



Democratic Erosion Consortium University Course Syllabus

Our syllabus is designed for a 13-week, semester-long course. Readings address the causes, symptoms, and consequences of democratic erosion. Over the course of the semester, students gain theoretical, empirical, and historical context to help them understand our unique political moment.

1. Setting the stage

Bermeo, Nancy. 2016. ["On Democratic Backsliding."](#) *Journal of Democracy* 27(1): pp. 5-19.

Cheeseman, Nic. ["How Zambia's long-stable democracy ended up in a political crisis in 2017."](#) *Quartz*. July 7, 2017.

Shifter, Michael. ["Nicaragua Is Turning into a Real-Life House of Cards."](#) *Foreign Policy*. September 5, 2016.

McCarthy, Michael. ["6 things you need to know about Venezuela's political and economic crisis."](#) *The Washington Post*. May 18, 2016.

Marcinkiewicz, Kamil and Mary Stegmaier. ["Poland appears to be dismantling its own hard-won democracy."](#) *The Washington Post*. July 21, 2017.

2. Definitions and theories of democracy and democratic consolidation

Schumpeter, Joseph. 1947. [*Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*](#). New York: Harper & Brothers. Chapter 22.

Dahl, Robert. 1972. [*Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*](#). New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 1.



Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson. 2006. [*Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*](#). New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2.

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

Bitar, Sergio and Abraham F. Lowenthal. 2015. [*Democratic Transitions: Conversations with World Leaders*](#). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. Pick or assign one chapter per student.

3. Definitions and theories of democratic erosion

Lust, Ellen and David Waldner. 2015. [*Unwelcome Change: Understanding, Evaluating, and Extending Theories of Democratic Backsliding*](#). Washington, DC: USAID. pp. 1-15.

Levitsky, Steven and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. [*How Democracies Die*](#). New York: Crown. Chapter 1.

Lehoucq, Fabrice. 2008. "[Bolivia's Constitutional Breakdown.](#)" *Journal of Democracy* 19(4): pp. 110-124.

Anria, Santiago. 2016. "[Delegative Democracy Revisited: More Inclusion, Less Liberalism in Bolivia.](#)" *Journal of Democracy* 27(3): pp. 99-108.

4. Using democratic institutions to undermine democracy

Varol, Ozan. 2015. "[Stealth Authoritarianism.](#)" *Iowa Law Review* 100(4): pp. 1673-1742. Parts I, II and III.

Huq, Aziz and Tom Ginsburg. 2017. "[How to Lose a Constitutional Democracy.](#)" *UCLA Law Review* 65(78): pp. 80-169. Parts 1 and 4; skim part 3.



5. Populism and demagoguery

Müller, Jan-Werner. 2016. [*What Is Populism?*](#) Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Berman, Sheri. 2017. ["The Pipe Dream of Undemocratic Liberalism."](#) *Journal of Democracy* 28(3): 29-38.

Kendall-Taylor, Andrea and Erica Frantz. ["How Democracies Fall Apart: Why Populism is a Pathway to Autocracy."](#) *Foreign Affairs*. December 5, 2016.

Pita, Adrianna. 2016. ["The Rise of the Right: Right-wing Populism in the US and Europe."](#) *The Brookings Institution*. April 19, 2016.

6. Information, communication, and accountability

Weitz-Shapiro, Rebecca and Matthew Winters. 2016. ["Can Citizens Discern? Information Credibility, Political Sophistication, and the Punishment of Corruption in Brazil."](#) *Journal of Politics* 79(1): pp. 60-74.

Ferraz, Claudio and Fred Finan. 2011. ["Exposing Corrupt Politicians."](#) *J-Pal Policy Brief*.

Svolik, Milan W. 2019. ["Polarization Versus Democracy."](#) *Journal of Democracy* 30(3): pp. 20-32.

Mercieca, Jennifer R. 2019. ["Dangerous Demagogues and Weaponized Communication."](#) *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 49(3): pp. 264-279.

Siegal, Alexandra A. and Joshua A. Tucker. 2018. ["The Islamic State's Information Warfare: Measuring the Success of ISIS's Online Strategy."](#) *Journal of Language and Politics* 17(2): pp. 258-280.

7. Disinformation and fake news



Bandeira, Luiza, Donara Barojan, Roberta Braga, Jose Luis Peñarredonda and Maria Fernanda Pérez Argüello. 2019. [Disinformation in Democracies: Strengthening Digital Resilience in Latin America](#). Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council. pp. 6-19.

Pomerantsev, Peter. 2019. ["The Disinformation Age: A Revolution in Propaganda."](#) *The Guardian*. July 27, 2019.

Persily, Nate and Alex Stamos. 2019. ["Regulating Online Political Advertising by Foreign Nationals and Governments."](#) Chapter 3 in *Securing American Elections*. Michael McFaul, ed. Stanford: Stanford Cyber Policy Center.

DiResta, Renée. 2018. ["What We Now Know About Russian Disinformation."](#) *New York Times*. December 17, 2018.

Bellingcat Podcast. 2019. ["MH17, Episode 2: A Pack of Lies."](#) *Bellingcat Podcast*. July 24, 2019.

8. Clientelism, corruption, and money in politics

Mares, Isabela and Lauren Young. 2016. ["Buying, expropriating, and stealing votes."](#) *Annual Review of Political Science* 19: pp. 267-288.

Stokes, Susan, Thad Dunning, Valeria Brusco and Marcelo Nazareno. 2013. [Voters, Brokers and Clientelism](#). New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6.

Carlin, Ryan E. and Mason Moseley. 2015. ["Good Democrats, Bad Targets: Democratic Values and Clientelistic Vote Buying."](#) *Journal of Politics* 77(1): pp. 14-26.

Pavão, Nara. 2018. ["Corruption as the Only Option: The Limits to Electoral Accountability."](#) *Journal of Politics* 80(3): pp. 996-1010. .

Vaishnav, Milan. 2017. [When Crime Pays: Money and Muscle in Indian Politics](#). New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 1.



Makaya, Lindsey and Amy Smith. [“Could corruption investigations undermine democracy in Latin America.”](#) Vox. May 17, 2018.

9. Socialism, neoliberalism, and economic inequality

Bartels, Larry M. 2017. [*Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*](#). 2nd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1.

Gilens, Martin. 2005. [“Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness.”](#) *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 69(5): pp. 778-796.

Solt, Frederick. 2008. [“Economic inequality and democratic political engagement.”](#) *American Journal of Political Science* 52(1): pp. 48-60.

Streeck, Wolfgang. 2014. [*Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*](#). London; New York: Verso. pp. 47-75.

Kramer, Larry. 2018. [“Beyond Neoliberalism.”](#) Palo Alto, CA: Hewlett Foundation. pp. 3-22.

Toro, Francisco. [“No, Venezuela doesn’t prove anything about socialism.”](#) *The Washington Post*. August 21, 2018.

10. Polarization

McCoy, Jennifer, Tahmina Rahman and Murat Somer. 2018. [“Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy: Common Patterns, Dynamics and Pernicious Consequences for Democratic Polities.”](#) *American Behavioral Scientist* 62(1): pp. 16-42.

Iyengar, Shanto and Masha Krupenkin. 2018. [“The Strengthening of Partisan Affect.”](#) *Political Psychology* 39(S1): pp. 201-218.

Mason, Lilliana. 2018. [*Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*](#). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1 and 3.



LeBas, Adrienne. 2018. ["Can Polarization Be Positive? Conflict and Institutional Development in Africa."](#) *American Behavioral Scientist* 62(1): pp. 59-74.

Ortellado, Pablo and Márcio Moretto Ribeiro. ["Mapping Brazil's political polarization online."](#) *The Conversation*. August 3, 2018.

11. Scapegoating, paranoia, and exclusion

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2016. [*Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*](#). New York: The New Press. Chapters 1, 9 and 15.

Cramer, Katherine J. 2016. [*The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*](#). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1.

Parker, Christopher S. and Matt A. Barreto. Forthcoming. "The Great White Hope: Existential Threat and Status Anxiety in the Age of Trump." *Political Behavior*.

Dinas, Elias, et al. 2019. ["Waking Up the Golden Dawn: Does Exposure to the Refugee Crisis Increase Support for Extreme-Right Parties?"](#) *Political Analysis* 27: pp. 244-254.

Bansak, Kirk, Jens Hainmueller and Dominik Hangartner. 2016. ["How Economic, Humanitarian, and Religious Concerns Shape European Attitudes Toward Asylum Seekers."](#) *Science* 354(6309): pp. 217-222.

12. Civil society and social movements

Gamboa, Laura. 2017. ["Opposition at the Margins: Strategies Against the Erosion of Democracy in Colombia and Venezuela."](#) *Comparative Politics* 49(4): pp. 457-477.

Chenoweth, Erica and Maria J. Stephan. 2012. [*Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*](#). Reprint. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapter 1.

Yarwood, Janette. 2016. ["The struggle over terms limits in Africa: The power of protest."](#) *Journal of Democracy* 27(3): pp. 51-60.



Berman, Sheri. 1997. "[Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic.](#)" *World Politics* 49(3): pp. 401–429.

13. Globalization, “globalism,” and democracy promotion abroad

Burgoon, Brian. 2009. "[Globalization and backlash: Polanyi’s revenge?](#)" *Review of International Political Economy* 16(2): pp. 145-177.

Rodrik, Dani. 2018. "[Populism and the Economics of Globalization.](#)" *Journal of International Business Policy* 1(1-2): pp. 12–33.

Kaufman, Joshua, Carol Sahley and Barbara Smith. 2013. [USAID Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance](#). Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development.

Smilde, David and Abraham F. Lowenthal. "[Negotiating Venezuela’s Transition.](#)" *The New York Times*. June 11, 2019.