Why you should take this course
Coups, civil wars, revolutions, and peaceful political transitions are the “real stuff” of political science. They show us why politics matters, and they highlight the consequences of political choices in times of institutional crisis. This course will help you understand why democracies emerge and why they die, from ancient times to the recent wave of democratization in Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, and the developing world.

What this course is about
Few things are more dramatic than the collapse of a political system, whether through violent conflict or the peaceful negotiation of new institutions. Explaining why regimes break down, why new ones emerge, and how these new regimes become consolidated are among the most important questions in political science. Not surprisingly, regime change has obsessed scholars for centuries, from Aristotle to Machiavelli to the current theorists of democratization.

You will review several broad explanations for regime change before turning to a more detailed examination of some of history’s most famous and theoretically interesting political transitions: the collapse of the Weimar Republic in Germany; democratic breakdown, the consolidation of military dictatorship, and re-democratization in Chile; the breakdown of British colonial rule in the Massachusetts Bay Colony; and protracted political transition in Mexico. There will be shorter discussion of democratization in Spain, South Africa, and South Korea, as well as democratic collapse in Brazil, Austria, and Italy.

Please note that there are two numbers for this class, 17.508 and 17.507. Graduate students should register under 17.508; no prerequisites are required. Undergraduates should register under 17.507, unless they wish to take the graduate-level version of the class (for which you must receive my permission).

Readings
Readings are assigned for each week, including for the first week (Class #1).
Weekly reading requirements are different for graduate students and undergraduates. Undergraduates are expected to read approximately 100 pages per week, which will focus on the central themes or cases for that week. These readings should take you about three to four hours, depending on how fast you read.

Graduate students are expected to read 100-125 additional pages that cover other cases or expand on theoretically challenging issues raised by the principal case. For instance, undergraduate readings on the rise of fascism in Europe examine the collapse of the Weimar Republic in
Germany. Additional graduate readings in that week examine the rise of fascism in Italy, as well as the case of Austria (where fascist and Nazi parties failed to take power). Graduate students should be able to complete all the readings for a typical week in about eight hours.

All readings will be placed on reserve in Dewey library, as will copies of the following books:


Graduate students should consider purchasing these books, if they do not already own them. All students should consider purchasing at least the first two, as we will read virtually all of them.

Written requirements
You have two options: (1) one long paper of approximately 25 pages OR (2) five short papers of 4-5 pages each. There will be no final exam.

1. **Long paper:** Pick an instance of regime change not covered in the course, and analyze it in detail. Your topic may be a military coup, revolution, civil war, peaceful transition to democracy, or some similar instance of regime change. It may also be a period of political crisis in which regime change did not occur – e.g., a failed coup attempt or uprising. It can be very specific (e.g., the 1989 suppression of the pro-democracy movement in China’s Tiananmen Square) or reasonably broad (e.g., the breakdown of democracy in Brazil in 1964). In either case, your paper must draw on at least some primary sources (newspaper articles, government documents, or interviews), as well as on secondary sources.

   In analyzing your case, you should pay special attention to four questions. First, what happened in the case you are studying? The more narrow your focus, the more specific your paper should be – for instance, if you were analyzing the failure of the democracy movement in China, you should report details like which military units were deployed during the Tiananmen Square massacre, where, and when.

   Second, what larger, structural factors played a role in the event you are analyzing? This portion of your paper should include a discussion of the effects of class structure, ethnic cleavages, political culture, perverse institutional arrangements, and similar background conditions. For instance, if you were studying the Brazilian military coup of 1964, you would mention factors like extreme socio-economic inequality, low levels of education, a history of military participation in government, and similar issues.
Third, what were the short-term triggers for the event you chose to analyze? Common factors include the state of the economy, specific civil-military disagreements, incompetent or polarizing leadership, and similar variables. In the Brazilian coup, for example, you would presumably discuss the rhetoric and policies of President Goulart, leftist mobilization, and rampant inflation.

Fourth, is the incident you analyzed better explained by structural or short-term factors? What realistic options did leaders have? Were specific mistakes made that fundamentally changed the course of events? Or was the event you describe basically destined to occur (though not necessarily exactly when it did)?

If you choose to write a long paper, you must come up with a list of potential topics by Class #3. These topics should be in the form of clearly articulated questions about your case (including the time frame you will analyze), rather than simply vague expressions of interest. By Class #5, you must select one of these topics and submit a comprehensive bibliography of sources related to that topic. You must also submit a one-page summary of your topic, which indicates that you have already read some of the key sources in your bibliography. By Class #8, you must submit a two-page overview of your case that summarizes your overall conclusions and argument, as well as a 5-10 page analysis of the incident you have chosen to analyze – that is, what happened, when, etc. By Class #11, you must submit a second installment of 5-10 pages, summarizing the theoretical section of your paper – that is, why things turned out the way they did. By Class #13, you must submit a complete draft of your paper. This version should be polished and free of grammatical or stylistic errors. I will return this draft to you by the following week, and you will then have an additional week before the end of the semester to revise your paper based on my comments. In Class #17, you must then submit a final version of your paper to me and to the rest of the class (by email). In Class #18, you will be expected to present the findings of your paper in class (plan on a presentation of 10-12 minutes, with transparencies if you wish). If class discussion of your paper leads you to change your conclusions or argument in some way, you may submit a revised version any time on or before Class #19. Please note that each of your submissions will be graded separately (as described below).

2. Short papers: Short papers should be 1,000-1,250 words and should address issues raised by the required readings from that week in a coherent way. They should not be composites of separate critiques of the readings. Rather, they should develop a coherent argument regarding the topic of the week, support that argument with evidence from the readings, and refute potential counter-arguments. For instance, in the second week of the class, the readings cover the causes of democracy. For this week, you may wish to discuss which factors seem most important. Alternatively, you might try analyzing which of the causes of democracy discussed by Huntington and Diamond best explain why democracy was not consolidated in the cases we discussed in the first week of class (ancient Israel, Pakistan, Venezuela, Ecuador, etc.).
In the third week of the class, readings focus on “modernization theory” (the argument advanced by Lipset, Huntington, Diamond and others that economic development leads to democracy). You may wish to defend this argument, or to argue that it is fundamentally flawed. In either case, you would then summarize the argument, recapitulate the evidence presented for it, and explain why this evidence is compelling or insufficient.

As a rule of thumb, you should leave at least eight hours to write a good short paper, in addition to the time you spend on the readings.

**Short papers are due by 4 p.m. on the Sunday before Class #4. They may also be emailed to me as a Microsoft Word attachment but must be received by 4 p.m.**

I will then print them out and grade them. I’d like to practice blind grading, so please don’t include a title page or put your name in the footer; instead, put your name on a separate page after the paper. Also, at the risk of stifling self-expression and generally sounding like a pain, I ask that all essays and short papers be double-spaced and submitted in Times font. (Otherwise I learn people’s fonts after the first paper, which defeats the purpose of blind grading.)

Finally, if you choose to write short papers, you must space them out to some degree over the course of the semester. **Unless you clear it with me ahead of time, you will be expected to write at least two papers in the first six weeks of the class and at least two in the last six weeks.**

**Oral requirements**

Oral requirements consist of regular class participation and one or two class presentations (depending on enrollment).

1. **Class participation:** Students are expected to participate actively and intelligently in class discussions. As a rule of thumb, you should plan to spend about an hour or two going over your notes from the readings and preparing for class each week, after you have completed the readings.

   My somewhat odd habit is to assign all students a letter grade for each class session, which makes grading overall class participation less arbitrary. Please notify me at the beginning of the class if, for whatever reason, you are unprepared to participate in class discussion that day. Also, if you must miss a class, please let me know in advance. Each student is entitled to one unexcused absence or “unprepared” over the course of the semester; any more will count against your class participation grade.

2. **Presentation(s):** Each class will begin with a brief (5-15 minute) presentation discussing and critiquing the readings. You should choose a week -- or, in the case of enrollment under twelve people, two weeks -- for your presentation. Bear in mind that the goal of your presentation is to refresh people’s memories about the readings, to highlight the key areas of disagreement, and to tee up questions for class discussion; you should not feel
compelled to mechanically summarize every article. As a rule of thumb, you should plan to spend an extra hour preparing for class on the day of your presentation(s).

Those of you writing longer papers will be expected to present the results of your findings in Class #18. This presentation will count as part of your paper grade (below).

**Other assignments**

In addition to papers and readings, you will have a handful of small assignments over the course of the semester. For the second week of the semester, for instance, you must register to vote. If you actively wish not to register you may instead submit a 100-word statement on how politics is relevant to their life. If you are not a citizen and thus cannot register in the United States, you may either show proof of registration in your home country or write the 100-word statement.

In several weeks, readings are supplemented by popular films or documentaries. These are intended to convey the flavor of the times and the feel of everyday life in the cases we study; they are also very good films in their own right. They are not intended to oppress you with further work. Keep in mind, however, that the Chile documentaries are quite long (over 2 hours each), so be sure to leave time in your schedule. I will arrange for a group screening of the films; they will also be on reserve in case you cannot make that time.

For the week on the American Revolution in Boston, you will be asked to walk the Freedom Trail instead of watching a movie. It will be spring then, and this should be fun. In any case, make sure you do this even if you have already done so.

The most important small assignment is due on Class #4 (when we discuss modernization theory). For this assignment, you are expected to review data on democracy available through the course website (or, if you wish, some other data set). You will be expected to present your findings in class, so make sure to come prepared. Plan on spending at least two hours on data analysis.

**Overall workload**

Combining the readings, class preparation, class presentation(s), small assignments, written work, and actual time in class, undergraduates should plan to devote **approximately eight hours per week to the class on average, over a thirteen week semester.** Graduate students should plan to devote **about twelve hours per week.**

**Grading**

Twenty-five percent (25%) of your grade will be based on class participation, including your presentation(s). Each presentation grade will count as the equivalent of six sessions of regular class participation. The other 75% of your grade will be based on your written work – i.e., either one long paper or five short papers. Short papers will all count equally (15% each); if you are feeling ambitious and want to write more than the requisite number of papers, your best five papers will be counted.

Components of the long paper (if you choose that option) will be graded as follows: list of potential topics (5%), 1-page summary of topic and comprehensive bibliography (10%), first installment of paper (15%), second installment of paper (10%), completed draft of paper (10%),
completed paper (15%), and presentation of paper in class (10%). If you submit a revised version of your paper in response to suggestions from your classmates, any improvement will be reflected in the grade for your completed paper.

The purpose of this grading system is to spread work for the long papers evenly over the semester, and thus to ensure that research and writing is not rushed. It also reflects my view that much of the writing of a good research paper, like a good experiment in the hard sciences, lies in the design and set-up. For this reason, I take the early submissions seriously and will grade them that way. For instance, a list of potential topics that demonstrates a conscientious attempt to identify researchable cases of regime change will be graded highly; a cursory list assembled at the last minute will be graded harshly. Similarly, a bibliography that lacks theoretical or empirical sources relevant to the topic will be graded harshly, while on that comprehensively covers the literature (including articles in academic journals, chapters edited books, primary sources, etc.) will be graded well.

Grading standards for the longer papers are different for graduate students and undergraduates. A good undergraduate research paper, for instance, should present a solid description of a particular case and a compelling explanation for why things turned out the way they did. A good graduate research paper should do these same things, but it should also situate your case in the context of broader scholarly debates on regime change, and it should demonstrate why your case is theoretically relevant to those debates. In other words, undergraduate research papers should explain trend (that is, why things turned out the way they did); graduate research papers should explain variation (that is, why things turned out one way in certain countries and differently in others). Put another way, a good undergraduate paper should tell me something new; a good graduate paper should tell me something that is both new and theoretically interesting.

Key deadlines
Class #1: Those writing a long paper must submit list of potential paper topics (or single topic, which subsequently cannot be changed).
Class #3: Those writing a long paper must submit list of potential paper topics (or single topic, which subsequently cannot be changed).
Class #5: Those writing a long paper must submit a one-page summary of their topic and full bibliography (at least 20 sources).
Class #8: Those writing a long paper must submit a 2-page introduction to their paper that summarizes their findings and conclusions) plus a 5 to10-page account of what happened in their case.
Class #11: Those writing a long paper must submit a 5 to10-page theoretical section (i.e., an analysis of why things turned out the way they did).
Class #13: Those writing a long paper must submit completed draft.
Class #17: Those writing a long paper must submit their completed final paper, and must email a copy to all students in the class.
Class #18: Class presentations on paper topic.
Class #19: Those writing a long paper may submit a rewrite.

All deadlines are for 4 p.m. on the day specified, and all will be strictly enforced. Late submissions will be marked down 1/3 of a grade (i.e., A to A-) for each day they are late.
Class Schedule

Class #1. From the First Political Transition to the Third Wave of Democracy

IN CLASS: Review of course requirements. Class discussion: What is a political regime? What is democracy? What is regime change?

READINGS


ASSIGNMENT

None.
Class #2. The Causes of Democracy

In class: The causes of democracy.

Readings


Additional readings for graduate students:


Assignment

Register to vote OR write a 100-word statement on why politics is relevant to your life.
Class #4. Modernization Theory and its Critics

IN CLASS: Review of data on democratization and critique of Przeworski, et al.; class discussion of findings from data.

READINGS


ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS:


ASSIGNMENT:

Review cross-national data on democracy (posted on web site). Graduate students should also review other data sets. Using this data, a subset of it, or any other data you wish to gather, evaluate some of the hypotheses discussed in class and in the readings about the causes of democracy. You may wish to focus on a particular country, a region, or a larger group of countries, and on one hypothesis or on several. Come to class prepared to present your findings and to discuss those of your colleagues.
Class #6. Is it how modern you are or how you modernize?

IN CLASS: Lecture: Modernization, social conflict, and authoritarianism

READINGS


ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS:


ASSIGNMENT

See the movie *Z: A Political Tragedy in Greece.*
Class #7. Crisis, Choice, and Regime Change

IN CLASS: Lecture: The Machiavellian moment and the politics of greatness.

READINGS


ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS:


Class #9. The Collapse of Weimar and the Rise of the Third Reich

**IN CLASS:** Lecture: From the breakdown of Weimar to the consolidation of Nazi rule.

**READINGS**


**ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS:**


**ASSIGNMENT**

See Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (a pro-Nazi propaganda film).

*Those writing short papers must have submitted at least two papers.*
Class #10. Democratic Breakdown in Chile

In class: Lecture: Class conflict, polarization, and the demise of democracy in Chile.

Readings for undergraduates
Arturo Valenzuela, “Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime,” in Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1989): 191-216.


Additional readings for graduate students


Assignment
See The Battle for Chile by Patricio Guzmán, Part I.
Class #12. The Consolidation of Personalistic Military Rule in Chile

IN CLASS: Lecture: How to consolidate a personalistic dictatorship.

READINGS FOR UNDERGRADUATES


ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS


ASSIGNMENT
See The Battle for Chile by Patricio Guzmán, Part II.
Class #14. Re-democratization in Chile

IN CLASS: The breakdown of the old regime and constrained transition to democracy.

READINGS FOR UNDERGRADUATES


ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS


ASSIGNMENT
None.
Class #15. The Breakdown of British Colonial Rule in the Massachusetts Bay Colony

IN CLASS: Lecture: The causes of the American Revolution in Boston, 1763-1775.

READINGS


ADDITIONAL READING FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS


RECOMMENDED READING (ON RESERVE) FOR THOSE WRITING SHORT PAPERS:


ASSIGNMENT
Walk the “Freedom Trail” in downtown Boston.
Class #16. Protracted Political Transition in Mexico

IN CLASS: Lecture: Partial regimes, subnational political change, and democratization.

READINGS


ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS:
Wayne Cornelius, Todd Eisenstadt, and Jane Hinley, eds., Subnational Politics and Democratization in Mexico (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, UCSD, 1999): 3-16.


ASSIGNMENT:
See movie, La ley de Herodes (Herod’s Law)
Class #18. Conclusions

**IN CLASS:** Lecture: The future of regime change. Class presentations and discussion of individual research.

**READINGS**

Class papers.

Paper by Lawson, TBA (if I finish it in time).

**ASSIGNMENT:**

Final papers due. Class presentations on research topics.