

# UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

**NUMBER:** INTL 8300  
**TITLE:** Democratic Erosion

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Cas Mudde (mudde@uga.edu)  
**OFFICE:** Candler 324  
**OFFICE HOURS:** Wednesdays 10:00-12.00, or by appointment

**TERM:** Spring 2019  
**DATE & TIME:** Tuesdays, 12:30-3:15  
**ROOM:** Candler Hall 117  
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## Introduction:

In 1989, Francis Fukuyama published his famous essay “The End of History,” in which he argued, simply stated, that liberal democracy was now without enemies and would reign supreme. The essay was illustrative of the democratic optimism in the wake of the fall of communism, as democracy spread throughout Europe and beyond. But at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century this optimism was challenged by a series of events, including the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the consequent US invasion of Iraq, and the failure of the democratic domino strategy of the neoconservatives. Colored Revolutions in post-communist countries (like Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine) as well as the Iranian “Green Revolution” and the Arab Spring rekindled the democratic optimism, but it was often short-lived, as most of the democratic uprising failed or took an authoritarian turn shortly after their initial success.

As the Great Recession hit the world, there was already a growing academic debate on democratic stagnation, or even backsliding, but it was really the victory of Donald Trump in the 2016 US presidential elections that brought this to the heart of the academic and public debate. Hardly a day goes by without an op-ed on the dangers of populism and the threat of democratic erosion, not just far away, in countries long associated with weak democracies, but even in the self-perceived cradle of democracy, the United States. Book after book shoots to the top of the New York Times Bestseller List, which proclaims a democratic crisis or even claims that “the democratic era” is coming to an end.

This course looks at the truths and myths of the crisis of democracy debate. It starts with an analysis of its conceptual and theoretical foundations and then moves to discussions of populism and “how

democracies die.” Throughout the course we will assess the state of democracy, and of democratic erosion, around the world; from the Czech Republic to Thailand and from Ecuador to Zambia. In the end, we will be able to provide a better informed answer to one of the crucial questions of today, namely: (1) is democracy in crisis? And (2) Is democracy in the US eroding?

### **Readings:**

Many of the readings are articles and book chapter, which will be posted on the ELC course page well before the relevant class. In addition, we use two (short) books that you are strongly encouraged to buy.

**Javier Corrales (2018). *Fixing Democracy: Why Constitutional Change Often Fails to Enhance Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.**

**Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt (2018). *How Democracies Die*. New York: Crown.**

**Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2017). *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.**

### **Course objectives:**

- To provide students with a conceptual and theoretical foundation to the topic of democracy.
- To discover and explain the differences and similarities among forms of democracy.
- To analyze and compare different processes of democratic erosion across the globe.
- To think more critically about the strengths and weakness of liberal democracy in theory and practice.
- To prepare students better for the ongoing debate about democratic erosion in the United States.

### **Teaching Methodology:**

- Student introductions
- Class discussions
- Film presentations

### **Classroom Attendance and Activity**

This class meets once a week and attendance is **mandatory**. You can miss up to **two** classes (*no excuses or notes are necessary*, although a heads-up will be appreciated). A third absence will lead to a lower participation grade (-20 points). When you miss **four** classes without a valid excuse, you will **fail** the course!

Obviously, you are expected **read and reflect upon** (at least) the compulsory readings before you come to class. In other words, I expect you to read the books (articles) well in advance of the class, and then reflect upon them in anticipation of the class discussion.

### **Course Evaluation:**

- Participation (20%)
- Presentations (15%)
- Book review (15%)
- Analytical papers (30%)
- Final analytical paper (20%)

**Participation (20%):** You are expected to actively participate in each class, which is based almost exclusively on student discussion. Your grade is based on the *quality and quantity* of your participation in the discussions. If you attend all classes but never participate in the discussions, you will receive a **D!**

**Presentation (15%):** You will be assigned to introduce readings for a class (max. 15 minutes per presentation) and take the lead in the class discussion of that day. It is your task to present the most important points **in your own words** and clarify them (if necessary) with **original** examples, i.e. that go beyond the ones presented in the reading(s).

**Book review (15%):** You have to write a book review of *Fixing Democracy* (Corrales). It should be written as an official book review, set for publication in an academic journal (like *Perspective of Politics*). The review should shortly summarize the main points, discuss the strengths and weaknesses, and provide an overall judgment (in max. 1,500 words). Due in class on **September 22**.

**Analytical papers (30%):** You have to write **three** analytical papers on the compulsory readings for a specific week during the course – I will draw up schedules for each student individually. The paper should be max. 1,000 words and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the article(s)/book by drawing on some other academic literature.

**Final analytical paper (20%):** You have to write **one** final analytical paper for the last class, addressing the question: “Is the US facing a crisis of democracy?” The essay should be max. 2,500 words and should discuss the compulsory readings for the last class as well as relevant additional and previous readings.

**Academic Integrity:**

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University’s academic honesty policy, “A Culture of Honesty,” and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in “A Culture of Honesty” found at: <http://www.uga.edu/honesty>. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.

**Grading:**

Letter Grade	Points
A	93 – 100 points
A-	90 – 92 points
B+	87 – 89 points
B	83 – 86 points
B-	80 – 82 points
C+	77 – 79 points
C	73 – 76 points
C-	70 – 72 points
D+	67 – 69 points
D	63 – 66 points
D-	60 – 62 points
F	59 and below

**Disability Statement:**

UGA is committed to the success of all learners, and we strive to create an inclusive and accessible online environment. In collaboration with the [Disability](#)

[Resource Center](#), we work with students who have documented disabilities to access reasonable accommodations and academic supports. For more information or to speak with a Disability coordinator, please call the Disability Resource Center at (706) 542-8719, TTY only phone (706) 542-8778.

### **Other Important Resources for Students**

UGA has a vast array of resources to support students facing a variety of challenges. Please don't hesitate to come speak with me or contact these resources directly:

**Office of Student Care & Outreach** (coordinate assistance for students experiencing hardship/unforeseen circumstances) – 706-542-7774 or by email [sco@uga.edu](mailto:sco@uga.edu)

**Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS)** - 706-542-2273 (during regular business hours) *After Hour Mental Health Crisis:* 706-542-2200 (UGA Police—ask to speak to the CAPS on-call clinician).

**Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention** – 706-542-SAFE (Please note, faculty and staff are obligated to report any knowledge of sexual assault/relationship violence to UGA's Equal Opportunity Office. The advocates at RSVP can provide student confidentially).

### **Third-Party Software and FERPA:**

During this course you might have the opportunity to use public online services and/or software applications sometimes called third-party software such as a blog or wiki. While some of these are required assignments, you need **not** make any personally identifying information on a public site. Do not post or provide any private information about yourself or your classmates. Where appropriate you may use a pseudonym or nickname. Some written assignments posted publicly may require personal reflection/comments, but the assignments will not require you to disclose any personally identifiable/sensitive information. If you have any concerns about this, please contact your instructor.

### **Some Ground Rules:**

1. **It is not my practice to give incompletes.** However, if there is suitable reason – subject to my approval and supported with appropriate written documentation – an exception to the “no incompletes” rule may be possible. With respect to these first ground rules, *if you have problems in completing assigned work, please let me know about it.*

2. **Laptops, tablets, phones, etc. are not allowed!** Be ready with pen and paper to make notes during the class. If you use any of these banned devices in class, you will be punished with a deduction of **10 points** of your *final grade*!
3. **You will be expected to attend class regularly, on time, and for the entirety of each class period.** Do not sign up for this class if you have social or other engagements (sports classes, meets, etc) that interfere with the time length of this course.
4. I do not expect that your views and perceptions of these controversial themes are identical with those of your classmates or me, either now or at the completion of the course. This course is a place for the free (and perhaps even heated) exchange of ideas. Thus I expect you to **challenge viewpoints** that differ from your own, but I also expect you to **substantiate your arguments** on the basis of the readings, lectures and discussions.
5. If you need to use outside **reference works**, please consult Joel Krieger, et. al., *Oxford Companion to Politics of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) as a place to start for political terms or concepts – **do not use Webster or other dictionaries** for political science definitions. For outside research sources, please use Galileo. Please **do not use the notoriously unreliable Wikipedia** until or unless this source emphasizes accuracy as much as it does volume and speed.
6. If you believe that you should have received a better grade, please provide **an explanation** to me *in writing* and *within a week* of receiving the grade. I will then grade your *whole* exam/paper again and I will issue a “new” grade, which will be either the same, a higher, or a lower grade.

**Important Dates:**

August, 20	First Class
September 22	Book review due
November, 26	Last Class
December, 3	Final paper due (at noon)

**Finally:**

*THE COURSE SYLLABUS IS A GENERAL PLAN FOR THE COURSE; DEVIATIONS ANNOUNCED TO THE CLASS BY THE INSTRUCTOR MAY (AND MOST PROBABLY WILL) BE NECESSARY!*

## THEMATIC OUTLINE

### 1 – Introduction (20 August)

*In this introductory class we will discuss the intentions and outline of the course as well as the mutual expectations. We will also assess the students' backgrounds in the politics of liberal democracies in general, and challenges to it in particular.*

Movie: *The Edge of Democracy* (Brazil, 2019)

#### Compulsory Reading:

Hunter, Wendy and Timothy J. Power (2019). "Bolsonaro and Brazil's Illiberal Backlash", *Journal of Democracy* 30(1): 68-82.

### 2 – On Democracy (27 August)

*Democracy is a crucial term in political discussions and life, but while everyone uses the term, few define it and people hold wildly different understandings of its meaning. What does democracy mean as a generic model? What are crucial democratic institutions and values? And what is "liberal democracy"? What are other types of democracy?*

#### Compulsory Readings:

Dahl, Robert A. (1998) *On Democracy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, chs.4-5.

Diamond, Larry (2003) "Defining and Developing Democracy", in Robert A. Dahl, Ian Shapiro and José Antonio Cheibub (eds.), *The Democracy Sourcebook*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 29-39.

Mouffe, Chantal (1989) "Radical Democracy: Modern or Postmodern?", *Social Text* 21: 31-45.

Plattner, Marc F. (1998) "Liberalism and Democracy: Can't Have One without the Other", *Foreign Affairs* 77(2): 171-180.

### 3 – Economics and Democracy (3 September)

*In discussions about democracy, particularly in the US, democracy is often tied to both capitalism and civil society (which are also often linked to each other). But what is the exact relationship between economics and democracy? Is economic development a cause or requirement for successful democracy?*

#### Compulsory Reading:

Lipset, Seymour Martin (1959). "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53(1): 69-105.

Przeworski, Adam and Fernando Limongi (1997). "Modernization: Theories and Facts", *World Politics* 49(2): 155-183.

Kapstein, Ethan B. and Nathan Converse (2008). "Why Democracies Fail", *Journal of Democracy* 19(4): 57-68.

#### **4 – Civil Society and Democracy (10 September)**

*The idea that democracies requires a thriving civil society can be found in writings from such diverse authors as Alexis de Toqueville and Robert Putnam. It was strengthened by developments in Eastern Europe, particularly Solidarity in Poland and the so-called “Velvet Revolution” in Czechoslovakia. But is a thriving civil society necessary for democracy? Is it necessarily good for democracy? Is there a fundament difference between “civil society” and “uncivil society”?*

##### Compulsory Reading:

- Diamond, Larry (1994). “Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation”, *Journal of Democracy* 5(3): 4-17.
- Putnam, Robert D. (1995). “[Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital](#)”, *Journal of Democracy* 6(1): 65-78.
- Foley, Michael and Bob Edwards (1996). “The Paradox of Civil Society”, *Journal of Democracy* 7(3): 38-52.
- Berman, Sheri (1997). “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic,” *World Politics* 49(3): 401-429.
- Mudde, Cas and Petr Kopecky (2003). “Rethinking Civil Society”, *Democratization* 10(3): 1-14.

#### **5 – Illiberal Democracy or Competitive Authoritarianism? (17 September)**

*We often differentiate between “democracies” and “autocracies”, as if the two are perfect opposites and encompass all theoretically possible and real existing regimes. As the number of (liberal) democracies have increased significantly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and of (pure) autocracies has decreased a lot, more and more regimes combine aspects of both. This has let to a lively debate on the best terms to describe these so-called “hybrid” regimes.*

##### Compulsory Reading:

- Zakaria, Fareed (1997). “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy”, *Foreign Affairs* 76(6): 22-43.
- Diamond, Larry (2002). “Thinking About Hybrid Regimes,” *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 21-35.
- Levitsky, Steven and Lucan Way (2002). *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, introduction & conclusion.
- Berman, Sheri (2017). “The Pipe Dream of Illiberal Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy* 28(3): 29-38.

#### **6 – Democratic Erosion (24 September)**

*Before diving into the individual cases of democratic erosion, we have to get some conceptual clarity. The literature uses a plethora of terms for often overlapping phenomena: backsliding, breakdown, careening, erosion. What do all these different terms mean? And what is the actual situation at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?*

##### Compulsory Readings:



- Linz, Juan J. and Alfred Stepan (1989). *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, ch.2.
- Schedler, Andreas (2010). "Authoritarianism's Last Line of Defense", *Journal of Democracy* 21(1): 69-80.
- Scheppele, Kim Lane (2013). "The Rule of Law and the Frankenstate: Why Governance Checklists Do Not Work", *Governance* 26(4): 559-562.
- Bermeo, Nancy (2016). "On Democratic Backsliding", *Journal of Democracy* 27(1): 5-19.
- Slater, Dan (2013). "Democratic Careening", *World Politics* 65(4): 729-763.
- Lührmann, Ann and Staffan I. Lindberg (2019). "A Third Wave of Authoritarianism Is Here: What is New About It?", *Democratization* 26(7): 1095-1113.

Optional Readings:

- Mechkova, Valeriya, Anna Lührmann and Staffan I. Lindberg (2017). "How Much Democratic Backsliding?", *Journal of Democracy* 28(4): 162-169.
- Waldner, David and Ellen Lust (2018). "Unwelcoming Change: Comping to Terms with Democratic Backsliding", *Annual Review of Political Science* 21: 93-113.

**7 – The Western Balkans (1 October)**

*The Western Balkans are in many ways the problem child of the European continent. It is here that the most brutal (civil) wars were fought after the fall of Berlin Wall – first in Bosnia-Herzegovina and later in Kosovo – and it is here that liberal democracy has a hard time establishing itself, despite the attraction of EU membership.*

**Guest Lecture: Jelena Subotić (Georgia State University)**

Compulsory Reading:

- Bieber, Florian (2018). "Patterns of Competitive Authoritarianism in the Western Balkans", *East European Politics* 34(3): 337-354
- Richter, Solveig and Natasha Wunsch (2019). "Money, Power, Glory: The Linkages Between EU Conditionality and State Capture in the Western Balkans", *Journal of European Public Policy* (forthcoming).
- Subotić, Jelena (2011). "Europe is a State of Mind: Identity and Europeanization in the Balkans", *International Studies Quarterly* 55(2): 309-330.
- Vachudova, Milada Anna (2019). "EU Enlargement and State Capture in the Western Balkans", in Jelena Džankić, Soeren Keil and Marko Kmezić (eds.), *The Europeanization of the Western Balkans: A Failure of EU Conditionality?*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 63-85.

**8 – Peru: The Fall of Fujimori (8 October)**

*In many ways, Alberto Fujimori was the ultimate populist outsider. A university president with no political experience, and an ethnic Japanese to boot, Fujimori was as unlikely to become Peruvian president as practically anyone. Moreover, his opponent was the internationally acclaimed novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, who led a broad alliance of economically liberal and*

“pro-western” parties. But Fujimori won and did not only take on the Peruvian elite but also its democracy.

Movie: [The Fall of Fujimori](#) (USA, 2005)

Compulsory Reading:

Corrales, Javier (2018). *Fixing Democracy: Why Constitutional Change Often Fails to Enhance Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Parts I-II.

Levitsky, Steven (2018). “Democratic Survival and Weakness,” *Journal of Democracy* 29(4): 102-113.

Levitsky, Steven and James Loxton, “Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism: The Case of Fujimori’s Peru”, in Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (eds.), *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 160-181.

**9 – Latin America (15 October)**

*Latin America has a long history of democratization and de-democratization, i.e. democratic erosion and even breakdown. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century the region saw a wave of left-wing populists come to power, including Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Rafael Correa in Ecuador, which challenged the political status quo both nationally and internationally. Javier Corrales advances an original theory to explain democratic erosion in Latin America, which might have relevance well beyond that region.*

**Guest Lecture: Javier Corrales (Amherst College)**

Compulsory Reading:

Corrales, Javier (2018). *Fixing Democracy: Why Constitutional Change Often Fails to Enhance Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Parts III-V.

**10 – Populism (22 October)**

*The debate on “the rise of populism” and “the decline of democracy” are closely related, given that in most cases of democratic backsliding, populist actors are identified as the main culprit. However, while some argue that populism is the main threat to democracy, others argue it is its most pure form. Is populism a threat or corrective to democracy?*

Compulsory Reading:

Mudde, Cas and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2017). *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**11 – Eastern Europe (29 October)**

*If there is one region where the democracy debate plays out, it is Eastern Europe. It was the fall of communism that inspired the “End of History” euphoria at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was confirmed in the EU membership of most Central and East European (CEE)*

*countries in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. But more recently, democracy has been eroding in several CEE countries, most notably in the two democratic frontrunners, Hungary and Poland. What makes this extra interesting, is that this democratic erosion is taking place within the structure of the EU, the most successful case of liberal democratic supranational integration.*

Compulsory Readings:

- Bánkuti, Miklós, Gábor Halmai and Kim-Lane Scheppele (2013). “Disabling the Constitution”, *Journal of Democracy* 23(3): 121-131.
- Grzebalska, Weronika and Andrea Pető (2018). “The Gendered Modus Operandi of the Illiberal Transformation in Hungary and Poland”, *Women’s Studies International Forum* 68: 164-172.
- Bozóki, András and Dániel Hegedüs (2018). “An Externally Constrained Hybrid Regime: Hungary in the European Union”, *East European Politics* 25(7): 1173-1189.
- Buzogány, Aron (2017). “Illiberal Democracy in Hungary: Authoritarian Diffusion or Domestic Causation?”, *Democratization* 24(7): 1307-1325.
- Sedelmeier, Ulrich (2017). “Political Safeguards Against Democratic Backsliding in the EU: The Limits of Material Sanctions and the Scope of Social Pressure”, *Journal of European Public Policy* 24(3): 337-351.
- Cianetti, Licia, James Dawson and Seán Hanley (2018). “Rethinking’ Democratic Backsliding’ in Central and Eastern Europe – Looking Beyond Hungary and Poland”, *East European Politics* 34(3): 243-256.

**12 – Asia (5 November)**

*The largest continent, in terms of both landmass and population, Asia has a highly diverse political landscape. While many of its most discussed countries are solidly authoritarian, notably China and North Korea, others have been more or less successful democracies, which more have recently experienced different degrees of democratic erosion.*

Compulsory Readings:

- Curato, Nicole (2017). “Flirting with Authoritarian Fantasies? Rodrigo Duterte and the New Terms of Philippine Populism”, *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47(1): 142-153.
- Esen, Berk and Sebnem Gumuscu (2016). “Rising Competitive Authoritarianism in Turkey”, *Third World Quarterly* 37(9): 1581-1606.
- Jaffrelot, Christophe (2017). “India’s Democracy at 70: Toward a Hindu State?”, *Journal of Democracy* 28(3): 52-63.
- Kongkirati, Prajak (2016). “Thailand’s Failed 2014 Election: The Anti-Election Movement, Violence and Democratic Breakdown”, *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 46(3): 467-485.
- Roznai, Yaniv (2018). “Israel – A Crisis of Liberal Democracy”, in Mark A. Graber, Sanford Levinson and Mark Tushnet (eds.), *Constitutional Democracy in Crisis?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Optional Reading:

Arugay, Aries and Dan Slater (2019). “Polarization Without Poles: Machiavellian Conflicts and the Philippines’ Lost Decade of Democracy, 2000-2010”, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681(1).

Hadiz, Vedi R. (2017) “Indonesia’s Year of Democratic Setbacks: Towards a New Phase of Deepening Illiberalism?”, *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 53(3): 261-278.

### **13 – Africa (12 November)**

*The continent that is probably least linked to democracy, and therefore democratic erosion, is Africa, which mainly makes the headlines with regard to poverty and war. However, since independent movements liberated their countries from colonial rule, in the wake of the Second World War, Africa has gone through various (de-)democratization waves and the continent is quite diverse in terms of democratic development.*

#### Compulsory Readings:

Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2015). “Democratic Commitment in Africa”, *Journal of Democracy* 26(1): 101-113.

Lynch, Gabrielle and Gordon Crawford (2011). “Democratization in Africa 1990-2010”, *Democratization* 18(2): 275-310.

Fraser, Alastair (2017). “Post-Populism in Zambia: Michael Sata’s Rise, Demise and Legacy”, *International Political Science Review* 38(4): 456-472.

Kelly, Catherine Lena (2012). “Senegal: What Will Turnover Bring?”, *Journal of Democracy* 23(3): 121-131.

Opalo, Ochieng’ (2012). “African Elections: Two Divergent Trends”, *Journal of Democracy* 23(3): 80-93.

#### Optional Reading:

Samba Diallo, El Hadji and Catherine Lena Kelly, “Sufi Turuq and the Politics of Democratization in Senegal”, *Journal of Religious and Political Practice*, 2(2): 193-211.

### **14 – How Democracies Die (19 November)**

*How Democracies Die is a direct response to Trump’s election to the US presidency. It became a New York Times bestseller and has been broadly debated in the national and international media. Drawing on their collective expertise on (de-)democratization in early-20th century Europe and late-20<sup>th</sup> century Latin America, Ziblatt and Levitsky look at how, in the past, democracies have died.*

#### Compulsory Readings:

*How Democracies Die*, introduction and chs.1-5.

### **15 – Quo Vadis US? (26 November)**

*What can we learn from democratic erosion in other countries, and periods, for the current situation in the US? And what can we learn from US history? Is US democracy eroding? And what is its likely future?*

Compulsory Readings:

*How Democracies Die*, chs.6-9.

*How Democracies Die* – PoP Symposium