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Office Hours: Wednesday, 14:00-15:00 (by appointment)

Universität Münster

# Winter term 2024/2025

# Challenges to Democracy

## Seminar Dates

The seminar takes place every week on Wednesday from 12:00 to 14:00 (c.t.). The first session takes place on 16 October 2024 and the final session will be held on 22 January 2025. The seminar is directed to master students and will take place in English.

## Course Overview

The seminar seeks to analyse the current challenges democratic regimes face. It is structured along three blocks. In the first block, we will learn about the essential features of a democracy and discover what shapes the quality of democracy. In a second block, we will engage with different empirical analyses of the current state of democratization and democratic systems. We will zero in on how institutions are sidelined; how actors, such as far-right parties, challenge democracies; and how democracy is threatened by crises. In the third block, we will look at potential solutions and scenarios of how democracy could cope with the current challenges.

Credits can only be granted if participants read and engage with the readings before the seminar and pass the seminar requirements.

## Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, you have been introduced to key concepts in democratization and democratic backsliding. You will learn about how democracies are defined and what determines the quality of democracies. Empirically, you will have acquired an understanding of the current state of democratic systems around the world. Further, you will have learnt about different threats to democracy – both coming from the inside and outside. Finally, you

will be able to critically evaluate potential solutions to the problems democracies are facing. Through reading and application, you will get a glimpse on different methodological approaches to assess democratic quality and its challenges. Further, you will have learned how to collect, analyse, summarise and present your own empirical data.

The goal of the individual sessions is to offer you different perspectives on how to study democracy. While being exposed to these different sub-dimensions will give you a basic insight into the discipline, what you will have learnt is invariably linked to your own interests, so your input in the seminar shapes your individual learning outcomes.

## Requirements

The amount of credits granted depends on the programme you are enrolled in. Keep in mind that each ECTS amounts to about 30 hours of working time. The final mark is composed of the following components. A successful seminar participation requires the following tasks to fulfil (estimated hours based on 7 $ECTS * 30 = 210$)

- regular attendance and active participation in discussion — 18 hours
- questions on three empirical articles
- podcast project
- term paper (graded)

— 192 hours

### Attendance and Questions on the Readings

Students should regularly attend the seminar. In case you miss a session, please inform me about your absence. This is very important for my own planning. Attendance requires active participation in class which presumes careful reading of the literature. This is a reading-intense seminar; each session is based on at least two readings. The readings are usually below 50 pages but require a thorough read.

When reading the empirical paper: There are different reading techniques but you should always take notes – either during or directly after reading the text. Focus on the core message of the author. Try to identify the puzzle and the question an author presents, their arguments, and the general methodological approach (for a first read, do not get lost in the details!). Then

always ask yourself whether you can follow the argumentation. On which point do you disagree and why? Once you are able to summarize the core idea of a paper within two minutes, you are ready to go. If you have problems in understanding the text, write them down and we'll try to clarify them in class.

For three sessions of your choice (except for session 4), you are asked to write down three different questions about the readings. These can be informed by the questions you had on the readings but should not be comprehension questions about the text (these can and should be raised separately in class). For instance, while your written questions should not ask what the main results of the article are, you could ask about the wider implications of a research finding for a democracy, the policy-making process etc. Each question should clearly relate to an article which was assigned for the class.

**Podcast project**

In small groups of 4-5 people, you are asked to work on a small podcast project. The podcast should be no longer than 3 minutes in length. Everyone in the group needs to participate – at the end of the project, you need to break down who did what. This implies that some of you may focus on the empirical analysis, others may interview people on the streets and others create the final project/presentation. You can record citizens and yourself with your mobile device. If you want, you can edit the recordings using Shotcut, a free editing software offered by the University of Münster (here's a short tutorial). However, it is totally fine just to present your empirical findings and play supporting interviews *live* in the session. In other words, do not worry about the technical realization of your podcast.

The aim of the project is to develop a question about the quality of democracy. We will initiate this in our third session in which we talk about different indices to measure the state of democracy. The subsequent session (on 6 November 2024) won't take place in classroom. Instead, you are asked to go on the streets of Münster surveying citizens about their experiences with democracy. What you want to ask them is entirely up to you. Some questions which may guide your podcast could be:

- What does *democracy* mean to you?
- Do you remember an event in your life in which you felt that this is "lived democracy"?
- When you think about the future of democracy, what comes into your mind?

- Are there certain things you would like to change about how our democracy currently works?

These questions should be tailored to the research question you will develop in the session before.

**Research Paper**

In case you need a grade, you are supposed to draft a research paper on one of the topics we covered (6,000 words $\pm$ 10%, font size 11/12, 1.5 spacing, justified text, margins 2.5cm). Please list the number of words on your title page. The research paper is due 31 March.

In your term paper, you are asked to apply the knowledge you have learnt in previous sessions. The research paper should follow the basic structure of an academic paper. Your academic paper should start with a research puzzle (some empirical phenomenon which cannot be explained by existing work), introduce the specific research question and motivate why it is important to examine this question. You should then review the existing literature on which base you develop your own theoretical framework formulating research hypotheses. You are required to test this argument empirically. In the data and methods section, you are expected to describe your analytic approach thoroughly before presenting your results and concluding with the overall implications for your research question.

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism and ghostwriting are forbidden. Written assignments may be checked for plagiarism using the plagiarism software Turnitin.

Students are required to use referenced work in their assignments with proper documentation and citation. To facilitate the citation workflow and prepare for future assignments in the programme, students are encouraged to use reference software. The University of Münster provides access to Citavi via AcadCloud on a reduced price. Alternatively, students can use the open-source software Zotero. When in doubt about proper citation, please refer to the Leitlinien zum wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten provided by the Department of Political Science.

You need to be transparent about the usage of AI tools at the end of your submitted writings (Which tools did you use? Which prompts did you issue?). AI can be a helpful tool

for coding, language editing and information retrieval. Still, please keep in mind that you are expected to submit original work which is based on your *own* ideas. Thus, a term paper written by AI cannot be accepted.

## Inclusiveness

To promote inclusiveness, this seminar aims to use gender-inclusive language. Participants are invited to share their pronouns with the class.

To allow for a dynamic feedback culture, students are encouraged to regularly submit (anonymous) feedback via Google Forms (link tba) or by sending me a mail.

## Readings and Timetable

### Introductory Readings

The following readings are not compulsory. However, they can guide you through the process of writing and provide you with a broader perspective on the future of democracy.

**On the comparative method:**

1. King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research, New Edition*. Princeton University Press
2. Cunningham, S. (2021). *Causal Inference: The Mixtape*. Yale University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1c29t27

**On democracy:**

1. Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2018). *How Democracies Die* (1st ed.). Crown
2. Nai, A., & Maier, J. (2024). *Dark Politics: The Personality of Politicians and the Future of Democracy* (1st ed.). Oxford University PressNew York. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197681756.001.0001
3. Przeworski, A. (2019). *Crises of Democracy*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108671019

**On writing:**

1. Powner, L. C. (2014). *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide*. CQ Press

**A tutorial about R**

1. Schröder, P., Kiemes, L., & Wuttke, A. (2024). R for Social Science Data Analysis - R for Social Scientists. Retrieved October 2, 2024, from https://adp-cvk.quarto.pub/r-for-social-science-data-analysis/

**Week 1: Introduction [16 October 2024]**

There is no need to prepare anything from your side. We will talk about the structure of the seminar, expectations and your pre-knowledge on the issue.

**Week 2: Concepts [23 October 2024]**

In this session, we will talk about different conceptualizations of democracy, laying out the foundation for the subsequent sessions in which we will always come back to what democracy really means.

**Compulsory readings**

1. Merkel, W. (2004). Embedded and defective democracies. *Democratization*, *11*(5), 33–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340412331304598
2. Munck, G. L. (2016). What is democracy? A reconceptualization of the quality of democracy. *Democratization*, *23*(1), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2014.918104

**Suggested reading**

1. Sartori, G. (1970). Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics*. *American political science review*, *64*(4), 1033–1053. https://doi.org/10.2307/1958356

**Week 3: Democracy - A Winning Formula? [30 October 2024]**

In this session, we will look at different indices measuring the quality of democracies. Please bring your laptops.

**Compulsory readings**

1. Fukuyama, F. (1989). The End of History? *The national interest*, (16), 3–18. Retrieved August 5, 2024, from https://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184
2. Boese, V. A., Lundstedt, M., Morrison, K., Sato, Y., & Lindberg, S. I. (2022). State of the world 2021: Autocratization changing its nature? *Democratization*, *29*(6), 983–1013. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2022.2069751

Optional: Wuttke, A., Gavras, K., & Schoen, H. (2022). Have Europeans Grown Tired of Democracy? New Evidence from Eighteen Consolidated Democracies, 1981–2018. *British journal of political science*, *52*(1), 416–428. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000149

**Suggested readings on the datasets**

1. Lührmann, A., Tannenberg, M., & Lindberg, S. I. (2018). Regimes of the World (RoW): Opening New Avenues for the Comparative Study of Political Regimes. *Politics and governance*, *6*(1), 60–77. https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v6i1.1214
2. Holmberg, S., Rothstein, B., & Nasiritousi, N. (2009). Quality of Government: What You Get. *Annual review of political science*, *12*(1), 135–161. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-100608-104510

**Week 4: Field work (no session) [6 November 2024]**

In this week, you are asked to work on your podcast project. The seminar session is cancelled. You can do the project work at any time during the week. I will be in my office if you have any questions (please text me in advance for an appointment).
Moreover, on Tuesday, the 5 November, the US elections take place. The IfPol organizes an event encompassing inputs from experts, games and watching. The event starts at 22:30 in the 'Aula am Aasee' and takes all night. Please sign up using this link if you intend to come.

**Week 5 & 6: Facilitators and Challenges to Democratization [13 and 20 November 2024]**

We will listen to your presentations. Afterwards, we will engage with literature on the difficulties for democratization.

**Compulsory readings**

1. Hager, A., & Krakowski, K. (2022). Does State Repression Spark Protests? Evidence from Secret Police Surveillance in Communist Poland. *American political science review*, *116*(2), 564–579. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421000770

2. Baturo, A., & Tolstrup, J. (2024). Strategic Communication in Dictatorships: Performance, Patriotism, and Intimidation. *The journal of politics*, *86*(2), 582–596. https://doi.org/10.1086/726945

**Suggested readings**

1. Boix, C. (2011). Democracy, Development, and the International System. *American political science review*, *105*(4), 809–828. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055411000402
2. Guriev, S., & Treisman, D. (2020). The Popularity of Authoritarian Leaders: A Cross-National Investigation. *World politics*, *72*(4), 601–638. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887120000167

**Week 7: Stretching the Rules of the Game [27 November 2024]**

Democracies are safeguarded by institutions, ensuring that the rule of law is implemented. But what happens if these are sidelined by its enemies? We will discuss theories of democratic backsliding and how informal norms can be weaponized against democracy.

**Compulsory readings**

1. Bermeo, N. (2016). On Democratic Backsliding. *Journal of democracy*, *27*(1), 5–19. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0012
2. Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2018). *How Democracies Die* (1st ed.). Crown – Chapter 1
   **or a corresponding podcast on the book:**
   Abou-Chadi, T. (n.d.). Daniel Ziblatt. How Democracies Die. https://soundcloud.com/user-467531770/episode-12-daniel-ziblatt-how-democracies-die

Optional: Poblete-Cazenave, R. (n.d.). Do Politicians in Power Receive Special Treatment in Courts? Evidence from India. *American journal of political science*, *n/a*(n/a). https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12804

**Week XX: Culture, Grievances and the Far-Right [cancelled]**

Societies are transforming, and the consequences are often attributed to the rise of a major challenger of liberal democracy, the far right. In this session, we will discuss how economic and cultural factors can contribute to the electoral success of the far right, and zero in on Poland, a country in which the far-right has gradually eroded democracy.

**Compulsory readings**

1. Bolet, D. (2021). Drinking Alone: Local Socio-Cultural Degradation and Radical Right Support—The Case of British Pub Closures. *Comparative political studies*, *54*(9), 1653–1692. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414021997158
2. Haas, V. I., Bogatyrev, K., Abou-Chadi, T., Stoetzer, L. F., & Klüver. (2024). *The Electoral Effects of State-Sponsored Homophobia*. https://violeta-haas.github.io/research/

**Suggested readings**

1. A general overview tracing the evolution of far-right:
   Mudde, C. (2019). *The Far Right Today*. John Wiley & Sons
2. More on the relation between economic grievances and the far-right:
   Baccini, L., & Weymouth, S. (2021). Gone For Good: Deindustrialization, White Voter Backlash, and US Presidential Voting. *American political science review*, *115*(2), 550–567. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421000022
3. More on cultural grievances and democratization:
   Leipziger, L. E. (2024). Ethnic Inequality, Democratic Transitions, and Democratic Breakdowns: Investigating an Asymmetrical Relationship. *The journal of politics*, *86*(1), 291–304. https://doi.org/10.1086/726949
4. More on radical right parties in (local power):
   Paxton, F. (2023). *Restrained Radicals: Populist Radical Right Parties in Local Government*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009379069
5. Podcast on the Mainstreaming of the Radical Right:
   Mudde, C. (n.d.). Aurelien Mondon on the Mainsteaming of the Far Right. https://www.buzzsprout.com/1134467/episodes/10821231

**Week 8: Democratic Norms and Affective Polarization [4 December 2024]**

In this session, we zero in on the citizen level. More specifically, we'll talk about the how affective polarization influence democratic norms.

**Compulsory readings**

1. Graham, M. H., & Svolik, M. W. (2020). Democracy in America? Partisanship, Polarization, and the Robustness of Support for Democracy in the United States. *American political science review*, *114*(2), 392–409. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000052
2. Broockman, D. E., Kalla, J. L., & Westwood, S. J. (2023). Does Affective Polarization Undermine Democratic Norms or Accountability? Maybe Not. *American journal of political science*, *67*(3), 808–828. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12719

**Optional readings**

1. Cohen, M. J., Smith, A. E., Moseley, M. W., & Layton, M. L. (2023). Winners' Consent? Citizen Commitment to Democracy When Illiberal Candidates Win Elections. *American journal of political science*, *67*(2), 261–276. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12690
2. Badrinathan, S., Chauchard, S., & Siddiqui, N. (2024). Misinformation and Support for Vigilantism: An Experiment in India and Pakistan. *American political science review*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055424000790

**Week 9: External Challenges to Democracy – Global Crises [11 December 2024]**

Crises resulting from a pandemic, economic recessions or climate change require appropriate governance. In this session, we will discuss the tension between the climate crisis and the future of democracy.

**Compulsory readings**

1. Mittiga, R. (2022). Political Legitimacy, Authoritarianism, and Climate Change. *American political science review*, *116*(3), 998–1011. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421001301
2. Cerkez, N. (2024). *Extreme Weather Events and the Support for Democracy*. https://nicolascerkez.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/droughtsdemocracy-2.pdf

**Week 10: Solutions – Strengthening Institutions [18 December 2024]**

After having engaged with multiple threats to democracy, in the next block, we will focus on potential solutions. In the first session, we will discuss how institutions can be strengthened to defend democracy.

**Compulsory readings**

1. Treisman, D. (2020). Democracy by Mistake: How the Errors of Autocrats Trigger Transitions to Freer Government. *American political science review*, *114*(3), 792–810. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000180
2. Martinangeli, A. F., Povitkina, M., Jagers, S., & Rothstein, B. (2024). Institutional Quality Causes Generalized Trust: Experimental Evidence on Trusting under the Shadow of Doubt. *American journal of political science*, *68*(3), 972–987. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12780

**Week 11: Solutions – Participation [8 January 2025]**

In this session, we will discuss how we can boost participation, one core pillar of democracy in action, to foster trust in the democratic process. We will also prepare the next session, which is an input and discussion session with the 'Demokratie-Update Münster'.

**Compulsory readings**

1. Kalla, J. L., & Broockman, D. E. (2020). Reducing Exclusionary Attitudes through Interpersonal Conversation: Evidence from Three Field Experiments. *American political science review*, *114*(2), 410–425. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055419000923
2. E. Finkel, S., Neundorf, A., & Rascón Ramírez, E. (2024). Can Online Civic Education Induce Democratic Citizenship? Experimental Evidence from a New Democracy. *American journal of political science*, *68*(2), 613–630. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12765

**Week 12: Solutions – Field trip to 'Demokratie-Update Münster' [15 January 2025]**

In this session, we will meet Andreas Schiel from the 'Demokratie-Update Münster' to discuss practical implications of a citizen assembly. The session will be held during the regular hours in the seminar room.
Read more about their work here.

**Week 13: Project and Wrap-Up Session [22 January 2025]**

This session serves the purpose to summarize what we did during the term, discuss your open questions and developing ideas for your planned research papers.