

# Autocratic Politics

Fall 2022

Mai Hassan

OHS: Mondays 3:00-4:30pm. Signup here: <https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/ntagu>

## Course Description:

More than half of the world's population lives under some form of autocracy. Authoritarian regimes feature prominently in international conflict, human rights abuses, and economic exploitation. We will examine variation in authoritarian regimes and how they stay in power. All assigned book chapters will be available on the course website; students should access academic articles through Google Scholar. The course will consist of a two-hour seminar. This course is in the Comparative Politics subfield.

## Course Requirements:

- **Discussant duties:** 30%. Each graduate student will serve as a “discussant” for 2 weeks (or potentially just 1, depends on class size). This involves two core tasks. First, on the Thursday before class, discussants should email out the best order of readings and why, as well as 3-5 discussion questions. Second, discussants will begin the class with a 20-25 minute presentation. The presentation should lay out the core ideas/themes from the required readings as opposed to simply summarizing them. I would also encourage the presentations to draw from the supplemental reading list or other sources as necessary. I expect prepping for one's discussant duties will require substantial prep time, so I will try to align student interests with course topics.
- **In-class discussion:** 30%. This class is a seminar and requires active participation. Attendance is required. Students should come to class having completed, and thought about, the assigned readings.
- **Final written assignment and class presentation:** 40%. You have one of three options for your final written assignment (below). In addition, students will give a 15-minute presentation on their research and field 10-15m of questions during (one of) the final class session(s). I encourage you to view the in-class presentation as an opportunity to get feedback from your classmates before the final paper is due.
  1. Students with a current working paper on a topic related to authoritarian politics can choose to substantially revise that working paper. For this option, submit the initial version of the paper the first week of class and I will determine if it fits within the purview of the class. If so, schedule a meeting with me sometime before Fall Break to

discuss how to improve the paper. Then, submit a final version at the end of term. This option is for fairly developed working papers, or for graduate students who intend to spend a substantial portion of the semester revising the paper. The hope is for students to submit the paper for publication soon after the end of the course.

2. Students can submit a research design for a research project relating to authoritarian regimes. Students who choose this assignment should schedule a meeting with me sometime before Fall Break to talk about their research design.
3. Students can write a paper that replicates, and improves upon, a quantitative paper that is discussed in the course or a quantitative paper on autocracy that was published in the last five years. The improvements can be additional robustness tests, a replication of the results using a different dataset or definition of key concepts, a test that examines an additional implication of the theory, etc. Students who choose this assignment should schedule a meeting with me sometime before Fall Break to propose a paper to replicate and discuss potential improvements.

## Schedule:

September 12: Introduction. *Guiding question: how should we define and categorize autocracy?*

- Required
  - Ashley Anderson, Jason Brownlee, and Killian Clarke. 2022. “Autocracy: A Substantive Approach.” *Working Paper*.
  - Barbara Geddes. 1999. “What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years?” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2: 115 - 144.
  - Milan Svoblik. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge University Press, Chs. 1-2.
- A partial supplemental reading list
  - Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith. 2002. “Political Institutions, Policy Choice and the Survival of Leaders.” *British Journal of Political Science*, 32(4): 559-590.
  - Mary E. Gallagher and Jonathan K. Hanson. 2015. “Power Tool or Dull Blade? Selectorate Theory for Autocracies.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18: 367-385.

September 19: Formal Institutions. *Guiding question: how do formal, nominally democratic institutions bolster autocracy?*

- Required
  - Carles Boix and Milan Svoblik. 2013. “The Foundations of Limited Authoritarian Government: Institutions, Commitment, and Power-Sharing in Dictatorships.” *Journal of Politics*, 75(2): 300 - 316.
  - Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar. 2009. “Elections Under Authoritarianism,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12: 403-22.
  - Milan Svoblik. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*, Ch. 4.
  - Rory Truex. 2016. *Making Autocracy Work*. Cambridge University Press, Chs. 1, 3, 5.
- A partial supplemental reading list
  - Lisa Blaydes. 2010. *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak’s Egypt*. Cambridge University Press.
  - Jason Brownlee. 2007. *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*. Cambridge University Press.
  - Jennifer Gandhi. 2008. *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*. Cambridge University Press.
  - Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar. “Elections Under Authoritarianism,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12: 403-22.
  - Beatriz Magaloni. 2006. *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico*. Cambridge University Press.

- Beatriz Magaloni. 2008. “Credible Power-Sharing and the Longevity of Authoritarian Rule.” *Comparative Political Studies*, 41: 715-41.
- Melanie Manion. 2015. *Information for Autocrats: Representation in Chinese Local Congress*. Cambridge University Press.
- Edmund Malesky and Paul Schuler. 2010. “Nodding or Needling: Analyzing Delegate Responsiveness in an Authoritarian Parliament.” *American Political Science Review*, 104.3: 482-502.
- Anne Meng. *Constraining Dictatorship*. Cambridge University Press.
- Andrew Nathan. 2003. “Authoritarian Resilience.” *Journal of Democracy*, 14.1: 6-17.

September 26: Business, Property Rights, Economic Growth under Autocracy. *Guiding question: how and why do autocrats develop (stymie) for economic growth??*

- Required

- Xue Hou. 2019. *The Private Sector in Public Office*. Cambridge University Press, Chs. 1-3.
- Ora John Reuter and David Szakonyi. 2019. “Elite Defection under Autocracy: Evidence from Russia.” *American Political Science Review*, 111.2: 552-568.
- Yuhua Wang. 2015. *Tying the Autocrat’s Hands*. Cambridge University Press, Chs. 1-2, 5.

- A partial supplemental reading list

- Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson. 2006. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Michael Albertus. 2015. *Autocracy and Redistribution*. Cambridge University Press.
- Yuen Yuen Ang. 2016. *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*. Cornell University Press.
- Yuen Yuen Ang. 2020. *China’s Gilded Age: The Paradox of Economic Boom and Vast Corruption*. Cambridge University Press.
- Quintin H. Beazer. 2012. “Bureaucratic Discretion, Business Investment, and Uncertainty.” *Journal of Politics*, 74 (3), 637-652.
- Edmund Malesky. 2008. “Straight Ahead on Red: How Foreign Direct Investment Empowers Subnational Leaders.” *Journal of Politics*, 70.1: 97-119.
- Thomas B. Pepinsky. 2009. *Economic Crises and the Breakdown of Authoritarian Regimes*. Cambridge University Press.
- Benjamin Smith. 2006. “The Wrong Kind of Crisis: Why Oil Booms and Busts Rarely Lead to Authoritarian Breakdown.” *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 40(4): 55-76.
- Joseph Wright. 2008. “Do Authoritarian Institutions Constrain? How Legislatures Affect Economic Growth and Investment.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 52.2: 322-343.

- Joseph Wright, Erica Frantz, and Barbara Geddes. 2013. “Oil and Autocratic Regime Survival.” *British Journal of Political Science*, 45: 287 - 306.

October 3: Informal Institutions and Regime Elites. *Guiding question: to what extent are autocrats ruling through informal mechanisms (within formal institutions)?*

- Required

- Jennifer Gandhi and Jane Lawrence Sumner. 2020. “Measuring the Consolidation of Power in Nondemocracies.” *Journal of Politics*, 82.4: 1545-1558.
- Jean Lachapelle, Steven Levitsky, Lucan Way, and Adam Casey. 2020. “Social Revolution and Authoritarian Durability.” *World Politics*, 72.4: 557-600.
- Thomas Pepinsky. 2014. “The Institutional Turn in Comparative Authoritarianism.” *British Journal of Political Science*, 44.3: 631-653.
- Fiona Shen-Bayh. 2018. “Strategies of Repression: Judicial and Extrajudicial Methods of Autocratic Survival.” *World Politics*, 70(3): 321 - 357.
- Victor Shih, Christopher Adolph, and Mingxing Liu. 2012. “Getting Ahead in the Communist Party: Explaining the Advancement of Central Committee Members in China.” *American Political Science Review*, 106.1: 166-187.
- Daniel Slater. 2010. *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge University Press, Ch. 1.

- A partial supplemental reading list

- Leonardo R. Arriola. 2009. “Patronage and Political Stability in Africa,” *Comparative Political Studies*, 42(10):1339-1362.
- Laure Bokobza, Suthan Krishnarajan, Jacob Nyrup, Casper Sakstrup, & Lasse Aaskoven. Forthcoming. “The Morning After: Cabinet Instability and the Purging of Ministers after Failed Coup Attempts in Autocracies.” *Journal of Politics*.
- Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz. 2018. *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization, and Collapse*. Cambridge University Press.
- Edward Goldring and Austin Matthews. Forthcoming. “To Purge or Not to Purge? An Individual-Level Quantitative Analysis of Elite Purges in Dictatorships.” *British Journal of Political Science*.
- Mai Hassan. Forthcoming. “New Insights On Africa’s Autocratic Past.” *African Affairs*.
- Philip Roessler. 2016. *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa: The Logic of the Coup-Civil War Trap*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jun Koga Sudduth. 2017. “Strategic Logic of Elite Purges in Dictatorships.” *Comparative Political Studies*, 50.13: 1768-1801.
- Josef Woldense. 2018. “The Ruler’s Game of Musical Chairs: Shuffling During the Reign of Ethiopia’s Last Emperor.” *Social Networks*, 52: 154-166.

October 17: Bureaucratic and Security Personnel Management. *Guiding question: how do autocrats staff and manage their (security) bureaucracies?*

- Required

- Sheena Chestnut Greitens. 2016. *Dictators & Their Secret Police: Coercive Institutions & State Violence Under Authoritarianism*. Cambridge University Press, Pgs. 1-41, Ch. 3.
- Mai Hassan. 2020. *Regime Threats and State Solutions: Bureaucratic Loyalty and Embeddedness in Kenya*. Cambridge University Press, Chs. 1-2, 4-5 (skip sections 4.3-4.5.2).
- Daniel Mattingly. Forthcoming. “How the Party Commands the Gun: The Foreign-Domestic Threat Dilemma in China.” *American Journal of Political Science*.

- A partial supplemental reading list

- Eva Bellin. 2004. “The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective.” *Comparative Politics*, 36(2): 139 - 157.
- Lisa Blaydes. 2018. *State of Repression: Iraq under Saddam Hussein*. Princeton University Press.
- Allison Hartnett, Nicholas Lotito, and Elizabeth Nugent. 2020. “The Colonial Origins of Coercion in Egypt.” *Working Paper*.
- Junyan Jiang. 2018. “Making Bureaucracy Work: Patronage Networks, Performance Incentives, and Economic Development in China.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 62.4: 982–999.
- Pierre Landry. 2008. *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China: The Communist Party’s Control of Local Elites in the Post-Mao Era*. Cambridge University Press.
- Barbara Maria Piotrowska. 2020. “The Price of Collaboration: How Authoritarian States Retain Control.” *Comparative Political Studies*, 53.13: 2091-2117.
- Pablo Policzer. 2009. *The Rise & Fall of Repression in Chile*. University of Notre Dame Press.
- James Quinlivan. 1999. “Coup-Proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East.” *International Security*, 24.2: 131-165.
- Adam Scharpf, and Christian Glabel. 2020. “Why Underachievers Dominate Secret Police Organizations: Evidence from Autocratic Argentina.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 64.4: 791-806.
- Naunihal Singh. 2014. *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups*. JHU Press.
- Jun Koga Sudduth. 2017. “Coup Risk, Coup-Proofing and Leader Survival.” *Journal of Peace Research*, 54.1: 3-15.
- Henry Thomson. 2022. “The Bureaucratic Politics of Authoritarian Repression: Intra-Agency Reform and Surveillance Capacity in Communist Poland.” *Working Paper*.

October 24: Repression. *Guiding questions: who do autocrats repress? how? why?*

- Required

- Chantal Berman. 2021. “Policing the Organizational Threat in Morocco: Protest and Public Violence in Liberal Autocracies.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 65.3: 733-754.
- Jane Esberg. 2021. “Anticipating Dissent: The Repression of Politicians in Pinochet’s Chile.” *Journal of Politics*, 83.2: 689-705.
- Anita Gohdes. 2020. “Repression Technology: Internet Accessibility and State Violence.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 64.3: 488-503.
- Sheena Chestnut Greitens. 2016. *Dictators & Their Secret Police: Coercive Institutions & State Violence Under Authoritarianism*, Pgs. 41-71, Ch. 6.
- Jean Lachapelle. Forthcoming. “Repression Reconsidered: State Violence and Power Consolidation in Authoritarian Regimes.” *Comparative Politics*.
- Jennifer Pan and Alexandra A. Siegel. 2020. “How Saudi Crackdowns Fail to Silence Online Dissent.” *American Political Science Review*, 114.1: 109-125.

- A partial supplemental reading list

- Consuelo Amat. 2022. “Mobilizing under Repression: Opposition Groups and the Church in Pinochet’s Chile.” *Working Paper*.
- Christian Davenport. 2007. “State Repression and the Tyrannical Peace.” *Journal of Peace Research*, 44(4): 485 - 504.
- Elizabeth R. Nugent. 2020. *After Repression: How Polarization Derails Democratic Transition*. Princeton University Press.
- Christopher Sullivan. 2016. “Political Repression and the Destruction of Dissident Organizations: Evidence from the Archives of the Guatemalan National Police.” *World Politics*, 68.4: 645-676.
- Arturas Rozenas. 2020. “A Theory of Demographically Targeted Repression.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 64.7-8: 1254-1278.
- Xu Xu. 2021. “To Repress or to Co-Opt? Authoritarian Control in the Age of Digital Surveillance.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 65.2: 309-325.
- Lauren Young. 2019. “The Psychology of State Repression: Fear and Dissent Decisions in Zimbabwe.” *American Political Science Review*, 113(1): 140-155.

October 31: Co-Optation; Coercive Distribution. *Guiding questions: who do autocrats co-opt? how? why?*

- Required

- Robert Bates. 1981. *Markets and States in Tropical Africa*. University of California Press, Chs. 5-7.

- Jennifer Pan. 2020. “Welfare for Autocrats : How Social Assistance in China Cares for Its Rulers.” *Oxford University Press*, Chs. 1-4.
- Bryn Rosenfeld. 2020. “The Autocratic Middle Class.” *Princeton University Press*, Chs. 1-3, 7.
- A partial supplemental reading list
  - Michael Albertus, Sofia Fenner, and Dan Slater. 2018. *Coercive Distribution*. Cambridge University Press.
  - Michael Albertus. 2021. *Property Without Rights: Origins and Consequences of the Property Rights Gap*. Cambridge University Press.
  - Cameron Ballard-Rosa. 2016. “Hungry for Change: Urban Bias and Autocratic Sovereign Debt Default.” *International Organization* 70(2): 313 - 346.
  - Mai Hassan, Daniel Mattingly, and Elizabeth R. Nugent. 2022. “Political Control.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 25.
  - Mai Hassan and Kathleen Klaus. 2022. “Closing the Gap: The Politics of Property Rights in Kenya.” *Working Paper*.
  - Henry Thomson. 2019. *Food and Power: Regime Type, Agricultural Policy, and Political Stability*. Cambridge University Press.
  - Jeremy Wallace. 2013. “Cities, Redistribution, and Authoritarian Regime Survival.” *Journal of Politics*, 75.3: 632-645.

November 7: Indoctrination through Censorship and Propaganda. *Guiding question: how do autocrats manipulate information? and why?*

- Required
  - Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman. 2019. “Informational Autocrats.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 33.4: 100-127.
  - Haifeng Huang. 2015. “Propaganda as Signaling.” *Comparative Politics*, 47.4: 419-444.
  - Margaret Roberts. 2018. *Censored: Distraction and Diversion Inside China’s Great Firewall*. Princeton University Press, Chs. 1-3.
  - Lisa Weeden. 1999. *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. University Of Chicago Press, Chs. 1-3.
- A partial supplemental reading list
  - Carter, Brett L. and Erin Baggott. Forthcoming. *Propaganda in Autocracies*. Cambridge University Press.
  - Mary Gallagher and Blake Miller. 2021. “Who Not What: The Logic of China’s Information Control Strategy.” *The China Quarterly*, 248.1: 1011-1036.
  - Holger Kern and Jens Hainmueller. 2009. “Opium for the Masses: How Foreign Media Can Stabilize Authoritarian Regimes.” *Political Analysis*, 17(4): 377-399.



- Jane Esberg. 2020. “Censorship as Reward: Evidence from Pop Culture Censorship in Chile.” *American Political Science Review*, 114.3: 821-836.
- Haifeng Huang. 2018. “The Pathology of Hard Propaganda.” *Journal of Politics*, 80.3: 1034-1038.
- Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. 2013. “How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression.” *American Political Science Review*, 107(2): 326-343.
- Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. 2017. “How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, Not Engaged Argument.” *American Political Science Review*, 111.3: 484-501.
- Andrew Little. “Propaganda and Credulity.” *Games and Economic Behavior*, 102: 224 - 232.
- Daniel Mattingly and Elaine Yao. Forthcoming. “How Soft Propaganda Persuades.” *Comparative Political Studies*.
- Augustina Paglayan. 2020. “The Non-Democratic Roots of Mass Education: Evidence from 200 Years.” *American Political Science Review*, 115.1: 179-198.
- Arturas Rozenas and Denis Stukal. 2019. “How Autocrats Manipulate Economic News: Evidence from Russia’s State-Controlled Television.” *Journal of Politics*, 81.3: 982-996.

November 14: Infiltration. *Guiding question: how do autocrats infiltrate society? why?*

- Required

- Daniel Mattingly. 2020. *The Art of Political Control*. Cambridge University Press, Chs. 1-2, 4, 6.
- Monika Nalepa and Grigore Pop-Eleches. Forthcoming. “Authoritarian Infiltration of Organizations: Causes and Consequences.” *Journal of Politics*.

- A partial supplemental reading list

- Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier. 1979. “Inducements versus Constraints: Disaggregating ‘Corporatism.’” *American Political Science Review*, 967-986.
- Christian Davenport. 2015. *How Social Movements Die: Repression and Demobilization of the Republic of New Africa*. Cambridge University Press.
- Philippe Schmitter. 1974. “Still the Century of Corporatism?” *The Review of Politics*, 36.1: 85-131.
- Xu Xu, Genia Kostka, and Xun Cao. Forthcoming. “Information Control and Public Support for Social Credit Systems in China.” *Journal of Politics*.

November 28: Authoritarian Legacies (or, if class is large, Day 1 of Presentations)

- Required

- Amaney Jamal. 2009. *Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World*. Princeton University Press, Chs. TBD.
- Yanilda Gonzalez. 2020. *Authoritarian Police in Democracy: Contested Security in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press, Chs. 1-3, 6.
- A partial supplemental reading list
  - Michael Bratton and Nicholas Van de Walle. 1997. *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
  - Anna Grzymala-Busse. 2007. *Rebuilding Leviathan: Party Competition and State Exploitation in Post-Communist Democracies*. Cambridge University Press. Princeton University Press.
  - Adrienne LeBas. 2011. *From Protest to Parties: Party-Building and Democratization in Africa*. Oxford University Press.
  - Jamie Loxton. 2021. *Conservative Party-Building in Latin America: Authoritarian Inheritance and Counterrevolutionary Struggle*. Oxford University Press.
  - Robert Mickey. 2015. *Paths Out of Dixie: The Democratization of Authoritarian Enclaves in America's Deep South, 1944-1972*. Princeton University Press.
  - Ken Ochieng' Opalo. 2019. *Legislative Development in Africa: Politics and Postcolonial Legacies*. Cambridge University Press.
  - Elizabeth Nugent. 2020. *After Repression: How Polarization Derails Democratic Transition*.
  - Rachel Riedl. 2014. *Authoritarian Origins of Democratic Party Systems in Africa*. Cambridge University Press.

December 5: Presentations

December 12: Doing Research in Authoritarian Regimes (On Zoom)

- Required
  - Graeme Blair. 2015. “Survey Methods for Sensitive Topics.” Comparative Politics Newsletter of the American Political Science Association.
  - Lily Tsai. 2010. “Quantitative Research and Issues of Political Sensitivity in Rural China” in *Contemporary Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods, and Field Strategies*. eds. Allen Carlson, Mary Gallagher, Kenneth Lieberthal, and Melanie Manion. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 14.
  - Sheena Chestnut Greitens and Rory Truex. 2020. “Repressive Experiences among China scholars: New Evidence from Survey Data.” *The China Quarterly*, 242: 349-375.
  - Melani Cammett. 2013. “Using Proxy Interviewing to Address Sensitive Topics” in *Interview Research in Political Science*. ed. Layna Mosley. Cornell University Press. Chapter 5.