

# POLISCI 352: How to be an Autocrat

Fall 2021

Professor Hassan  
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OHours: Mondays 12:00 - 2:00pm. Signup here: <https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/ntagu>

Virtual meeting room link: <https://umich.zoom.us/j/8204318768>

## **Course Description:**

Autocrats are in a precarious position – facing threats from the population who wants greater democratization and other regime elites who want to replace them. How do autocrats navigate these threats? In this course, we study how to be an autocrat. After understanding the different nature of threats that autocrats face, we then move into the different ways that autocrats design their regimes to temper these threats including coup-proofing their security apparatus, coercing the population, and co-opting rival elites. We then move to cases in which (elements of) autocracy co-exists with elections.

Student evaluation will consist of midterms, presentations, and simulations. Class will consist mainly of lecture, but I strive for an interactive classroom; students are expected – and encouraged! – to ask questions, respond to their classmates' questions, and give their opinions. All assigned book chapters will be available on Canvas; students should access academic articles through Google Scholar. Students are expected to have completed the readings/assignments listed for that class beforehand (i.e., the assignment listed under September 1 should be completed before the lecture on September 1).

*This syllabus is subject to change. Consult the course website regularly for updates to the course schedule.*

## **Graded Assignments:**

- Section (25%): Please see section syllabus.
- Section simulation (5.0% each, 15% total): Simulation on the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, the 2019 Sudanese Uprising, and the 2021 attempted coup in Jordan. Dates TBD. Instructions will be posted on Canvas at least one week beforehand.
- Midterms (20% each, 40% total): Cumulative.
- Final project (20%): Students will work in groups of 4 - 5 to create a simulation about an authoritarian regime's response to a crisis, similar to that on Mubarak's Egypt. Students will present on the simulation (12.5%) and produce a joint document (12.5%). See the instructions posted on Canvas.

## Schedule and Assignments (note: assignments/readings due for that class)

August 30: Introduction

September 1: Defining Autocracy

- Choose 3 countries that you perceive to be autocratic. Each country should be on a different continent. Use the websites below to view each country's ratings over the past 5 years
  - <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world> (for each country you choose, click on the country and then choose past years)
  - <https://www.v-dem.net/en/data/data/v-dem-dataset-v111/> (download "V-Dem Core" – peruse the codebook and then look through ratings for each country you chose)
  - <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html> (download "Polity V Annual Time-Series, 1946-2018" – peruse the codebook and then look through (dated) ratings for each country you chose)

September 8: Autocratic Problems

- Svobik, Milan, 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*, Cambridge University Press, pg. 1 - 32.

September 13: Why Parties and Legislatures (and other NDIs)?

- Erica Frantz & Elizabeth Stein. 2017. "Countering Coups: Leadership Succession Rules in Dictatorships." *Comparative Political Studies*, 50(7): 935 - 962. Stop at pg. 944.
- Leonardo Arriola. 2009. "Patronage and Political Stability in Africa." *Comparative Political Studies*, 42: 1339 - 1362.
- Anne Meng. 2020. *Constraining Dictatorship*, Cambridge University Press, pg. 34 - 41.

September 15: Why Parties and Legislatures (and other NDIs) Continued?

- Erica Frantz & Elizabeth Stein. 2017. "Countering Coups: Leadership Succession Rules in Dictatorships." *Comparative Political Studies*, 50(7): 935 - 962. Stop at pg. 944.
- Leonardo Arriola. 2009. "Patronage and Political Stability in Africa." *Comparative Political Studies*, 42: 1339 - 1362.
- Anne Meng. 2020. *Constraining Dictatorship*, Cambridge University Press, pg. 34 - 41.

September 20: The Dangers of Incorporation

- Phillip Roessler. 2017. *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa*. Cambridge University Press, pg. 1 - 6, 16 - 21.

September 22: The Invisible Enemy

- Josef Woldense. Forthcoming. "What Happens When Coups Fail? Probing Autocratic Behavior in Times of Crisis." *Comparative Political Studies*.
- Fiona Shen-Bayh. 2018. "Strategies of Repression: Judicial and Extrajudicial Methods of Autocratic Survival." *World Politics*, 70(3): 321 - 357.

September 27: Guarding Against the Guardians: Break-out Session on Coups IRL

- Naunihal Singh. 2014. *Seizing Power*, Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapter 4, 5, or 6 (assigned by section)
- Naunihal Singh. 2014. *Seizing Power*, Johns Hopkins University Press. pg. 5-10. **Optional, but highly recommended (these pages summarize later chapters)**

September 29: The Invisible Enemy Continued

- Josef Woldense. Forthcoming. "What Happens When Coups Fail? Probing Autocratic Behavior in Times of Crisis." *Comparative Political Studies*.
- Fiona Shen-Bayh. 2018. "Strategies of Repression: Judicial and Extrajudicial Methods of Autocratic Survival." *World Politics*, 70(3): 321 - 357.

October 4: Guarding Against the Guardians: Patronage and Neopatrimonialism

October 6: Midterm

October 11: Guarding Against the Guardians: Security Apparatus Design

- Greitens, Sheena. 2016. Dictators and Their Secret Police: Coercive Institutions and State Violence. *Cambridge University Press*. pgs. 11 - 13, 17 - 36.
- Galeotti, Mark. "What Turkey Can Learn from Russia about Coup Proofing the Military." August 2, 2016. [LINK](#)

October 13: Popular Threats

- Svobik, Milan, 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*, Cambridge University Press, pg. 1 - 32. Review

October 20: Political Control: Repression

- Davenport, Christian. 2007. "State Repression and Political Order." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10(1): 1 - 23.

October 25: Political Control: Repression by Extension

- Jean Lachapelle. Forthcoming. "Repression Reconsidered: State Violence and Power Consolidation in Authoritarian Regimes." *Comparative Politics*

October 27: Political Control: Co-opting the Urban Masses

- Bates, Robert H. 1981. *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Bases of Agricultural Policies*. Berkeley: University of California Press; ch. 6
- Wallace, Jeremy L. 2013. "Cities, Redistribution, and Authoritarian Regime Survival", *Journal of Politics*, 75(3): 632 - 645.

November 1: Political Control: Co-optation through Coercive Distribution

- Albertus, Michael, Sofia Fenner, and Daniel Slater. 2018. *Coercive Distribution*. Cambridge University Press. pgs. 1-19, skip section 1.1

November 3: Political Control: Indoctrination

- King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. “How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression.” *American Political Science Review*. 107(2): 326 - 343. Read Abstract, Introduction, Conclusion. Skim rest.

November 8: Political Control: Infiltration

- Mattingly, Daniel. 2020. “Responsive or Repressive? How Frontline Bureaucrats Enforce the One Child Policy in China.” *Comparative Politics*, 52(2): 269-288.

November 10: Backlash against Political Control

November 15: Review/Flex Class

November 17: Midterm

November 29: Natural Resource Wealth and Regime Durability

- Hubbard, Ben. “Saudi King Unleashes a Torrent of Money as Bonuses Flow to the Masses.” *The New York Times*. 19 February 2015 [LINK](#)
- Frantz, Erica, Barbara Geddes and Joseph Wright. “How Oil Helps Dictatorships Survive.” *The Washington Post*. 17 June 2014 [LINK](#)

December 1: Competitive Authoritarianism

- Levitsky, Steven and Lucan Way. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism*, Cambridge University Press. Pgs. 1 - 13; 16 - 23

December 6: Historic Cases of Authoritarian Backsliding

- Maureen R. Berman and Roger S. Clark. “State Terrorism: Disappearances.” *Rutgers Law Journal* 1981-1982. pgs. 531-547.
- Howard M. Kleinman. “Disappearances in Latin America: A Human Rights Perspective.” *NYU Journal of International Law and Politics* 1986-1987. pgs. 1033-1042.

December 8: Wrap-up

**Email Policy**

I will respond to emails within 24 hours during the workweek, and by Monday 5pm for those emails sent out over the weekend. If I have not responded to your email within 24 hours, send me a follow-up email.

**Absences**

There is no attendance policy.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; <http://ssd.umich.edu>) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

**Religious and Academic Conflicts**

Although the University of Michigan, as an institution, does not observe religious holidays, it has long been the University's policy that every reasonable effort should be made to help students avoid negative academic consequences when their religious obligations conflict with academic requirements. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. Students who expect to miss classes, examinations, or other assignments as a consequence of their religious observance shall be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete such academic responsibilities.

It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent. Such notice must be given by the drop/add deadline of the given term. Students who are absent on days of examinations or class assignments shall be offered an opportunity to make up the work, without penalty, unless it can be demonstrated that a make-up opportunity would interfere unreasonably with the delivery of the course. Should disagreement arise over any aspect of this policy, the parties involved should contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Final appeals will be resolved by the Provost.

**Students Representing the University of Michigan**

There may be instances when students must miss class due to their commitment to officially represent the University. These students may be involved in the performing arts, scientific or artistic endeavors, or intercollegiate athletics. Absence from classes while representing the University does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course missed during the period of absence. Students should provide reasonable notice for dates of anticipated absences and submit an individualized class excuse form.

**Student Mental Health and Wellbeing**

University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (734) 764-8312 and <https://caps.umich.edu/> during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselors physically located in schools on both North and Central Campus. You may also consult University Health Service (UHS) at (734) 764-8320 and <https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs>, or for alcohol or drug concerns, see [www.uhs.umich.edu/aodresources](http://www.uhs.umich.edu/aodresources).

For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, visit:  
<http://umich.edu/mhealth/>

### **Academic Integrity**

The LSA undergraduate academic community, like all communities, functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. The College holds all members of its community to high standards of scholarship and integrity. To accomplish its mission of providing an optimal educational environment and developing leaders of society, the College promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct. Academic dishonesty may be understood as any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community. Conduct, without regard to motive, that violates the academic integrity and ethical standards of the College community cannot be tolerated. The College seeks vigorously to achieve compliance with its community standards of academic integrity. Violations of the standards will not be tolerated and will result in serious consequences and disciplinary action.

### **Grade Grievances**

If you believe a grade you have received is unfair or in error, you will need to do the following:

1. Wait 24 hours after receiving the grade before approaching me and the GSI.
2. Provide an explanation in writing for why the grade you received was unfair or in error.
3. If you believe my response fails to address your claim of unfairness or error, you may petition the department's Director of Undergraduate Studies at the latest within the first five weeks of classes following the completion of the course. You must convey in writing the basis for the complaint, with specific evidence in support of the argument that the grade either was given in error or was unfairly determined. This formal complaint also should summarize the outcome of the initial inquiry to the course instructor, indicating which aspects are in dispute. Within three weeks of the receipt of the petition, the DUS will determine whether to convene the Undergraduate Affairs Committee, the student, and the instructor(s) for a formal hearing. Further details on this process are included on the department website under Advising > Contesting a Grade.

### **Computer Policy**

Students may use their laptop in class, however we will revisit this policy in the middle of the course. If student use of laptops gets to be distracting or disruptive, this policy may change.