

INTL 4315: COMPARATIVE DEMOCRACY, DEMOCRATIZATION, AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Fall 2025

Instructor:	Solbi Kim	Time:	TTR, 2:20 – 3:35 pm
Email:	Solbi.Kim@uga.edu	Place:	Park Hall 145

1. Course Descriptions

Course Pages: <https://uga.view.usg.edu/d2l/home/3695557>

Student Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30 – 12:30 pm by appointment
(You can sign up our meeting at <https://calendly.com/solbikim25/30min>).

Office: IA Building (202 Herty Dr.) Room B01

Objectives and Learning Outcomes: This course is designed to equip students with a theoretical understanding of the multifaceted nature of democracy and democratization within a comparative framework. The course also explores various interconnected factors that influence democracy, such as political institutions, systems, and the roles of civil society, gender, and social media.

By the end of the semester, students will be able (better) to:

- Explain theoretical frameworks that define, conceptualize, and measure democracy while considering global democratization trends.
- Investigate the key actors and institutions that shape democratic systems, including political parties, electoral systems, civil society, citizen participation, gender, minority representation, and the influence of social media.
- Evaluate contemporary challenges to democracy, such as the rise of authoritarianism, populism, and the dynamics of digital activism.
- Connect theory to practice by analyzing real-world case studies, participating in interactive class discussions and a comprehensive final essay.
- Write a research paper based on their case studies, with the potential to present their work at undergraduate research conferences.

Classroom Environment and Expectations: Throughout the semester, we will engage in discussions on complex and, at times, contentious political issues. All students are expected to maintain a respectful and inclusive learning environment. Disagreements are welcome and encouraged, but they must be expressed thoughtfully and respectfully. Although differing opinions are a vital part of meaningful dialogue, responses should focus on ideas rather than individuals. Interruptions, personal attacks, slurs, or mocking of others' views will not be tolerated. Let's work together to create a space where everyone feels comfortable sharing their perspectives. Critiques should be grounded in evidence and feedback should be provided in a constructive and supportive way that contributes to everyone's learning.

Required Textbook: There are no required textbooks for this class. All readings will be available on Google Scholar and the University Library website. They will also be accessible through eLC.

2. Course Structure and Requirements

This course is designed to maximize student engagement and active participation, emphasizing collaboration, application of material, and critical thinking over traditional lectures. The structure aims to create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment that values diverse perspectives and learning styles.

Each class will include a lecture covering the theoretical and empirical background of the week's topic, alongside discussions, group activities, and case studies that encourage students to critically engage with the topic's discussion questions. These highly interactive sessions encourage students to engage deeply with the material and their peers.

Grading Policy: Syllabus Quiz (5%), Attendance (5%), Class Participation (15%), Midterm Quiz (20%), Research Reflection Memo (15%), Case Selection (15%), Final Essay (25%).

- **Syllabus Quiz (5%):** The quiz consists of multiple-choice questions based on the syllabus. Students will have *two* attempts per quiz, and the highest score will count toward their final grade. Late submissions will **NOT** be accepted.

The due is **8/30 (Saturday), 11:59 pm.**

- **Attendance (5%):** Regular attendance is expected in this course, as it significantly contributes to your learning experience. You are allowed up to three absences without justification. For each additional absence beyond the allowed *three*, the grade will be deducted.

- Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class either by calling names or through a posting submitted after completing an in-class activity. If the attendance is not recorded for any reason, it is student's responsibility to inform me immediately after class to ensure you are not marked absent.
- Please note that you must email me in advance if you anticipate being late. Late arrivals beyond 15 minutes into the class may be treated as an absence. Also, please be aware that lateness without prior email notification may be treated as an absence. Failure to notify me after the class will also be considered an absence.
- If you are out for a prolonged period, please get in touch with me. I also encourage you to reach out to Student Care and Outreach (sco@uga.edu) for assistance. They can contact all your professors on your behalf.

- **Class Participation (15%):** Simply showing up to class does not constitute participation. You are expected to participate actively in class and group discussions. Active participation is essential for your learning journey in this course. Class activities and assignments are designed to facilitate skill-building and critical thinking. Participation involves actively engaging in class activities such as group discussions, simulation, case studies by presenting arguments grounded in assigned readings and research, and asking insightful questions.

5% of the participation will be evaluated based on the first half of the semester, and the other 5% will be evaluated based on the second half.

- **Midterm Quiz (20%):** The midterm quiz is designed to assess your understanding of key concepts, theories, and cases discussed in the course. This assessment will test your ability to synthesize and critically engage with the multifaceted nature of democracy and democratization within a comparative framework.

The quiz will include multiple-choice, true/false, and short-answer questions, and you will have *one* attempt to complete it. It will be administered electronically via eLC. Although this quiz will be open-note and open-book, I **HIGHLY** recommend reviewing the material in advance to perform well. Late submissions will **NOT** be accepted.

The due is **10/9 (Friday), 11:59 pm.**

- **Research Reflection Memo (15%):** Each student will submit a memo of at least **300 words (excluding references)** to the research reflection board on eLC. Make sure to meet the word count and response requirements to receive full credit. This assignment is designed to guide students through the initial stages of the research design process within the field of democracy and democratization from a comparative perspective. The memo will consist of following three sections.
 - Research Question (5%): Students will choose one keyword that represents an important concept, theory, or issue related to democracy and democratization. In the first paragraph, explain what the keyword means and how it helps us understand the nature of democracy. For example, how it relates to democratic values, institutions, or current challenges. Then, using this keyword as a starting point, develop a clear and focused research question. This question should be something you can explore further by reviewing existing research or collecting data, and it should serve as a possible foundation for a future research project.
 - Existing Research (5%): Using the selected keyword and research question, students will identify **at least three** scholarly articles or books that are relevant to their topic. The goal is to understand how existing literature has addressed the issue, whether directly or indirectly, and to engage with key findings, theories, and methodological approaches used in the field.
 - Hypothesis Generation (5%): In this final section, students will think about how well the research articles they found answer their research question. If the articles do not fully answer the question or leave some parts unclear, explain what is missing and why more research is needed. If the articles do answer the question well, think about what else could be studied next. Are there other related issues, outcomes, or groups that could be explored? Based on this reflection, students will write **at least one** possible hypothesis (a specific, testable statement) that future research could investigate. This hypothesis will later guide your case selection and serve as the basis for your final essay.

The due is **10/24 (Friday), 11:59 pm.**

- **Case Selection (15%):** Each student will submit a memo of at least **300 words (excluding references)** to the case selection board on eLC. Make sure to meet the word count and response requirements to receive full credit. This assignment is designed to help students take the next step in the research process by selecting appropriate empirical examples that align with the research question and hypothesis they developed in the previous assignment. The memo will consist of the following three sections.
 - Identify the Unit of Observation and Range of Cases (5%): Clearly define what you are observing in your research. Is your unit of observation a country, a political party, an election, a social movement, or an institution? Next, identify the broader set of possible cases from which your chosen case(s) could be drawn. For example, if your research question is about democratic backsliding, your range of cases might include all countries classified as democracies since 1990.
 - Select a Case(s) (5%): From your possible cases, choose one or more specific cases that are especially relevant for exploring your research question and hypothesis.
 - Hypothesis Generation (5%): Provide a clear explanation of why this case (or these cases) offer meaningful insights into your research question. Does it represent a typical case, a deviant case, or a critical case for testing your hypothesis? How will studying this case contribute to answering your broader research question? Keep in mind that this selection will serve as the foundation for your final essay, so your justification should show strong alignment between the case and your earlier research design.

The due is **11/14 (Friday), 11:59 pm.**

- **Final Essay (25%):** This final essay builds upon the earlier *Research Reflection Memo* and *Case Selection* assignment. Students will identify one clear research question related to comparative democracy and democratization, ideally developed through class discussions, journal reflections, or previous assignments. In the essay, students will present their own answer to the research question, which may draw from existing theories or frameworks introduced in the course. They will then apply and test this answer using a carefully selected case study.

Grading will be based on the quality of the research question, the strength and clarity of the argument, the effective use of the case study, and the overall structure and writing of the essay. Detailed guidance and examples will be provided during class sessions.

- Introduction (3%): Introduce the topic and briefly preview the structure of your paper by outlining the main sections.
- Research Question (2%): Explain a research question extended from the readings and class discussions based on Research Reflection Memo.
- Literature Review (5%): Include descriptions of the source's main arguments, hypotheses, and application to your theory based on Research Reflection Memo.
- Theory (5%): Provide your main arguments and hypothesis(es)
- Case Study (5%): Select a case (or cases) that helps you answer your research question based on Case Selection assignment. Discuss how the case connects to your research question and why it is useful for illustrating or challenging your main claims.
- Conclusion (3%): Summarize the paper and describe what we know better after reading your paper.
- References (2%): Include *at least five* key **ACADEMIC** sources(e.g., peer-reviewed journal articles, working papers from research institutes) that are used in your project.

The due is **12/8 (Monday), 5 pm.**

The paper should be *at least five pages* in length, *excluding references*, and must be double-spaced with 1" margins, using 12pt, Times New Roman font. Students may use any standard citation style, such as [APA Style](#), [Chicago Manual of Style](#), or [MLA Style](#). Please be consistent in your use of the chosen style throughout the paper. Papers that do not follow the required formatting guidelines may not receive full credit.

- The overall class grade will be calculated on the following scale:

93.00–100	A	74.00–76.99	C
90.00–92.99	A–	70.00–73.99	C–
87.00–89.99	B+	67.00–69.99	D+
84.00–86.99	B	64.00–66.99	D
80.00–83.99	B–	60.00–63.99	D–
77.00–79.99	C+	0–59.99	F

Late Work Policy: Late work, defined as submitting assignments after the established deadline, will incur a deduction of 10% of the grade. Work submitted as makeup for an excused absence is exempt from this policy.

- Late submissions will **NOT** be accepted for the **Syllabus Quiz** and **Midterm Quiz**. These assessments will automatically close on the scheduled deadline.
- **Research Reflection Memo** submitted **after 10/24, 11:59pm, but before 10/25, 11:59pm (via eLC)** will be considered late work. No late submissions will be accepted.

- **Case Selection** submitted **after 11/14, 11:59pm, but before 11/15, 11:59pm (via eLC)** will be considered late work. No late submissions will be accepted.
- **Final Essay** submitted **after 12/8, 5 pm, but before 12/9, 5 pm (via eLC)** will be considered late work. No late submissions will be accepted.

Re-Scheduled/Missed Works: If you are unable to complete an assignment due to a valid reason (e.g., personal health issues, starting an internship), you must email me at least one week before the deadline to discuss rescheduling options. Please be aware that contacting me after the deadline may result in the inability to accommodate a makeup assignment. Your prompt communication and cooperation are greatly appreciated.

Grading Disputes: If you wish to dispute a graded assignment, you can send me a one-page memo within one week of receiving the graded assignment. The memo should address the feedback provided on the assignment with your class and reading notes. I will carefully review the assignment and its grade, given that the memo provides a reason to do so. After regrading, you must accept the reviewed grade, even if the grade is lower than the original assignment.

Communication: I will inform you about the course and any updates to the syllabus via email. If you have any questions, please email me at solbi.kim@uga.edu. Please do **NOT** reply to messages sent from @uga.view.usg.edu, as those emails are generated automatically, and I cannot view or respond to them.

- When emailing me, please use your UGA email account and include the course number in the subject line (e.g., [INTL 4315]), so I can identify which course you're referring to and avoid confusion with students from other classes. I will typically respond to emails within 24 hours. Before reaching out, check the syllabus to confirm that your question has not already been addressed.
- Please begin your email with an appropriate salutation, including my name (e.g., "Dear Professor Kim"), and conclude with your name. It's best to avoid starting emails with casual phrases like "Hey", as these are not appropriate in academic communication.
- I believe that most students are familiar with the basic principles of professional email communication, but if you need additional guidance, feel free to visit: [How to Email a Professor](#).

Important Dates:

Syllabus Quiz Due	8/30 (Saturday), 11:59 pm, eLC
Research Reflection Memo Due	10/24 (Friday), 11:59 pm, eLC
Withdrawal Deadline	11/12 (Wednesday)
Case Selection Due	11/14 (Friday), 11:59 pm, eLC
Holiday: Thanksgiving - No Classes	11/26–28 (Wednesday–Friday)
Final Essay Due	12/8 (Monday), 5 pm, eLC
Grades Due	12/15(Monday), 12 pm

3. University Policies

Academic Honesty: Please see the UGA Honor Code: "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at www.uga.edu/ovpi.

In addition, unless explicitly stated, artificial intelligence-based technologies, such as Chat-GPT, must not be used to generate responses for student assignments. Using such programs for any course assignments,

including reflection memos, journal reflections, final essays, and in-class participation, is not allowed in this course and could result in failing this class and other undesirable outcomes.

Disclaimer: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; changes communicated to the class by the instructor may be required.

Accommodations Due to Disability: If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, please register with the Disability Resource Center. They can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting <http://drc.uga.edu>. See https://drc.uga.edu/content_page/sample-access-statements for additional examples.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

- Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the Embark@UGA program, which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.
- UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health at any time, any place. Whether on campus or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.
 - Well-being Resources: <https://well-being.uga.edu>
 - Student Care and Outreach: <https://sco.uga.edu>
 - University Health Center: <https://healthcenter.uga.edu>
 - Counseling and Psychiatric Services: <https://caps.uga.edu> or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273
 - Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: <https://healthpromotion.uga.edu>
- Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting <https://well-being.uga.edu>.

The Use of AI for Coursework Policies: At UGA, the default rule for student use of AI in their coursework is that it is not permitted unless explicitly authorized by the course instructor before turning it in. In this class, in line with UGA policy, a detailed statement about using AI tools must be disclosed when you submit your assignment.

If you're not sure where the line is between collaborating with AI and copying from AI, I recommend that you don't have both your assignment and the AI tool open on the same device. Instead, you can just take notes in your own words while you interact with the AI tool and then use them to remember what you've learned and inform your work. Lastly, AI tools can be very wrong and biased, so it is your job to check the validity and usefulness of any AI result you use.

4. Course Outline

| Week 1: Introduction

- 8/14: Introduction & Syllabus Review

| Week 2: What is Democracy?

- 8/19: Definition of Democracy

Readings

- Dahl, R. A. (2015). What is Democracy? In *On Democracy* (2nd ed., pp. 35–50). Yale University Press.

- 8/21: Quality of Democracy

Readings

- Diamond, L., & Morlino, L. (2004). The Quality of Democracy: An Overview. *Journal of Democracy*, 15(4), 20-31.

Week 3: Why Democracy Matters?

- 8/26: Values of Democracy

Readings

- Dahl, R. A. (2015). Why Democracy? In *On Democracy* (2nd ed., pp. 44–61). Yale University Press.
- Sen, A. (1999). Democracy as a Universal Value, *Journal of Democracy*, 10(3), 3-17.

- 8/28: Challenges to Democratic Values

Readings

- Diamond, L. (2015). Facing Up to the Democratic Recession. *Journal of Democracy*, 26(1), 141-155.
- Foreign Policy Analytics. (2022, September 14). *Defending Democracy in the Digital Age*. Foreign Policy.

Syllabus Quiz Due: 8/30 (Saturday), 11:59 pm

Week 4: Measuring Democracy

- 9/2: Measuring Democracy

Readings

- Bernhagen, P. (2009). Measuring Democracy and Democratization. In C. W. Haerpfer, P. Bernhagen, R. F. Inglehart, & C. Welzel (Eds.), *Democratization* (pp. 52–66). Oxford University Press.

- 9/4: In-Class Activity (Comparing Democracy Index)

What are existing measures of democracy? Do you think these measures are valid and reliable?

Readings

- Boese, V. A. (2019). How (not) to Measure Democracy. *International Area Studies Review*, 22(2), 95-127.
- Freedom House: <https://freedomhouse.org/reports/freedom-world/freedom-world-research-methodology>
- IDEA: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/tools/state-democracy-assessments>
- Polity: <https://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html>
- V-Dem: <https://v-dem.net/data/the-v-dem-dataset/>

Week 5: Conference

- 9/9 – 9/11 : No Classes

Week 6: Theories of Democratization

- 9/16: Social and Economic Factors

Readings

- Robinson, J. A. (2006). Economic Development and Democracy. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 9(1), 503-527.
- Lipset, S. M. (1959). Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy. *American Political Science Review*, 53(01), 69-105. (*Optional but highly recommended*)

- 9/18: Political Culture

Readings

- Gorodnichenko, Y., & Roland, G. (2021). Culture, Institutions and Democratization. *Public Choice*, 187, 165-195.
- Inglehart, R. F. (2019). Cultural Evolution: People's Motivations are Changing, and Reshaping the World. *Social Forces*, 98(4), 1-3.

Week 7: Authoritarianism

- 9/23: What is Authoritarian Regimes?

Readings

- Hadenius, A., & Teorell, J. (2007). Pathways from Authoritarianism. *Journal of Democracy*, 18(1), 143-157.

- 9/25: Survival of Authoritarianism

Readings

- Repucci, S., & Slipowitz, A. (2022). *The Global Expansion of Authoritarian Rule*. Freedom House.
- Guriev, S., & Treisman, D. (2023). Introduction. In *Spin Dictators: The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century* (pp. 3-29). Princeton University Press. (*Optional*)

Week 8: The International Context

- 9/30: Latin America and Southern Europe

Readings

- Puddington, A. (2015, August 3). *Latin America Shows That Democratization Is Possible Anywhere*. Freedom House.
- Bunce, V. (2003). Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from the Postcommunist Experience. *World Politics*, 55(2), 167-192.

- 10/2: China and Russia

Readings

- Mattingly, D. (2024, October 14). *China's Soft Sell of Autocracy Is Working: And America's Efforts to Promote Democracy Are Failing*. Foreign Affairs.
- Gandhi, J., & Lust-Okar, E. (2009). Elections Under Authoritarianism. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12(1), 403-422.

Week 9: Midterm

- 10/7: Midterm Quiz Review

***Midterm Quiz Available After Class**

- 10/9: **Midterm Quiz Due: 10/9(Thursday), 11:59 pm** (No Class)

| Week 10: Democratic Institutions

- 10/14: Political Parties and Party Systems

Readings

- Morlino, L. (2019). Political Parties. In C. W. Haerpfer, P. Bernhagen, C. Welzel, & R. Inglehart (Eds.), *Democratization* (2nd ed., pp. 212-227). Oxford University Press.
- Aldrich, J. H. (2008). Political Parties in and out of Legislatures. In R. E. Goodin (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science* (pp. 196-216). Oxford University Press.

- 10/16: Parliamentary vs. Presidential Systems

Readings

- Norris, P. (2008). Presidential and Parliamentary Executives. In *Driving Democracy: Do Power-Sharing Institutions Work?* (pp. 132-156). Cambridge University Press.
- Horowitz, D. L. (1990). Comparing Democratic Systems. *Journal of Democracy*, 1(4), 73-79.

| Week 11: Electoral Systems

- 10/21: Types of Electoral Systems

Readings

- Gallagher, M., & Mitchell, P. (2018). Dimensions of Variation in Electoral Systems. In E. S. Herron, R. J. Pekkanen, & M. S. Shugart, (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems* (pp. 23-40). Oxford University Press.

- 10/23: In-Class Activity (Political System Design)

How would you design a political system? What factors would you prioritize to ensure effective decision-making, representation, and accountability?

Readings

- Lijphart, A. (2004). Constitutional Design for Divided Societies. *Journal of Democracy*, 15(2), 96-109.

Research Reflection Memo Due: 10/24(Friday), 11:59 pm

| Week 12: Civil Society and Democracy

- 10/28: Social Capital and Civil Society

Readings

- Letki, N. (2019). Social Capital and Civil Society. In C. W. Haerpfer, P. Bernhagen, C. Welzel, & R. Inglehart (Eds.), *Democratization* (2nd ed., pp. 171-181). Oxford University Press.
- Paxton, P. (2002). Social Capital and Democracy: An Interdependent Relationship. *American Sociological Review*, 67(2), 254-277.

- 10/30: Political Participation

Readings

- McAllister, I. & White, S. (2019). Conventional Citizen Participation. In C. W. Haerpfer, P. Bernhagen, C. Welzel, & R. Inglehart (Eds.), *Democratization* (2nd ed., pp. 197-211). Oxford University Press.
- Rom, M. C., Hidaka, M., & Walker, R. B. (2022). [How Do Individuals Participate Other than Voting?](#) *Introduction to Political Science*. OpenStax.

Week 13: Women and Minorities in Democracy

- 11/4: Gender and Democracy

Readings

- Paxton, P. & Velasco, K. (2019). Gender and Democratization. In C. W. Haerpfer, P. Bernhagen, C. Welzel, & R. Inglehart (Eds.), *Democratization* (2nd ed., pp. 158-170). Oxford University Press.
- Muschett, M. & Vaeza, M.-N. (2024, January 4). [There is No Democracy Without Gender Equality](#). UNDP.

- 11/6: Minorities and Democracy

Readings

- Rovny, J. (2023). Antidote to Backsliding: Ethnic Politics and Democratic Resilience. *American Political Science Review*, 117(4), 1410-1428.
You can refer to the article by Rovny J. (2023, February 2). [Why Ethnic Politics can Act as a Check on Democratic Backsliding](#). LSE Blogs.

Week 14: Media and Democracy

- 11/11: Digital Activism

Readings

- Diamond, L. & Whittington, Z. (2019). Social Media. In C. W. Haerpfer, P. Bernhagen, C. Welzel, & R. Inglehart (Eds.), *Democratization* (2nd ed., pp. 253-266). Oxford University Press.
- Biswal, K. K., & Panda, B. N. P. (2024, October 26). [From Hashtag to Action: The Digital and Online Activism](#). The Sunday Guardian Live.

- 11/13: Digital Authoritarianism

Readings

- Roberts, T., & Oosterom, M. (2024). Digital Authoritarianism: A Systematic Literature Review. *Information Technology for Development*, 1-25.
- Polyakova, A., & Meserole, C. (2019). Exporting Digital Authoritarianism: The Russian and Chinese Models. *Policy Brief, Democracy and Disorder Series*, 1-22.

Case Selection Due: 11/14(Friday), 11:59 pm

Week 15: Democratic Futures

- 11/18: Threats to Democracy

Readings

- Noakes, S. & Wilson, C. (2023). Threats to Democracy: Backsliding, Coups and Populism. In *Democratization: A Thematic Approach* (pp. 138-161). Bloomsbury Academic.

- Carothers, T., & Press, B. (2022, October 20). *Understanding and Responding to Global Democratic Backsliding*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

- 11/20: Still Democracy

Readings

- Welzel, C., Inglehart, R., Bernhagen, P., & Haerpfer, C. W. (2019). Conclusion: The Future of Democratization. In C. W. Haerpfer, P. Bernhagen, C. Welzel, & R. Inglehart (Eds.), *Democratization* (2nd ed., pp. 423-431). Oxford University Press.
- Welzel, C. (2021). *Why the Future is Democratic*. *Journal of Democracy*, 32(2), 132-144.

Week 16: Thanksgiving

- 11/25 – 11/27 : No Classes

Week 17: Class Reflection

- 12/2: Final Class Wrap-Up and Reflection

Final Essay Due: 12/8(Monday), 5 pm