VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PROGRAMME
POLS 209: DICTATORSHIPS AND REVOLUTIONS
20 POINTS

TRIMESTER 1 2015

Important dates

Trimester dates: 2 March to 1 July 2015

Teaching dates: 2 March to 5 June 2015

Easter/Mid-trimester break: 3–19 April 2015

Study period: 8–12 June 2015

Examination/Assessment Period: 12 June to 1 July 2015

Note: students who enrol in courses with examinations must be able to attend an examination at the University at any time during the scheduled examination period.

Withdrawal dates: Refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds. If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats.

Class times and locations

Lectures: Tuesday 14:10 - 15:00 New Kirk KKLT301

                  Friday 14:10 - 15:00 Maclaurin MCLT103

                  (Note that the Tuesday and Friday lectures are in two different rooms).

Tutorials: At the moment there are three tutorials scheduled; more will be scheduled soon. Sign up via S-Cubed.

                  Wednesday 9:00-9:50 KK107

                  Thursday 13:10-14:00 KK105

                  Monday 14:10-15:00 MY103

Names and contact details

Course Coordinator: Xavier Marquez
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Phone: 463-5889
Email: xavier.marquez@vuw.ac.nz
Office hours: Come over or make an appointment. My door is usually open whenever I'm not teaching or in meetings.

Course website: On Blackboard
Course blog (important – you will need to sign up separately!):
http://politicalpathologies.blogspot.com
I often write on dictatorships, revolutions, and related matters at
http://abandonedfootnotes.blogspot.com (not the course blog).

Communication of additional information

This course uses Blackboard and presumes that all enrolled students have valid myvuw.ac.nz addresses. Please check that this account is active and you have organised email forwarding. Additional information and any changes to the timetable or lecture and seminar programme will be advised by email, announced in lectures, and posted on the course Blackboard site.

Prescription

This introduces students to the nature and varieties of modern dictatorship and non-democracy, the cause of their emergence, and the processes that lead to their collapse and transformation. Our focus will be on developing concepts and tools useful for the analysis of a wide variety of cases.

Course content

We will begin by examining the nature and types of non-democratic government, as well as the strategies dictators use to maintain themselves in power. We will also discuss how these strategies create incentives for dictators to act for or against the common good, and thus evaluate some historically important arguments for and against various forms of non-democracy. In particular, we will discuss whether dictatorships produce more prosperity than democracies, whether some cultures are prone to dictatorship, and whether some dictatorships make more intelligent decisions than democracies. We will next look at the causes of regime change (both to and from dictatorship) and the process of revolution, and examine the factors that lead to non-dictatorial outcomes in revolution. We end with a consideration of transitional justice after regime change. Cases discussed include Venezuela, Zaire, China, Singapore, Libya, Egypt, the East European communist regimes and the revolutions of 1989 that overturned them, and the Arab Spring. See lecture schedule (additional document) for details of topics, readings and assignment deadlines.

Course learning objectives (CLOs)

Students who pass this course should be able to:
1. identify existing non-democracies, and articulate similarities and differences among non-democracies
2. identify the mechanisms by which non-democratic regimes and dictators keep themselves in power, as well as the ways in which their power is constrained
3. critically evaluate the systematic advantages and evils of various forms of non-democracy
4. understand the processes leading to the emergence, transformation, or overthrow of non-democratic regimes
5. critically use and evaluate quantitative and statistical data about political regimes
6. summarise and explain important current research in political science about dictatorships and revolutions.

Teaching format

This course is taught by means of two weekly lectures of one hour each and a weekly tutorial (starting the second week of term) of one hour as well. It also involves an important online component on the course blog.

Though tutorials are not explicitly required (no roll is taken) you are VERY STRONGLY encouraged to attend; otherwise you will not be able to participate fully in the main class project (see assessment section below). Tutorials start the SECOND week of term.

The lectures provide the theoretical background necessary for identifying dictatorships and revolutions, explaining their development, and evaluating their consequences.

The lectures include interactive exercises, including one mock trial and a simulation.

Discussion activities in both lectures and tutorials provide students with the opportunity to examine how the theories introduced in lecture help us understand current events and historical cases. Activities in the tutorial are also designed to enable students to collaborate on the main project for the course, which will involve developing a worldwide regime classification system and using it to answer questions about dictatorships and revolutions.

The online component of the course consists of participation in the course blog and a few other ad-hoc activities. Participation in the blog will help you learn how to explain and understand academic research about dictatorships and revolutions; see the assessment section below for details.

There is a final examination in this course, scheduled during the regular exam period.

Mandatory course requirements

Other than achieving an overall pass mark of 50%, there are no mandatory course requirements.

Workload

In accordance with University Guidelines, this course has been constructed on the assumption that students will devote 200 hours to the course throughout the trimester, approximately 13 hours a week across the trimester. This total includes the following:
- weekly attendance at lectures, and tutorials; (36 hours)
- completion of all set weekly readings for tutorials; (36 hours)
- research and writing for assessment tasks. (128 hours)

Assessment

	Assessment items and workload per item	%	CLO(s)	Due date
1	Contributions to the regime classification exercise described below. These include helping to select the research question, contributing to the design of a classification system, classifying three different countries at three different points in time, and writing a short paper (1,500 – 2000 words) documenting the findings of the project.	40%	1, 2, 5, 6	Four different deadlines for different aspects of the project. See below for details.
2	Two posts explaining specific readings on the course blog (about 1,000 words each, though exact length is flexible – see below for details and deadlines). If you are uncomfortable submitting your work to the blog, you may request to submit these posts as short essays, though the expectation is that everyone will contribute these posts to the blog.	20% (10% each)	2, 3, 4, 6	Exact deadlines vary depending on last digit of Student ID. See below for details.
3	Participation in the course blog in at least 5 other weeks of the term, through less formal contributions (short posts or comments).	10%	All	Weekly, Friday at 5pm.

4	2hr Final Examination	30%	All	Examination period

Group work: This course requires participation in a group project, the regime classification exercise described below, though only 5% of your final grade is strictly group assessment. See details below.

Detailed Description of Assessment and Marking Criteria

Regime Classification Exercise

The object of this project is to learn both about systematic differences among political regimes and about the difficulties and challenges of making judgments about such differences. The project should also serve as an introduction to the problems of doing systematic research in political science with quantitative data.

To that end, the class as a whole will develop a regime classification scheme and use it to consider a general question about the systematic differences between dictatorships and other regimes. Previous classes have developed worldwide indexes of democracy comparable in accuracy to the professionally used Freedom House index of "Freedom in the World"; but this year the class may decide to generate a somewhat different classification system, covering different periods of time or specific regions, and aiming at answering different questions. The RCE is an unusual assignment for a course, and it may at first feel confusing; nevertheless, the instructor will provide extensive guidance throughout the process, and the benefits of the exercise will eventually be clear. It is worth noting that one former student in this course got a coveted internship with the Fund for Peace working on the Failed States Index based on her participation in the regime classification exercise a few years ago!

Each student will contribute to the project by 1) voting on a set of questions that the regime classification data will help to answer, 2) discussing a list of classification criteria (most of this will happen in tutorials during the first half of the term; hence the importance of attending tutorials!) 3) classifying a number of countries (selected by the instructor) based on these criteria (this will happen soon after the midterm break), 4) documenting the results of the classification in a course wiki; and 4) writing a short essay critically evaluating the criteria used for classification and using the results of the classification to suggest some possible answers to the questions raised by the class.

The project has four stages.

In the first stage the class as a whole will vote on a research question for the project (e.g., are dictatorships more likely to go to war than democracies?). An initial set of questions will be provided by the instructor to seed the voting process, though students will be able to submit their own questions. (A link to the online voting software will be made available through blackboard). The class will then rank the set of questions by 5pm 13 March 2015. This stage is ungraded, but you would do well to participate if you want to have any influence on the direction of the research.

In the second stage, each tutorial group will develop a list of criteria for classifying regimes that would be useful for answering the research question selected in the first stage. The list of criteria need not be wholly original; a tutorial group might propose, for example, replicating the Freedom House or the Polity IV classification system. Each tutorial group will be responsible for posting the consensus proposal for regime classification in the course blog by midnight 24 April 2015, along with any other necessary information (e.g., a proposed procedure to classify regimes; a list of

allowed sources; a justification for a particular regional or historical focus; etc.). This is worth 5% of the final grade for the course. Assessment will be on a coarse scale: from 0 points (no participation) to 5 points (insightful and relevant participation). To facilitate grading, you will submit a simple self-assessment form to the instructor briefly summarising your contributions to this stage of the project by midnight 23 August. (A link to the self-assessment form will be made available online via Blackboard). Note that people who do not submit a self-assessment form will automatically receive 0 points for this part of the project.

These proposals for classification systems will now be open to comment and critique by everyone in the class until 1 May, when the class will vote. Each tutorial group may wish to amend their proposal during this time. (Comments on the blog will count towards your grade for the online assessment component).

The instructor will then set up an electronic form where the actual classification can be made (the third stage of the project) and a wiki to write down the justifications for each country classification, provide the students with information on how to produce an accurate classification, and assign each student the countries that they are responsible for classifying, unless students wish to organise themselves in different manner. (The exact procedure for assigning countries depends on the number of people and the list of classification criteria, but each student will probably be responsible for about three countries. Adjustments may be made, however, depending on which research question and which classification scheme the class ends up adopting.) The actual classification will be due (electronically, via the form mentioned above and the course wiki) on 22 May. This is worth 20% of your final grade. Each classification will be evaluated according to whether it is plausible and properly explained and documented in the course wiki.

In the final stage, the instructor will extract the information produced by the students, make it available in an accessible form (this may include comparing it to professionally produced indexes or regime classification systems), and help the students to make use of it. The instructor will also set up a class page documenting the findings of the project, to which students are encouraged to contribute. Students will then write an essay of about 1500-2000 words critically discussing whether or not the data and methods used in the project can actually help answer the research question selected in the first stage. This essay is due on 5 June, and is worth 15% of your final grade; it must be submitted exclusively via Blackboard (no paper submissions allowed).

More information about each of these stages and further guidance at each point in time will be given in class and posted on Blackboard and the course blog.

The exercise represents a collective project by the entire class: the better everyone's contributions are, the better, more useful, and more interesting the final product will be. You will learn more about political regimes and their classification by collaborating with others in this sort of project than by working alone. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that assessment is strictly individual: I will only take into consideration the quality of your individual classifications and your essay in assigning a grade and giving feedback to you.

Explanatory Blog Posts or Mini-Essays

You will need to submit two "explanatory blog posts" to the course blog (http://politicalpathologies.blogspot.com, also accessible through Blackboard, though you will need to register separately for it) during the term, at deadlines determined by the last digit of your student ID (see below for more details on the deadlines). These posts should be around 1000 words or so, though a great deal of flexibility is allowed, so long as the main goals of the assignment are met.

One or both of these posts should explain one of the readings for the particular week you are assigned; the second can be a short profile of a dictatorship or revolution that ties it to one of the readings for that week. Since these are blog posts, not traditional essays, you may wish to avail yourself of the possibilities of the medium, including video, pictures, and other non-traditional ways of explaining difficult concepts. (Previous students in this class have produced excellent video and audio projects). In keeping with the precept that "teaching teaches the teacher," the point is for you to teach others in the class both how to understand one of the readings for the week, and/or how to connect one of these readings to a specific regime or revolution. If you are uncomfortable posting to the blog, you may request to submit these as mini-essays, though the expectation is that everyone will submit work to the blog. If you request to submit these blog posts as mini-essays, and the instructor agrees, they should be sent directly by e-mail to the instructor by the appropriate deadline (no paper submissions are allowed).

Deadlines for submission are staggered as follows (see lecture schedule for actual dates). Students with IDs ending in 0 and 9 must submit their blog posts on weeks 2 and 11; students with IDs ending in 1 and 8 submit on weeks 3 and 10; IDs ending in 2 and 7 submit on weeks 4 and 9; IDs ending in 3 and 6 submit on weeks 5 and 8; and IDs ending in 4 and 5 submit on weeks 6 and 7. ID numbers ending in 0-5 submit their blog posts on Tuesdays before the lecture (by 14:10); ID numbers ending in 6-9 submit their blog posts on Fridays before the lecture (by 14:10). A wiki page on Blackboard with all the specific deadlines for each student will be made available early in the term; students who wish can trade with each other for more convenient deadlines, so long as the instructor is notified. (E.g., if student A must submit on week 2 and student B must submit on week 5, but they would prefer the reverse, they may switch, so student A submits on week 5 and student B on week 2). Staggered deadlines will allow the instructor and the tutor to provide more immediate feedback, which improves learning outcomes. Late posts incur standard penalties noted below.

Each explanatory blog post will be evaluated on a 1-10 point scale according to the following criteria:
- A good post shows that the student has done the reading and understood its argument. It should accurately summarise the reading, using appropriate quotations and the student's own words.
- A good post explains why the claims made are believed to be true. What methods does the author of the reading use? How robust are these methods?
- A good post puts the reading in context. Do other studies reach similar conclusions? Are the conclusions controversial or widely accepted? This may require some additional research.
- A good post provides some critical commentary. Are there any weaknesses in the argument? Are the methods used to arrive at the conclusions appropriate? Are there problems with the concepts used in the reading?
- A good post ties the reading to specific examples relevant to the course content. Does the reading explain some useful aspect of politics in dictatorial regimes, or in other regimes? If the reading concerns a specific regime or revolution, does it illustrate an important theoretical idea discussed in another reading for the course?
- A good post is clearly composed and written, well formatted, and has relevant links to its sources. (Even though a blog post is not an essay, you should always acknowledge your sources; on the internet, that means linking to them).

You may submit more than two of these blog posts. If you do so, only the best two grades will count, but 1) you must submit the posts on the deadlines you are assigned (unless you can find someone to exchange deadlines with) and 2) you must identify which posts you want to "count" towards your final grade.

Other contributions to the course blog

Studies show that the best way to learn course material and participate effectively in class discussions is to remain engaged with such material over the course of the term, rather than cram for an exam at the end of the term. Moreover, quick and prompt feedback is necessary for learning. In order to further these objectives, 10% of your final grade will depend on additional contributions to the course blog over 5 other weeks of the term (other than the weeks where you are required to submit explanatory blog posts).

You can submit posts or comments for this aspect of assessment any week of the term. Any contributions you submit before 5pm on Fridays count for the previous week; you should contribute in at least five different weeks during the term to have a chance of gaining the maximum number of points. Unlike the "explanatory blog posts" described above, regular contributions to the blog can be of any length, and need not be very formal. (Comments on other people's posts are fine – there is no need to post to the main page).

Take a look at what former students have contributed to the blog in the past for inspiration about the sorts of things you may wish to contribute. Not every posting needs to raise a question, though you may wish to raise questions about class content; and your contributions can be in comments to other people's postings. (All posts and comments in any given week count for your grade for that week). You can, for example:

- Raise questions about issues that are unclear from the class
- Comment on, and link to, articles in the international press about dictatorships or revolutions
- Raise issues that you think ought to be discussed in class
- Have a little fun at the expense of dictators everywhere

I will be contributing to the blog frequently, posting, among other things, short quizzes to test understanding of course content, links to articles I find interesting, and material from my research blog that may be relevant. I will also participate in discussions and use the issues raised in the blog for tutorial discussions or address them in lecture, but the main responsibility is on the students to make the blog a useful learning resource.

A good contribution to the blog should:
- Be clearly written and formatted
- Do more than simply link to other sources on the internet
- Raise an interesting question or problem or comment on some theme discussed in class
- Acknowledge its sources clearly (by linking to them)

Assessment of blog postings will be on a coarse scale. Any contribution (or set of contributions in any given week) that is reasonably on topic (i.e., on a topic relevant to the course content), readable, and not otherwise problematic should receive 1 points. Exceptional contributions should receive 2 points. Very minor or insufficiently relevant contributions should receive either nothing or 0.5 points. You will need to accumulate 10 points over the course of the term. If you do not contribute on a given week, you will receive 0 points (no "make up" contributions are allowed); but all your contributions count, and the assessment is designed so that you can miss a number of weeks without hurting your grade too much. (So 7 weeks of 1 point contributions = 7/10 points = the equivalent of B for this component of assessment. There are 11 weeks during which you can contribute to the blog; the week where you are required to contribute an EBP does not count).

Final examination

The final examination is cumulative, integrative, and closed book, and will last 120 minutes at some date during the examination period.

Submission and return of work

All work for this course is submitted electronically, some of it to the course blog, some of it to Blackboard. **NO PAPER COPIES OF ASSESSMENT ITEMS WILL BE COLLECTED OR ACCEPTED**; if you are unsure about whether an electronic copy of your work has been received, e-mail the instructor for confirmation. **IT IS ALSO YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT ALL FILES SUBMITTED TO BLACKBOARD ARE READABLE**; if a file cannot be opened, it will be counted as "not submitted" and late penalties may be applied until a readable version of the assignment is submitted. If you are in doubt about readable file formats, submit your work as a PDF file.

Comments and other feedback will be available via Blackboard or the comments section of the blog on a continuous basis (as soon as possible after specific pieces of assessment are due, e.g., explanatory blog posts). Note that we reserve the right to check any assessable work via Turnitin.com (see www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin)

Extensions and penalties

Extensions

Late submission of **assignments** will **not be accepted** unless the student makes an appointment as soon as practically possible with the course coordinator to explain the lateness (preferably before the assignment is due to be submitted). The circumstances under which an extension will be considered are outlined in section 3.2.1 of the Assessment Handbook.
(See: www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf).

Penalties

Students will be penalised for late submission of assignments – **a deduction of 5% for the first day late, and 2% per day thereafter, up to a maximum of 8 days**. Work that is more than 10 weekdays late can be accepted for mandatory course requirements but may not be marked. Penalties may be waived if there are valid grounds (for example, illness [presentation of a medical certificate will be necessary] or similar other contingencies). In all such cases, prior information will be necessary. Extensions on deadlines for written work will only be granted under exceptional circumstances.

Set texts

A book of readings for POLS 209 will be available from Vic Books. Please see their website: www.vicbooks.co.nz for details on buying Books of Readings. We will advise enrolled students via Blackboard when the Book of Readings is available to purchase.

Recommended reading

The following books are recommended, and will be available for purchase at Vicbooks and placed on reserve in the library:

- Sebestyen, Victor. 2010. Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire: Knopf Doubleday.
- Gelvin, James L. 2012. The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know. New York: Oxford University Press.

I maintain a large bibliography of potentially useful resources, tagged by topic, here:
http://www.citeulike.org/group/13886.

Class representative

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. A class representative will be selected at the first lecture of the course. Students may like to write the Class Rep's name and details in this box:

Class Rep name and contact details:

Student feedback

Enhancements made to this course, based on the feedback of previous students, will be covered during the course.

Student feedback on University courses may be found at www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php.

Other important information

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism
- Aegrotats: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats
- Academic Progress: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progess (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin
- Grades: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades
- Resolving academic issues: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Special passes: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy
- Student support: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support
- Students with disabilities: www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability
- Student Charter: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter
- Student Contract: www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract
- Subject Librarians: http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian
- Turnitin: www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin
- University structure: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure
- Victoria graduate profile: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile
- VUWSA: www.vuwsa.org.nz