Course Objectives

When the Soviet empire collapsed in 1991, it seemed to confirm Americans’ faith in the superiority and inevitable triumph of democratic government. Hopes were further raised by the popular uprisings of the Arab Spring in 2011 and 2012. However, the Arab uprising faltered, and authoritarian governments have regrouped and become more aggressive. For over a decade, the world has been in a "democratic recession" (setbacks to democratic government in countries around the world have exceeded advances). Economic crisis and political dysfunction in the democratic core countries of Europe and the US raise questions about democracy’s sustainability and effectiveness. China’s rapid economic growth under an authoritarian government has lead some to claim that China may have a better model for governance.

In this course, we will try to answer the following questions:

- Is government necessary?
- What conditions foster the rise of anti-democratic populism?
- Is there a best system of government, applicable to all peoples, at all times?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of liberal democracy when compared to the alternatives?
- Why did the so-called Arab Spring fail? Are Islam and liberal democracy compatible?
- Does the success of the “China model” pose a serious challenge to liberal democracy?
- Are all democracies essentially the same, or do different systems of representation make a significant difference?
- What is the proper role for government in the economy?
- Can democracy and economic development be exported?

Participation/attendance in class is 10% of grade.

Office: Old Main 326A

Contact: 797-9742, steve.sharp@usu.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:30-2:00. I’m happy to meet with you at other times. Please make arrangements by email.

Teaching Assistant: Brenton Steele (brenton.d.steele@gmail.com)

Final exam: Dec 18, 9:30-11:20

Required Readings & Quizzes: There is no required textbook for this class. Required readings and quizzes on the reading will be posted most weeks in Canvas. Due dates may change depending on the progress of class discussion, so be sure to check regularly after each class to see if there is a required reading and quiz.

Electronic Devices Not Allowed in Class Laptops, netbooks, iPads, smart phones, cell phones, and other similar electronic devices distract from class discussion. Unfortunately, this means their use is not allowed in class, even for taking notes. You will lose points if I see you using a device in class.

Attendance and participation is required. Participation/attendance in class is 10% of grade. Participation includes: answering questions, participating in polls, providing rationales for
your own positions or (even better) for positions other than your own. TA Brenton Steele will call on students randomly.

*If you don’t attend class, you will miss information vital to the exams. Material covered in class may not be covered in the reading, and terms you may think you know are frequently defined differently in political science. If you do miss class for whatever reason, you are responsible to get notes from a classmate.*

**Extra Credit:** There is no extra credit in the course. Please do not ask at the end of the semester if there is something you can do to raise your grade. You will be graded on work that every student is assigned during the semester.

**Basis of Course Grade:**

- class participation/polls 10%
- online quizzes 20%
- country profiles 5%
- research essays (3) 35%
- midterm exam 20%
- final exam 10%

**Grade scale:**

- A = 94-100%
- A- = 90-93%
- B+ = 87-89%
- B = 84-86%
- B- = 80-83%
- C+ = 77-79%
- C = 74-76%
- C- = 70-73%
- D+ = 67-69%
- D = 60-66%
- F = 0-59%

**Rounding policy:**

When it comes to the final grade, simple arithmetic rounding to two decimal places will be used. Grades are crude approximations of your performance. The difference between 89.4% (rounded to 89%) and 89.5% (rounded to 90%) is only 0.1%, but that’s the difference between a B+ and A- on your transcript. Unfortunately, the university requires us to draw a line somewhere; I cannot grant appeals that you are “so close” to a better grade.

**Exams:** (A study guide will be available one week before each exam.)

- midterm exam worth 20% of your class grade (The midterm exam will only be given at the regularly scheduled times unless there is prior arrangement with me.)
- final exam worth 10% of your class grade (The final exam will only be given at the regularly scheduled times unless there is prior arrangement with me.)
Online Quizzes are taken on the Canvas system (canvas.usu.edu). Check Canvas after each class for details. The objective of the quizzes is to have you become familiar with the readings. Quizzes are generally due before midnight (11:59 pm) on the due date.

Research Essays: Detailed requirements and deadlines will be posted on Canvas.

Late Submission of Assignments and Quizzes:
Please pay close attention to due dates posted in Canvas. Dates for quizzes on readings may shift to better correspond to class discussion, so check frequently. Except in the case of documented emergencies, due dates are enforced. Late work is subject to an automatic 30% reduction, so the best you can expect on a late assignment or quiz is a C-. You may complete assignments early to avoid last minute problems.

Make-up Exams:
To be fair to all students, make-up exams will not be given, except by prior arrangement, or in documented, extraordinary cases, such as hospitalization or death in the immediate family.

Assessment Exam: The State of Utah has mandated that every professor teaching a General Education course at USU must assess how much students are learning in the course. So early in the semester, we will conduct an assessment designed to determine how much you know about course materials upon entering the course. The grade you receive on this “assessment exam” will NOT be factored into your course grade. Later in the semester, after we have covered these topics, questions from the assessment will be asked again. The points you receive for your answers this time will be included in the computation of course grades.

Accommodation for Disabilities
Special accommodation can be made for students with documented disability. Please discuss your needs with me early (preferably during the first week of class). See www.usu.edu/drc (Links to an external site.) for details on USU’s accommodation policy and procedures.