

PSCI/INTR 260 Democratic Erosion
University of Rochester
Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30pm-13:45pm
Harkness 329
Spring 2023

Professor Gretchen Helmke
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Office hours: Wednesdays 10am - 11am, or by appointment.
Harkness 331

Course Description

Politics in the new millennium belies the idea that any democracy is ever fully safe. Still, we are only beginning to grasp the multitude of ways in which a democracy may die. This upper-level undergraduate seminar is based on a cross-university collaboration, [Democratic Erosion](#), which is aimed at evaluating threats to democracy both in the United States and abroad. Importantly, the class is

Assignment #2 (15%): Students will be asked to work in groups of 2-3 people (randomly assigned) to prepare short presentations (8-10 minutes) based on the [Strengthening Democracy Challenge](#) at Stanford University. Additional instructions about the assignment will be provided at the beginning of the semester. Due Week 15 and 16 (April 20th and 25th).

Case Study for W requirement (20%): Students will have the option to write either a 13-15 page case study of a country that has recently experienced democratic erosion, or write a 13-15 page case study about how to improve one or more aspects of American democracy. Additional instructions about the case study will be provided at the beginning of the semester and descriptions can be found in the dropbox. **A draft of the W paper is due March 23rd. The final draft should be proofread and emailed to me by midnight on April 20th. For each day that the paper is late, half a grade will be deducted.**

Cumulative In-class Midterm Exam (40% for non-W students; 20% for W students): The midterm exam will consist of identification terms, short answers, and an essay question. Students will be given a study guide the week before the midterm exam, which will take place on April 13th.

Academic Honesty Policy and Flexibility During the Pandemic

All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the [Academic Honesty Policy](#).

Course Schedule and Readings

Please purchase:

Resisting Backsliding: Opposition Strategies against the Erosion of Democracy (2022) by Laura Gamboa.

Books available

Week 1: Introduction

Thursday, January 12th

Class overview and sign-up

Week 2: The Challenge of Democratic Erosion

Tuesday, January 17th

Bermeo, Nancy. 2016.

Journal of Democracy 27(1): pp. 5-19.

V-Dem. 2022. Democracy Report.

Thursday, January 19th

Protect Democracy. 2022. *The Authoritarian Playbook*.

Identifying Successful Interventions to Strengthen
Preprint.

Week 3: Conceptualizing Democracy

Tuesday, January 24th

Dahl, Robert. 1972. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 1.

Przeworski, Adam. 1991. *Democracy and the Market*. Ch. 1.

Thursday, January 26th

American Political Science Review 91.2 (1997): 245-263.

Week 4: Theories of Democratic Erosion

Tuesday, January 31st

Levitsky, Steven and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How Democracies Die*. New York: Crown. Introduction, Chapters 1, 4, and 5.

Thursday, February 2nd

Huq, Aziz and Tom Ginsburg. 2017.

UCLA Law

Review 65(78): pp. 80-169. Parts 1 and 4; skim part 3.

Svolik, Milan W. 2019.

Journal of Democracy 30(3): pp. 20-

32.

Week 5: Constitutional Hardball

Tuesday, February 7th

Helmke, Gretchen. 2017. *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

Thursday, February 9th

Pozen, David E. "Hardball and/as Anti-Hardball." *NYUJ Legis. & Pub. Pol'y* 21 (2018): 949.

Helmke, Gretchen and Jack Paine. 2022
Working Paper.

Kleinfeld,

Thursday, April 6th

Kalmoe, Nathan P., and Lilliana Mason. 2022. *Radical American Partisanship: Mapping Violent Hostility, Its Causes, and the Consequences for Democracy*. University of Chicago Press. Selections TBD.

*Proceedings of the National
Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 119.

Week 14: Cumulative Midterm

Tuesday, April 11th

Midterm Review

Thursday, April 13th

In-class Midterm

**Week 15: Solutions and
Strengthening Democracy Challenge (Assignment #2)**

Tuesday April 18th

Drutman, Lee. 2020. *Breaking the Two-Party Doom Loop: The Case for Multiparty Democracy in America*. Oxford University Press. Selections TBD.

Thursday 20th

In-class Presentation

Week 16: Strengthening Democracy Challenge (Assignment #2 continued)

April 25th Tuesday

In-class Presentation (continued)