

PLS 731: Transitions to Democracy... or Not
Graduate Seminar in Comparative Politics
Winter 2008



Dr. Laura M. Luehrmann

Seminar: Wednesdays, 6:05-9:25pm, 002 Millett Hall

Faculty Office: 313 Millett Hall (tel: 775-3197)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:45-11:45; Wednesdays 2:00-3:30; and by appointment

E-mail: Laura.Luehrmann@wright.edu

“To safeguard democracy, the people must have a keen sense of independence, self-respect, and their oneness.” (Mohandas K. Gandhi)

“The ‘third wave’ of democracy is over...Democracy promotion can no longer assume a consensus about the preeminence of democracy among the main geostrategic actors in the world.”

(A leading authority on democracy promotion and democratization, in an October 2007 assessment of his field.)

“Elections are like weddings. They promise, but they do not guarantee.”
(An observer of recent Indonesian elections.)

“We know how to do a lot of things, but deep down, we don’t really know what we are doing.”

(Democracy practitioner in Latin America, commenting on efforts to spread the rule of law.)

Course Overview

One of the central puzzles in the study of politics has been the explanation of the birth, survival, and collapse of democratic governance. In this graduate seminar, we will explore the opportunities and obstacles faced by transitional systems. At its core, this course is about political change, specifically the complex processes involved in regime change. While many argue that we are living in a “democratic age,” recent events remind us of the extreme difficulties with which democratic regimes become established, and more importantly, consolidated. We will examine the range of explanations and theories that have been developed to delve into these questions.

This course is intended as an introductory survey of the political, social, cultural, economic and international factors that foster (or hinder) the development and consolidation of democracy. By the end of the course, students will be familiar with the theoretical debates and main issues concerning political

transitions, consolidation, and the cases of so-called “non-transitions.” Additionally, students will develop expertise on either a substantive topic or conceptual approach through independent research that will culminate in a literature review.

Course Materials

Required readings can be found in three books and multiple articles that have been placed on reserve (both hard copy and electronic) at Dunbar Library. Our password will be distributed in class. The required books are:

Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) (abbreviated as “Brownlee”);

Robert A. Dahl, Ian Shapiro, and José Antonio Cheibub, editors, *The Democracy Sourcebook*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003) (abbreviated as “Sourcebook”);

Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*, (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) (abbreviated as “Diamond”).

Attendance and Participation: This course is a graduate seminar, and attendance is mandatory. More than one unexcused absence from seminar will result in a full letter deduction of the final grade. Regular use of your Wright State University e-mail account is essential for this course: seminar papers and completed exams will be distributed electronically.

Students will also be required to participate in the classroom studio for PLS 731, available on the University’s WINGS portal (<http://wings.wright.edu>). After entering your WSU username and password, go to the “Academics” Tab and then find “My Courses.” Here you will find each of your WSU classes. Click on “PLS 731” to open our course studio.

The instructor will post internet links, handouts and other important material to the WINGS studio. All of the seminar papers (see below) will be posted to our Course Studio. In order to use WINGS, *students must use their Wright State University e-mail account*. Check to see what firewalls or connectivity problems you may encounter and plan your coursework accordingly. For questions about your WSU account, password, etc., please contact Computing and Telecommunications Services (CATS) at 775-4827.

Seminar Papers: Seminar papers will serve as the basis for discussion in each of our meetings. These papers, which should be two sides a sheet of paper (single-spaced), combine elements of a summary presentation with independent analysis, critical reflection, and questions for discussion. Papers should avoid simple summarization by critically evaluating the themes in the readings – linking the material under review *to other readings that week* as well as building on other seminar themes.

We will divide the seminar paper assignments during the class session for Week Two. Depending on final course enrollment, each student will complete and present two or three seminar papers across the quarter. Papers must be submitted to WINGS Course Studio no later than **NOON EST** the **Tuesday** before the class meeting in which we will cover the article. They will be posted to the PLS 731 Course page under “Files”. To facilitate sharing and locating papers, please save under the following protocol: “**Author.WeekX.YourName,**” i.e. “Rustow.Week1.Luehrmann.” If you do not e-mail seminar papers by noon, you will not receive full credit for the paper. All seminar participants are responsible for reading the papers prior to the seminar meeting, and preparing comments on them for class discussion. (The instructor has prepared a seminar paper for Week One to serve as an example.)

Literature Review: Each student will prepare a literature review of 4-5000 words (approximately 15-20 pages, double spaced), presenting the key analytical approaches to a topic relevant to political transitions. Possible topics include the democratization process in a country or set of countries (for instance, Francophone Africa or Central America), the role of a particular actor (popular movements, churches, women or aid donors), or a specific issue's relationship with democratization (ethnicity, class, economic reform or international support). A proposal, consisting of a one-paragraph description of the research question and a preliminary *annotated* bibliography, must be submitted during Week Four of the quarter.

Literature reviews are due Week Eight. Each paper will be reviewed by both the instructor and one of your classmates. The academic world revolves around the process of peer review: colleagues review and comment on scholarship, teaching, grants, and almost all aspects of the academic enterprise. As students enrolled in a graduate program, you will quickly learn the merits of collaboration and collegiality.

The classmate-discussant will not assign a grade to the draft, but rather, will make constructive suggestions for revision. During Week Nine, the discussant will bring two identical copies of the written suggestions to class: one for the paper author and one for the professor. The final revised version is due during the last week of classes.

Exams: there will be two written examinations (take-home) in this course. Students will be required to reference relevant readings in their answers, but outside research for these examinations is not expected.

Academic Honesty: All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism will be tolerated. Careful citation is required for all written materials, including seminar papers. Please familiarize yourself with the university guidelines on academic integrity, which can be found at: http://www.wright.edu/students/judicial/stu_integrity.html

Grading:

Final grades for the course will be based on the following:

Seminar papers:	15%
Take-home midterm:	20%
Lit Review: <i>First Draft</i> :	15%
Lit Review: <i>Revised</i> :	20%
Discussant Comments:	5%
Take-home final:	25%

Tentative Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week One: (Jan 9)

Course overview and introduction to the literature. Training on WSU's portal, WINGS. Introduction to the seminar topic: Why do some argue that we are living in a democratic age? What are the pros and cons of democracy's hegemonic status? Are there any preconditions to democracy?

In addition to these readings, please consult "Freedom in the World, 2007": available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=15>

Huntington, "Democracy's Third Wave" (*Sourcebook* pp. 93-98)

Dankwart A. Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics* 2:3 (April 1970), pp. 337-63 (Reserve)

Arch Puddington, "The Pushback Against Democracy: The 2006 Freedom House Survey," *Journal of Democracy* 18:2, April 2007, pp. 125-137 (Reserve)