project via the email link I send in the first week.

### Late Policy

Late assignments are accepted but with a letter grade penalty for each day an assignment is late (e.g., two letter grades (20%) are automatically deducted from an assignment that is submitted on Saturday). All assignments must be handed in on time unless you provide a University accepted excuse. If you suspect that you might have a problem submitting an assignment on time, please let me know!

### Course Reading Material:

This course entails a substantial amount of reading. In order for the class to function smoothly, students are expected to be familiar with all assigned readings *before the class meeting* for which they

are assigned. With this being said, there is no expectation on my part that you will understand the reading material completely. All I expect is that you try to keep up with the assigned readings and come to class prepared to discuss the readings. For each of our class sessions, *bring the readings with you (either electronically or hard copies)*. For each assigned reading, you should be able to succinctly state the following:

1. The major research questions addressed.
2. The author's argument.
3. The evidence presented in support of that argument.
4. Your critique of the argument/evidence.

These handouts will be helpful in teaching you how to: (a) [get the main point of what you read](#) and (b) [remember what you read](#).

#### Rules of Behavior:

- 1.) In order to foster an open learning environment, please behave in a respectful manner toward others. The course material is intentionally structured to encourage debate and I am sure many of you do not share the same opinions or beliefs. Since it is important that everyone feels comfortable participating in class, please do not insult others or their point of view. I reserve the right to remove students from the class who do not abide by this rule.
- 2.) Please refrain from using laptops, tablets, and/or smart phone devices for non-educational purposes (e.g., games, web-browsing, Facebook, Twitter, texting, etc.) during class (it's pretty obvious if you're doing so). Also, please turn your cell phone either off or on silent before class starts. **Finally, you may not use your cellphone, laptop, or tablet to take pictures or record lectures without my permission.** Failure to abide by these rules may be grounds for removal from class -- as is failing to laugh at my jokes. If cell phones or laptops become a distraction, I reserve the right to prohibit students from bringing them to class.

#### Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is honest, truth and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service through which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy was adopted in Spring 2015, and can be accessed on the Provost's Office website here: <http://www.slu.edu/provost/policies.php>.

Additionally, each SLU college, school and center has adopted its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites. All SLU students are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions, and appeals. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the dean/director of the college, school or center in which your program is housed.

Specific College of Arts and Sciences Academic Honesty Policies and Procedures may be found here: <http://www.slu.edu/arts-and-sciences/student-resources/academic-honesty.php>.

## Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authorized by or revised by another person as the student's own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination or quiz without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, sharing or receiving the questions from an on-line quiz with another student, taking an on-line quiz with the help of another student, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

All clear violations of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. In this course, academic dishonesty on an assignment will result in an *automatic grade of 0 for that assignment* and a report of academic dishonesty sent to the Academic Honesty Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences. In the case of Class B violations, the Academic Honesty Committee may impose a large sanction including, but not limited to, assigning a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University.

Students should refer to the following SLU website for more information about Class A and B violations and the procedures following a report of academic dishonesty:  
<http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>.

## Title IX

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g., sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX coordinator, Anna R. Kratky (DuBourg Hall, Room 36; [akratky@slu.edu](mailto:akratky@slu.edu); 314.977.3886) and share the basic fact of your experience with her. The Title IX coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK. To view SLU's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web address: <https://www.slu.edu/about/safety/sexual-assault-resources.php>.

## Student Learning & Student Success Center

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. The Student Success Center, a one-stop shop, which assists students with academic and career related services, is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331) and the School of Nursing (Suite, 114). Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, department resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.

- University-level support (e.g., tutoring services, university writing services, disability services, academic coaching, career services, and/or facets of curriculum planning) by visiting the Student Success Center or by going to [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success)

### Disability Services Academic Accommodations

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 314.977.8885 or visit the Student Success Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

### Writing Services

Please take advantage of the University Writing Services; getting feedback benefits all writers! Trained writing consultants can help with any assignment, multimedia project, or oral presentation. During one-on-one consultations, you can work on everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. These services do fill up, so please make an appointment! Also, bring your assignment description, and a few goals, to the consultation. For more information, or to make an appointment, call 314.977.3484 or visit [www.slu.edu/writingservices.xml](http://www.slu.edu/writingservices.xml).

### Course Evaluations

Please do your best to complete the course evaluation at the end of the semester. This evaluation is your opportunity to provide feedback regarding the course content, the professor, and your overall impression of how the material was presented. These evaluations are anonymous, yet extremely valuable. Help me know what you think works and does not work for you in the course (and be completely honest)!

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

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\*\*\*Tentative and subject to change. Key dates, University holidays, discussion topics, readings, and assignments are bolded.

### Week One (1/17): Introduction - Setting the Stage & Democracy in Decline?

Learning objectives: Familiarize ourselves with the course/each other, review data, select cases, and survey on democratic erosion, discuss best practices for approaching academic journal articles/readings, and conduct preliminary discussion on whether democracy is declining and the implications of democratic erosion.

Read: Freedom House, “Freedom in the World 2018 Report” (Bb); Bermeo, “On Democratic Backsliding” (Bb); Norris, “Is Western Democracy Backsliding?” (Bb); Corrales, “Hugo Boss” (Bb); Naim & Toro, “Venezuela’s Democratic Façade has Completely Crumbled” (Bb); Ulfedler, “Daniel Ortega Shows Us How to Dismantle a Democracy, 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Style” (Bb); Ost, “Regime Change in Poland, Carried Out from Within” (Bb); Kingsley, “On the Surface, Hungary is a Democracy. But What Lies Underneath?” (Bb)

### Week Two (1/24): Definitions & Theories of Democracy

Learning objectives: Understand prominent approaches to conceptualizing and defining democracy;



understand what is theorized to condition democracy and democratic consolidation; understand the distinction between liberal and illiberal democracy; understand how the design of democratic institutions can affect inclusion in, and the equity of, democratic rule.

Read: Schumpeter, “Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy” (Bb); Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy” (Bb); Dahl, “Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition” (Bb); Diamond, “Thinking About Hybrid Regimes” (Bb); Acemoglu & Robinson, “Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy” (Bb); Zakaria, “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy” (Bb)

### Week Three (1/31): Definitions & Theories of Democratic Erosion

Learning objectives: Define democratic erosion and distinguish it from other ways that countries can transition into authoritarianism; review the symptoms, observable implications, and causes of democratic erosion; begin our discussion on the possibility of democratic erosion in the US (what might cause this, what would this mean, and the implications).

Read: Linz & Alfred, “The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes” (Bb); Lust & Waldner, “Unwelcome Change: Understanding Evaluating, and Extending Theories of Democratic Backsliding” (Bb); Lieberman, “Trumpism and American Democracy: History, Comparison, and the Predicament of Liberal Democracy in the United States” (Bb); Isaac, “How Hannah Arendt’s classic work on totalitarianism illuminates today’s America” (Bb); Levistky & Ziblatt, “How Democracies Die” Ch. 1 (Bb)

**Case studies decided in class. If  
you are absent, you will be  
assigned a case by the instructor.**

### Week Four (2/7): Use & Abuse of Democratic Institutions

Learning objectives: Understand the different ways in which democratic institutions can be used to undermine democracy; consider why democratic backsliding through the legal use of democratic institutions has increased in recent years; learn which components of democracy are most vulnerable to democratic decay via democratic institutions; continue our discussion on the possibility of democratic erosion in the US.

Read: Varol, “Stealth Authoritarianism” Parts I, II, and III (Bb); Landau, “Abusive Constitutionalism” (Bb); Scheppele, “Not Your Father’s Authoritarianism: The Creation of the Frankenstate” (Bb); Huq and Ginsbury, “How to Lose a Constitutional Democracy” (Bb); Levistky & Ziblatt, “How a Democracy Dies” Ch. 5 & 6 (Bb)

### Week Five (2/14): Populism & Demagoguery

Learning objectives: Define populism, and consider how it relates to democratic or authoritarian rule; review the conditions that give rise to populism on both the left and right; consider the kinds of politics and policies that are likely to prevent the rise of populism, and how democracy can be preserved in the face of threats from authoritarian populist parties and leaders.

Read: Zakaria, “Populism on the March” (Bb); Berman, “The Pipe Dream of Undemocratic Liberalism” (Bb); Kendall-Taylor & Frantz, “How Democracies Fall Apart: Why Populism is a

Pathway to Autocracy” (Bb); Voigtlander & Voth, “Highway to Hitler” (Bb); Weyland, “There Are 4 Big Barriers to the Populist Model in America (and Your Democracy is Safe)” (Bb)

**Blog post workshop held this session. We will discuss how to write an effective blog post in class. In preparation, please (1) bring a printed draft of your blog post on the US (due on 2/21) and (2) read the following blog posts at <http://democratic-erosion.com/blog/>:**

- Karibjanian, “Why bureaucratic resistance is not a fundamental threat to democracy” (Dec. 2017)
- Sharp, “Position of the Tennessee Secretary of State on Voting Rights Restrictions” (Oct. 2017)

#### Week Six (2/21): Propaganda & Restrictions on the Press

Learning objectives: Describe the effect of propaganda and misinformation on individual attitudes and behavior; discuss in comparative perspective whether and how misinformation contributes to larger processes of democratic erosion.

Read: Rodriguez, “Facts, Alternative Facts, and Fact Checking in Times of Post-Truth Politics” (Bb); Adena, “Radio and the Rise of the Nazis in Prewar Germany” (Bb); Gehlbach, “Reflections on Putin and the Media” (Bb); Gunther, “Fake News Did Have a Significant Impact on the Vote in the 2016 Election”

**Blog post on US due. Deadline for attending a political event (e.g., town hall meeting, pro- or anti-Trump rally, etc.).**

#### Week Seven (2/28): Polarization

Learning objectives: Understand the nature of polarization and different forms it can take, including the distinction between social polarization and ideological polarization, and how the first can lead to the second; understand why and how polarization within society can lead to democratic erosion; understand the history of growing polarization in the US; understand the nature of polarization and different forms it can take, including the distinction between social polarization and ideological polarization, and how the first can lead to the second.

Read: Barber and McCarty, “Causes and Consequences of Polarization” (Bb); McCoy et al., “Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy” (Bb); Greene, “Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap between Us and Them” (Bb); LeBas, “Can Polarization Be Positive? Conflict and Institutional Development in Africa” (Bb)

**Blog post detailing your reflection on the political event you attended is due.**

### Week Eight (3/7): Midterm Exam & Country Cases

The midterm is scheduled for the first 75 minutes of class. After break, we will have a preliminary discussion on your country cases.

### Week Nine (3/21): Scapegoating, Exclusion, & Resentment

Learning objectives: Learn how extremist hate groups can become mainstream and influence popular culture; understand how both populists and mainstream parties use scapegoating and a sense of exclusion to win elections; consider the consequences of scapegoating for democratic decay, racial polarization, and violent uprisings.

Read: Hochschild, “Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right” Ch. 1, 9, & 15 (Bb); Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics” Ch. 1 (Bb); Wood, “Racism motivated Trump voters more than authoritarianism” (Bb); Kuhn, “Sorry, Liberals. Bigotry Didn’t Elect Donald Trump” (Bb); Bennhold, “Germany’s Far-Right Rebrands: Friendlier Face, Same Doctrine” (Bb)

### Week Ten (3/28): Case Studies: Democratic Erosion in Latin America

Learning objectives: Explore cases associated with the topic of democratic erosion in Latin America.

Read: Weyland, “Latin America’s Authoritarian Drift: The Threat from the Populist Left” (Bb); Levitsky and Loxton, “Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism in the Andes” (Bb); Corrales, “The Authoritarian Resurgence: Autocratic Legalism in Venezuela” (Bb); McCoy, “Venezuela’s Controversial New Constituent Assembly, Explained” (Bb)

**Blog post for your assigned country due.**

### Week Eleven (4/4): Case Studies: The Paradox of Democracy in Africa

Learning objectives: Explore the paradox of democracy in Africa as well as cases illustrating democratic reversal or potential democratic reversal.

Read: Gyimah-Boadi, “Africa’s Waning Democratic Commitment” (Bb); Bratton and Gyimah-Boadi, “Political Risks Facing African Democracies: Evidence from Afrobarometer” (Bb); Cheeseman, “How Zambia’s Long-Stable Democracy Ended Up in a Political Crisis in 2017” (Bb)

**Comments on three blog posts due.**

### Week Twelve (4/11): Case Studies: Democratic Erosion in Turkey, Russia, & Eastern Europe

Learning objectives: Explore Turkey, Russia, and Eastern Europe as cases for the topic of democratic erosion.

Read: Gessen, “The Man Without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin” Ch. 7 & 8 (Bb); Ozbudun, “AKP at the Crossroads: Erdogan’s Majoritarian Drift” (Bb); Esen and Gumuscu, “Rising Competitive Authoritarianism in Turkey” (Bb)

Week Thirteen (4/18): Fighting the Erosion of Democracy (Resistance)

Learning objectives: Describe what resistance to undemocratic institutions looks like; learn to identify and articulate a variety of resistance strategies; consider the conditions under which different strategies are more likely to be used, and more likely to be successful.

Read: Ginsburg and Huq, “Democracy’s Near Misses” (Bb); Gamboa, “Opposition at the Margins: Strategies against the Erosion of Democracy in Colombia and Venezuela” (Bb); Chenoweth, “People Are in the Streets Protesting Donald Trump. But When Does Protest Actually Work?” (Bb); Stephan and Chenoweth, “Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict” (Bb); Gerken, “We’re about to See States’ Rights Used Defensively against Trump” (Bb); Klemen and Pech, “Poland’s Plan to Get Rid of Independent Judges has Just Hit a Roadblock” (Bb); Ali and Fahmy, “Gatekeeping and Citizen Journalism” (Bb)

Documentary: Bringing Down a Dictator

Week Fourteen (4/25): Country-Case Study Presentations

Theme: Student presentations & discussion on unifying themes/links across cases.

*Case study papers due by 4:15pm.*

Week Fifteen (5/2): Conclusion: What Now?

Learning objectives: Review the symptoms, observable implications and causes of democratic erosion; review our cases/data on democratic erosion; conclude our discussion on the possibility of democratic backsliding in the US.

Readings: Levistky & Ziblatt, “How Democracies Die” Ch. 8 & 9 (Bb); Ulfelder, “What Now?” (Bb); Hughes, “What Now?” (Bb); Levistky & Ziblatt, “Is Donald Trump a Threat to Democracy?” (Bb); Riddell, “Anti-Trump Left a Threat to American Democracy” (Bb); Colgan, “Six Months of Trump: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” (Bb)

**Final Exam -- Thursday, May 9, 2019, 4-5:50pm**