

**Special Studies in Comparative Politics and Governments:
COMPARATIVE AUTHORITARIANISM**

Political Science 4340, Fall 2022

Tu 6:30–9:20pm, Dedman Life Science Building (DLSB) 132

Web page: <http://canvas.smu.edu>

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Office hours: MW 1:30–3:00pm
(Appointment required)

Course Description and Objectives

This course offers a thematic approach to the study of authoritarian politics. We will cover the major areas of political science research on authoritarian governance while simultaneously building empirical knowledge about the politics of particular authoritarian regimes. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- (1) use leading theories and empirical findings to analyze some of the major challenges confronting particular authoritarian regimes today;
- (2) critically evaluate different research strategies to analyze authoritarian politics by using working knowledge of the leading theories and empirical findings associated with the study of authoritarian regimes; and
- (3) develop seminar skills by engaging in critical discussions of the readings.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance and participation (including reading memo assignments) (20% of a student's course grade): Attendance at lecture and participation in discussion are mandatory. The readings vary in length and difficulty but average about 100–150 pages per week. You are expected to attend all the lectures in-person and do the required readings. Come to class **prepared and ready to participate** in discussing the material assigned in the readings. Most importantly, *students are required to turn in a **memo on Canvas** to the instructor by 11:59pm of the due date.*

An unexcused absence will adversely affect your course grade, as will being present but unprepared to participate, participating without being prepared, or not following the incumbent masking rules. Your attendance will be counted as long as you let me know your absence (preferably in advance, but if not then as soon as possible). In short, you must communicate with me as soon as possible when you have to be absent from class.

*After two unexcused absences, I may give an FA (F for attendance) to your course grade. An excused absence is almost exclusively restricted to religious reasons, certain university activities, documented medical conditions, or documented family emergencies. Absences for religious reasons or for university extracurricular activities require communication with me at the **beginning** of the semester. It is **your** responsibility to make arrangements with me*

prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work.

Ultimately your attendance and participation grade turns on **my** impression of how seriously you take this course. It is **your** responsibility to take this course seriously and let me know that. How? Attend class; be prepared for class—complete the reading assignments for understanding, be ready to ask and answer questions, take an informed role in discussions, and most importantly, write a good reading memo; **arrive early** to class; remain for the entire class; *be attentive in class without distracting me or your classmates with smart phones, text messages, side conversations, bathroom trips, coming-and-going, and so forth*; complete assignments when due; and demonstrate your understanding on the essays and other assignments. Laptops, cell phones, iPhones, and any other *electronic devices may not be used in class—not even for note-taking*.

Masks Recommended: While masks are not required in this course, individuals should use their own discretion if they prefer to wear masks. The instructor and students will show respect for individual decisions and responses to the health concerns of the pandemic for those who choose to continue wearing masks. Your vaccine status is private information and will neither be requested nor made public.

2. **Two Take-home midterms** (15% each): The exam is open book and open notes and will require 7 pages or longer (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font) of writing. Essays will be evaluated on the basis of: demonstrated mastery of the assigned readings; skill in exposing nuances of similarity and difference in various defensible positions; cogency, clarity, precision and organization of presentation; and relevance of evidence marshaled to *support your argument(s)*. Papers shorter than the indicated length will receive deduction of your grade unless you receive my consent prior to submission. Same if your paper is single-spaced, you use abnormally large margins or fonts (larger than 12-point), or your paper is not typed. No extensions will be granted except in the case of a serious illness or a death in the family. **Please plan to finish the assignment prior to the due date, and leave adequate time to work out any computer problems that may arise.**
3. **Research paper** (35%): Each student will be required to write a research paper of 15 pages or longer (typed, double-spaced, and 12-point font) on a controversial issue in authoritarian politics. Topics and readings for the paper should be developed in close consultation with the course instructor. *Each paper must be re-written, taking into account criticism of your first draft.* Each student is *required to meet the following due dates*:

Paper topic / question	Aug. 26
Progress report	Oct. 14
First draft	Nov. 11
Final draft	Dec. 9

Each research paper will be evaluated based on the final draft. However, *the paper will not be graded and given an F if you have not turned in the first draft or some of the previous assignments*. Moreover, if you turn in the first draft late, your research paper grade will be

marked down with at least 20%. *A paper written without close consultation with the instructor will not be graded and given an F.* If you receive an F for the research paper, you will also receive an F for your course grade. **Late papers will not be accepted.** More detailed information on this assignment will be posted on the course web site.

4. **Take-home final** (15%): The take-home final will be made available on Nov. 29 and **due Dec. 13 at 11:59pm on Canvas**. It will cover material from the entire semester but mainly from Part III. The exam is open book and open notes and will require 7 pages or longer (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font) of writing. **Late assignments will not be accepted.** Incompletes will be granted only in circumstances beyond your control: e.g., illness or family emergencies.

Each of you must meet with Professor Takeuchi for 20 minutes in the first weeks of the semester. Sign up for an appointment time during the first day in class. Be punctual.

Disability Accommodations

Students who need academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit smu.edu/DASS to begin the process. Once they are registered and approved, students then submit a DASS Accommodation Letter through the electronic portal, *DASS Link*, and then communicate directly with each of their instructors to make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, but rather require advance notice in order to implement.

Sexual Harassment

All forms of sexual harassment, including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking, are violations of SMU's Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy and may also violate Texas law. Students who wish to file a complaint or to receive more information about the grievance process may contact Samantha Thomas, SMU's Title IX Coordinator, at accessequity@smu.edu or 214-768-3601. Please note that faculty and staff are mandatory reporters. If students notify faculty or staff of sexual harassment, they must report it to the Title IX Coordinator. For more information about sexual harassment, including resources available to assist students, please visit smu.edu/sexualmisconduct.

Pregnant and Parenting Students

Under Title IX, students who are pregnant or parenting may request academic adjustments by contacting the Office of Student Advocacy and Support by calling 214-768-4564. Students seeking assistance must schedule an appointment with their professors as early as possible, present a letter from the Office of the Dean of Students, and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that academic adjustments are not retroactive and, when feasible, require advance notice to implement.

Religious Observance

Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester and should discuss with them,

in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. Click [here](#) for a list of holidays.

Medical-Related Absences

To ensure academic continuity and avoid any course penalties, students should follow procedures described by their instructors in order to be provided with appropriate modifications to assignments, deadlines, and exams.

Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities

Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled university extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments that were missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements for make-up work with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examinations or other missed assignments. (See current [Catalog](#) under heading of “Academic Records/Excused Absences.”)

Academic Dishonesty

Students are expected to embrace and uphold the [SMU Honor Code](#). Violations of the Honor Code will be acted upon in accordance with the policies and procedures outlined in the [Mustang Student Handbook](#).

Student Academic Success Programs (SASP)

Students needing assistance with writing assignments for SMU courses may schedule an appointment with the Writing Center through Canvas. Students who would like support for subject-specific tutoring or success strategies should contact SASP, Loyd All Sports Center, Suite 202; 214-768-3648; smu.edu/sasp.

Caring Community Connections (CCC) Program

CCC is a resource for anyone in the SMU community to refer students of concern to the Office of the Dean of Students. The online referral form can be found at smu.edu/deanofstudentsccc. After a referral form is submitted, students will be contacted to discuss the concern, strategize options, and be connected to appropriate resources. Anyone who is unclear about what steps to take if they have concerns about students should contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 214-768-4564.

Mental Health Resources: On-Call and Ongoing Counseling Services

Throughout the academic year, students may encounter different stressors or go through life experiences which impact their mental health and academic performance. Students who are in distress or have concerns about their mental health can schedule a same-day or next-day appointment to speak with a counselor by calling [Counseling Services](#). Counselors are available at any time, day or night for students in crisis at this number: 214-768-2277 (then select option 2). They will be connected with a counselor immediately. Students seeking ongoing counseling should call the same number (214-768-2277, then select option 1) during normal business hours to schedule an initial appointment.

Campus Carry Law

In accordance with Texas Senate Bill 11, also known as the ‘campus carry’ law, and following consultation with entire University community, SMU chooses to remain a weapons-free campus. Specifically, SMU prohibits possession of weapons (either openly or in a concealed manner) on campus. For more information, please see smu.edu/campuscarrylaw.

Books and Readings

The following books are available for purchase at the bookstore. There may be changes in the readings and assignments below.

Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith, *The Dictator’s Handbook: Why Bad Behavior Is Almost Always Good Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).

Bruce J. Dickson, *The Party and the People: Chinese Politics in the 21st Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021).

Erica Frantz, *Authoritarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman, *Spin Dictators: The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022).

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Broadway Books, 2018).

Schedule and Reading Assignments

Readings provide background on topics covered in class lectures and discussions, so read the assignment **before** the class for which they are assigned. Because the course will make frequent reference to current events, you should make a habit of *reading a respectable newspaper on a regular basis* and pay attention to the events in authoritarian countries.

I. Varieties of Authoritarianism

1. Introduction (Aug. 23)

Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, introduction (pp. 1–18).

Frantz, chapters 1–3 (pp. 1–43).

* Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz, *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization, and Collapse* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018): pp. 1–22.

RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC AND QUESTION DUE AUG. 26, 11:59PM ON CANVAS

2. Theories of Authoritarian Politics (Aug. 30)

Frantz, chapters 4–9 (pp. 44–154).

Memo Assignment 1 due Sep. 2, 11:59pm on Canvas.

3. How Authoritarianism Works (1): Initiation and Power Consolidation (Sep. 6)

Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, chapters 1–5 (pp. 19–154).

4. How Authoritarianism Works (2): Co-optation, Corruption and War (Sep. 13)

Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, chapters 6–9 (pp. 155–281).

5. Electoral Authoritarianism (Sep. 20)

* Masaaki Higashijima, *The Dictator's Dilemma at the Ballot Box: Electoral Manipulation, Economic Maneuvering, and Political Order in Autocracies* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2022): pp. 3–74 & 103–158.

THE FIRST TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE SEP. 23, 11:59PM ON CANVAS

II. Case Study – China and Comparative Authoritarianism

6. Institutions in Authoritarian Politics (Sep. 27)

Dickson, introduction & chapters 1–3 (pp. 1–98).

* Hiroki Takeuchi and Saavni Desai, “Chinese Politics and Comparative Authoritarianism: Institutionalization and Adaptation for Regime Resilience,” *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 22(4) (December 2021): pp. 381–392.

* Victor Shih, Chris Adolph, and Mingxing Liu, “Getting Ahead in the Communist Party: Explaining the Advancement of Central Committee Members in China,” *American Political Science Review* 106(1) (February 2012): pp. 166–187.

* Rory Treux, “The Returns to Office in a ‘Rubber Stamp’ Parliament,” *American Political Science Review* 108(2) (May 2014): pp. 235–251.

7. Public Response to China's Authoritarian Regime (Oct. 4)

Dickson, chapters 4–7 (pp. 99–225).

Memo Assignment 2 due Oct. 7, 11:59pm on Canvas.

RESEARCH PAPER PROGRESS REPORT DUE OCT. 14, 11:59PM ON CANVAS

8. Repression, Censorship, and Information Manipulation (Oct. 18)

* Bruce J. Dickson, *The Dictator's Dilemma: The Chinese Communist Party's Strategy for Survival* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016): pp. 1–95.

* Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret Roberts, “How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression,” *American Political Science Review* 107(2) (May 2013): pp. 326–343.

* Lisa Blaydes, *State of Repression: Iraq Under Saddam Hussein* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018): pp. 1–27.

9. Implications on U.S. Foreign Policy Toward China (Oct. 25)

Dickson, chapter 8: pp. 226–254.

* Kurt M. Campbell and Ely Ratner, “The China Reckoning: How Beijing Defied American Expectations,” *Foreign Affairs* 97(2) (March/April 2018): pp. 60–70.

* Alastair Iain Johnston, “The Failure of the ‘Failure of Engagement’ with China,” *The Washington Quarterly* 42(2) (Summer 2019): pp. 99–114.

* Hiroki Takeuchi, “Domestic Politics of Chinese Foreign Policy: Where Will Xi Jinping Bring China?” *Asian Security* 15 (May 2019): pp. 205–213.

* Barry Naughton, “A Perspective on Chinese Economics: What Have We Learned? What Did We Fail to Anticipate?” in Anne F. Thurston, ed., *Engaging China: Fifty Years of Sino-American Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021): pp. 174–196.

* John J. Mearsheimer, “The Inevitable Rivalry: America, China, and the Tragedy of Great-Power Politics,” *Foreign Affairs* 100(6) (November/December 2021): pp. 48–58.

* “A Rival of America’s Making? The Debate over Washington’s China Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 101(2) (March/April 2022): pp. 172–188.

THE SECOND TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE OCT. 28, 11:59PM ON CANVAS

III. Authoritarianization of Democracy

10. Spin Dictatorship (Nov. 1)

Guriev and Treisman, chapters 1–5 (pp. 3–135).

* Tony Barber, “When Democratic Spin Conceals a Descent into Dictatorship,” *Financial Times*, May 13, 2022. (<https://on.ft.com/3yC7h16>)

11. Undermining Democracy (Nov. 8)

Levitsky and Ziblatt, introduction & chapters 1 & 4 (pp. 1–32 & 72–96).

RESEARCH PAPER FIRST DRAFT DUE NOV. 11, 11:59PM ON CANVAS

12. Undermining American Democracy (Nov. 15)

Levitsky and Ziblatt, chapters 2–3 & 5–8 (pp. 33–71 & 97–203).

Memo Assignment 3 due Nov. 18, 11:59pm on Canvas.

13. NO CLASS (Nov. 22)

14. What Is to Be Done? (Nov. 29)

Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, chapters 10–11 (pp. 282–344).

Guriev and Treisman, chapters 7–8 (pp. 169–219).

Levitsky and Ziblatt, chapter 9 (pp. 204–231).

RESEARCH PAPER FINAL DRAFT DUE DEC. 9, 11:59PM ON CANVAS

TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE DEC. 13, 11:59PM ON CANVAS