

## Democracy in the Twenty First Century

Winter Term 2022/2023

Time: Monday 10:00 AM – 13:30 PM

Location: IBW Gebäude, Seminar Room S100

Instructor: Jun.-Prof. Chitrlekha Basu, PhD

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Office Hours: Wednesday 13:00 – 15:00 PM

**Overview.** Contemporary phenomena such as high levels of inequality, new forms of technology, political polarization and, most recently, a global pandemic, have transformed democratic politics in the twenty first century. Some commentators have even gone so far as to argue that the future of democracy is now in peril, suggesting that support for democracy is waning even among citizens of long-standing democracies. In this advanced seminar, we will consider how developments such as rising income and wealth inequality, broadband internet and social media, and the COVID-19 pandemic, have influenced the operation of democratic politics in contemporary societies. We will also seek to better understand the causes of key recent developments, such as the ‘crisis’ of social democracy in Western Europe, growing support for populist alternatives across the globe, and possible backsliding in Western democracies. Although we will, at times, broaden our regional focus, the bulk of the course will focus on the politics of the United States and Western Europe. Over the course of the semester, students will learn to how to interpret and evaluate recent quantitative research on these topics. Most sessions will consist of a mixture of oral presentations and class discussion. At the same time, students will have the opportunity to develop and enhance their own quantitative research skills, in preparation for an MA or PhD thesis.

**Prerequisites.** This is an advanced seminar, and I will assume that students are familiar with regression analysis and concepts like statistical significance. As such, it is essential that students have either previously completed the MA course in quantitative methods (or an equivalent), or take it jointly with this course if they have no background in quantitative research methods. Moreover, students should be able to understand and express themselves in English, as this will be the classroom language – though perfection is neither expected nor required. All coursework should also be completed in English.

**Assessment.** Your performance in this course will be evaluated using a portfolio examination, based on in-class participation (10%), two oral presentations (20% each), and a research paper making use of quantitative research methods (50%).

*Participation* [10%]. As this is a graduate seminar, and not a lecture, the success of the seminar will hinge entirely on active participation by students in class discussion. To obtain a high grade for participation, students should regularly attend and participate in weekly sessions, and, beginning 24 October (session 2), also hand in **two (reasonable) discussion questions** based on at least **two** of the week’s assigned readings via email by noon on the Sunday preceding the session.<sup>1</sup> If there is a reason why you

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<sup>1</sup>That is, I will expect to receive discussion questions from enrolled students beginning Sunday 23 November. This also

will not be able to regularly attend the seminar (e.g. outside employment or caring responsibilities), please let me know in advance so I can take this into account when determining your participation grade.

Discussion questions should be open-ended and leave room for discussion, disagreement and debate. For instance, “What explains the declining performance of social democratic parties in Europe?” is a good discussion question – researchers disagree on the answer. Discussion questions may also single out aspects of the research design that seem unpersuasive (i.e., Is the theoretical argument convincing? Does the evidence provided support the claim being made? Are the measures used appropriate given the research question?). On the other hand, students should not suggest discussion questions where the answer is clear and unambiguous from the assigned readings. For instance, “What are the two facets of social policy preferences, according to Trump and Cavallé?” is not a good discussion question. I will select two to three questions each week from those submitted to guide our class discussion of the assigned readings.

*Paper presentations* [20% each]. Each enrolled student will deliver an oral presentation of 20 minutes (with slides) on each of **two** assigned readings over the course of the semester. Students can only select to present **one** assigned reading in an individual session. Presentations will be allocated in the first week of the lecture period. Presentations should: (i) summarize the key argument(s) of the selected article or book chapter(s), (ii) identify the research question and methodology, (iii) identify the evidence on which any conclusions are based, as well as (iv) critically evaluate the research design and the overall persuasiveness of the study.

*Research paper* [50%]. One objective of this course is to help students learn how to write an empirical research paper using quantitative research methods and publicly available data. Enrolled students will therefore be expected to complete a research paper (double-spaced, font size 12, one inch margins, not more than 10,000 words) to be uploaded to ILIAS by 23:59 CET on **1 March 2023**. References and appendices will not count towards the word limit. Late submissions will be penalised unless previously arranged with the instructor. Paper submissions will be checked for plagiarism.

Students should also submit a 1-2 page proposal outlining the (i) research question/puzzle, (ii) working hypotheses, and (iii) proposed data and methodology (e.g. OLS with fixed effects) to the instructor by 23:59 CET on **16 January 2023**, also using ILIAS. The research question or motivating puzzle in the paper should concern one or more of the topics covered in the course. *Note: if fewer students enroll in this course than expected, we will skip the final topic and students will instead present their research proposals to the rest of the class in the last session of the course (in place of a written submission).*

**Readings.** All required readings are listed below and will be made available electronically to enrolled students via ILIAS.

#### **Key Dates.**

- 10 October 2022: first session
- 16 January 2023: last session and deadline for 1-2 page proposal (23:59 CET)
- 1 March 2023: deadline to submit research paper (23:59 CET)

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means that you do not need to read *all* of the assigned readings for each session.

## Course Schedule

### 10 October: Introduction (note: shorter session from 10.00 - 11.30 AM only)

- Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. 'What Democracy Is ...and Is Not.' *Journal of Democracy* 2(3): 75-88.
- David Stasavage. 2020. *The Decline and Rise of Democracy: A Global History from Antiquity to Today*, chs. 11 and 12.

### 24 October: Democracy in the New Gilded Age

- Adam Bonica et al. 2013. 'Why Hasn't Democracy Slowed Rising Inequality?' *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 27(3): 103-24.
- Kris-Stella Trump and Charlotte Cavaillé. 2015. 'The Two Facets of Social Policy Preferences.' *Journal of Politics* 77(1): 146-160.
- Tom O'Grady. 2022. *The Transformation of British Welfare Policy: Politics, Discourse and Public Opinion*, chs. 3 and 6.
- Frederick Solt. 2008. 'Economic Inequality and Democratic Political Engagement.' *American Journal of Political Science* 52(1): 48-60.
- Nicholas Carnes. 2012. 'Does the Numerical Underrepresentation of the Working Class in Congress Matter?' *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 37(1): 5-34.
- Lea Elsässer, Svenja Hense and Armin Schäfer. 2020. 'Not Just Money: Unequal Responsiveness in Egalitarian Democracies.' *Journal of European Public Policy* 28(12): 1890-1908.

### 7 November: Democracy in the Internet Age

- Yphtach Lelkes, Gaurav Sood and Shanto Iyengar. 2017. 'The Hostile Audience: The Effect of Access to Broadband Internet on Partisan Affect.' *American Journal of Political Science* 61(1): 5-20.
- Levi Boxell et al. 2017. 'Greater Internet Use is Not Associated with Faster Growth in Political Polarization Among US Demographic Groups.' *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114(40): 10612-10617.
- Andrew Guess, Jonathan Nagler and Joshua Tucker. 2019. 'Less Than You Think: Prevalence and Predictors of Fake News Dissemination on Facebook.' *Science Advances*, 5: eaau4586.
- Seva Gunitsky. 2015. 'Corrupting the Cyber-Commons: Social Media as a Tool of Autocratic Stability.' *Perspectives on Politics* 13(1): 42-54.
- John T. Jost et al. 2018. 'How Social Media Facilitates Political Protest: Information, Motivation and Social Networks.' *Political Psychology* 39(S1): 85-118.
- Max Schaub and Davide Morisi. 2020. 'Voter Mobilization in the Echo Chamber: Broadband Internet and the Rise of Populism in Europe.' *European Journal of Political Research* 59(4): 752-773.

#### **14 November: The Crisis of Social Democracy**

- Giacomo Benedetto, Simon Hix and Nicola Mastrococco. 2020. 'The Rise and Fall of Social Democracy, 1918-2017.' *American Political Science Review* 114(3): 928-939.
- Johannes Karreth, Jonathan Polk and Christopher Allen. 2013. 'Catchall or Catch and Release? The Electoral Consequences of Social Democratic Parties' March to the Middle in Western Europe.' *Comparative Political Studies* 46(7): 791-822.
- Line Rennwald and Geoffrey Evans. 2014. 'When Supply Creates Demand: Social Democratic Party Strategies and the Evolution of Class Voting.' *West European Politics* 37(5): 1108-1135.
- Tarik Abou-Chadi and Markus Wagner. 2019. 'The Electoral Appeal of Party Strategies in Postindustrial Societies: When Can the Mainstream Left Succeed?' *Journal of Politics* 81(4): 1405-19.
- Tarik Abou-Chadi et al. 2021. 'Old Left, New Left, Centrist or Left Nationalist? Determinants of Support for Different Social Democratic Programmatic Strategies.' Draft book chapter.
- Line Rennwald and Jonas Pontusson. 2021. 'Paper Stones Revisited: Class Voting, Unionization and the Electoral Decline of the Mainstream Left.' *Perspectives on Politics* 19(1): 36-54.

#### **21 November: The Rise of Populist Alternatives**

- Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris. 2017. 'Trump and the Populist Authoritarian Parties: The Silent Revolution in Reverse.' *Perspectives on Politics* 15(2): 443-454.
- Armin Schäfer. 2021. 'Cultural Backlash? How (Not) to Explain the Rise of Authoritarian Populism.' *British Journal of Political Science*, online first.
- Noam Gidron and Peter Hall. 2020. 'Populism as a Problem of Social Integration.' *Comparative Political Studies* 53(7): 1027-1059.
- Italo Colantone and Piero Stanig. 2018. 'The Trade Origins of Economic Nationalism: Import Competition and Voting Behavior in Western Europe.' *American Journal of Political Science* 62(4): 936-953.
- David Adler and Ben Ansell. 2020. 'Housing and Populism.' *West European Politics* 43(2): 344-365.
- Leonardo Baccini and Stephen Weymouth. 2021. 'Gone for Good: Deindustrialization, White Voter Backlash and US Presidential Voting.' *American Political Science Review* 115(2): 550-567.

#### **5 December: Democratic Erosion and Backsliding**

- Anna Lührmann and Staffan I. Lindberg. 'A Third Wave of Autocratization Is Here: What Is New About It?' *Democratization* 26(7): 1095-1113.
- Roberto Foa and Yascha Mounk. 2017. 'The Signs of Deconsolidation', *Journal of Democracy* 28(1): 5-16 **and** online exchange on "Democratic Deconsolidation" between Roberto Foa, Yascha Mounk, Amy Alexander, Christian Welzel, Pippa Norris and Erik Voeten in the *Journal of Democracy*, April 2017 (link here). [high page count but not very dense or technical]
- Matthew H. Graham and Milan W. Svoblik. 2020. 'Democracy in America? Partisanship, Polarization and the Robustness of Support for Democracy in the United States.' *American Political Science Review* 114(2): 392-409.

- Kevin Arceneaux and Rory Truex. 2022. 'Donald Trump and the Lie.' *Perspectives on Politics*, online first.
- Alexander Wuttke, Konstantin Gavras and Harald Schoen. 2022. 'Have Europeans Grown Tired of Democracy? New Evidence from Eighteen Consolidated Democracies, 1981-2018.' *British Journal of Political Science* 52(1): 416-428.
- Inga A.-L. Saikkonen and Henrik Serup Christensen. 2022. 'Guardians of Democracy or Passive Bystanders? A Conjoint Experiment on Elite Transgressions of Democratic Norms.' *Political Research Quarterly*, online first.

### **16 January: Democracy and COVID-19**

- Sarah Engler et al. 2021. 'Democracy in Times of the Pandemic: Explaining the Variation of COVID-19 Policies Across European Democracies.' *West European Politics* 44(5-6): 1077-1102.
- Michael Bayerlein et al. 2021. 'Populism and COVID-19: How Populist Governments (Mis)Handle the Pandemic.' *Journal of Political Institutions and Political Economy* 2: 389-428.
- Damien Bol, Marco Giani, André Blais and Peter John Loewen. 2021. 'The Effect of COVID-19 Lockdowns on Political Support: Some Good News for Democracy?' *European Journal of Political Research* 60(2): 497-505.
- Julian Erhardt, Markus Freitag and Maximilian Filsinger. 2022. 'Leaving Democracy? Pandemic Threat, Emotional Accounts and Regime Support in Comparative Perspective.' *West European Politics*, online first.
- Amanda B. Edgell et al. 2021. 'Pandemic Backsliding: Violations of Democratic Standards During COVID-19.' *Social Science & Medicine* 285: 114244.
- Keng-Chi Chang et al. 2022. 'COVID-19 Increased Censorship Circumvention and Access to Sensitive Topics in China.' *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 119(4): e2102818119.