Introduction. The study of democracy and democratization has a long history in the discipline of political science. Interest in this topic has expanded dramatically over the past decade and one-half, because of what seems to have become since the mid-1970s a global wave of democratization—extending from southern Europe and Latin America to eastern Europe, Africa and east and southeast Asia. Thus, to the considerable literature on democratization as a longterm process of historical development has been added a huge number of new studies of what could be termed “quick democratization.” It is primarily this literature that we will be addressing in this course—though we are happy to recommend comparative work on “slow democratization” as well.

The course is guided by two goals. The first is to introduce you to the major issues, theories, concepts, and arguments in the literature on recent democratization. This will not be easy, because there is so much work in this area. In this syllabus, we have tried to provide you with a representative sample of two types of work, which sometimes (and only sometimes) overlap—the best research and the research that grapples with the most important and interesting puzzles. The second goal of the course is to give you a comparative perspective on some of the major cases of transitions from dictatorship to democracy. In practice, this will mean focusing primarily—but far from entirely—on the postcommunist Eurasian states and Sub-Saharan Africa. This focus is not just self-serving on our part, given our areas of expertise. It is also easily defensible in methodological terms. These two regions feature a very large number of cases; each region exhibits unusual diversity in both causes and effects, thereby making for instructive comparisons (in direct contrast to Latin America, for example, where variations in regime outcomes are limited); and these two areas share, nonetheless, some important characteristics, such as weak states, long experiences with colonial rule, and far from ideal correlations between national and state boundaries.

What we are trying to do in this course, therefore, is to balance theory with empirics. This is difficult business. No doubt, this will leave us at times feeling that we should do more of one or the other. However, please keep in mind that: 1) you have the option of writing a research paper (or taking an examination at the end of the course); 2) this is a survey course which will, we hope, help identify the kinds of questions you may want to pursue in greater detail in the future.

Format. This is a seminar. Thus, the weekly meetings will be devoted to discussion of the assigned readings. Our role will be one of providing some structure to the discussion and adding, where useful, additional information. Your role will be to lead the discussion—which two of you will be doing each week, in addition to providing the class (on Monday by noon through email) with a critical summary of the assigned readings. This summary should be no longer than two double-spaced pages. In addition to taking
turns at leading the discussion, we expect each of you to participate in the discussion and will feel free to call on you, even when you do not volunteer.

Requirements. As already noted, each of you will be a discussion co-leader at several sessions during the term (with how often a function of enrollment), and each of you will be providing your colleagues and me with a critical review of the readings. Finally, you have the choice of either writing a research paper (of about 20-25 pages in length) or doing a take-home examination (composed of questions similar to those offered at A examinations in the subfield of comparative politics).

Readings: The assigned readings are in a box in the Government Reading Room at the library. In addition, the following books are assigned, and they are available at the campus store:


August 31: Introduction to the Course.

September 7: Overviews and (Some) Methodological Issues. This session has two goals. The first is to get a lay of the land by reading and then discussing several recent reviews of the literature on recent democratization. The second is to confront some important methodological issues in the study of democratization—an issue that will be addressed repeatedly throughout the semester. Please read the following:

September 14: The Breakdown of Authoritarian Rule. In this session, we will look at very different approaches to explaining why authoritarian regimes weaken. Surprisingly enough, this topic has not received a great deal of attention. This is because of three factors, all testifying to the biases of how we have analyzed recent democratization—in particular, the rush to look at democratization, the tendency to conflate the breakdown of authoritarian rule with democratization, and the emphasis, especially evident in the transitions school, on proximate rather than longer-term influences on democratization. Please read the following:


September 21: International Influences and Democratization. The transition to democracy in the postcommunist region was—and is—strongly affected by international actors—for example, various non-governmental organizations, along with the European Union. In addition, the political economy of the Soviet bloc virtually guaranteed that political and economic change would be region-wide. By contrast, in the African cases change was less certain and often less dramatic. Authoritarian leaders struggled to obtain much needed resources from abroad, while minimizing the political conditions attached to aid. African democracy activists sought support from regional and international agencies and NGOs. Democracy assistance programs mushroomed as foreign organizations directed funds towards elections, legal systems, political parties and civil society groups.

September 28: Social Requisites Versus Intra-Elite Bargaining. Earlier studies of democratization (for example, in the 1960-1970s) focused on socio-economic variables, such as the size and balance of power among classes as countries made the transition from agrarian to industrial societies. By contrast, studies of recent democratization have placed far more emphasis on bargaining between opposition leaders and authoritarian elites. The assumption in the latter body of work—which has been heavily influenced by the transitions school in general and the Spanish case in particular—is that structured bargaining that produces agreements between the two sides about the rules of the transition (what is commonly called pacting) is the approach that is most likely to produce robust democratic outcomes. Once we shift our attention from the Latin American and southern European cases to, say, Sub-Saharan Africa and the postcommunist region, however, we can begin to question how common such an approach has been and whether it is in fact so ideal.


**October 5: Civil Society and Social Capital.** Civil society can be defined as associational life independent of the state, and social capital can be defined as “features of social organization, such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Robert Putnam, “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital.” *Journal of Democracy*, January, 1995, p. 67). The argument is that democracy is well-served by a vibrant civil society and by a largesse of social capital. The readings lay out these arguments and then complicate them.


**October 12: Fall Break**

**October 19: Political Culture and Democratic Attitudes.** It is ironic that the literature on recent democratization was, until recently, largely a literature on elite attitudes and intra-elite bargaining and not about mass perspectives and mass participation in politics. In this session, we will focus on political values and attitudes. Which mass attitudes are likely to be supportive or threatening to new democracies? How are those attitudes formed and what causes them to change?

October 26: Political Parties, Unions and Voting Behavior. The primary ways in which publics link to government in a democratic order is through two institutions—political parties and unions. Moreover, it can be argued that the central problem in many new democracies, aside from the weakness of the state, is the weakness of political parties. Finally, the most common form of political participation in new democracies, as well as well-established democratic orders, is voting. In this session, we will look at political parties, voting behavior, and unions. Please read the following:


November 2: Institutions and Democratization. In this session, we will examine (in very superficial fashion—this is a very large literature) institutional design and democratization. Many authors who write about institutions assume that institutions are causes, not effects, and many authors assume as well that the design of institutions tells us in straight-forward fashion how they operate in practice. More recently a number of scholars began investigating the political influences on institutional choice and institutional performance in different contexts. Please read the following:


There are two good reasons to assume patterned relationships among democratization, economic reform and economic performance. The first is that the global wave of democratization has been accompanied by a global wave of economic reform—or marketization, privatization and free trade. The second is that in a democratic setting, politicians are accountable to the electorate, and a core issue to the electorate is their own economic circumstances, along with their reading of the overall performance of the economy (or “sociotropic” voting).


November 16: Democratization as the Dependent Variable: Variable Outcomes.

The literature on redemocratization in Latin America and southern Europe had one methodological problem (which was also a “real-world problem”): little variation in the dependent variable. This was, by the way, quite unexpected. When the project on transitions from authoritarian rule began, the assumption was merely that authoritarian rule was weakening, not that democracy would necessarily follow in all cases. However, postcommunist political dynamics, as well as political change in Africa, have been quite variable. Thus, a number of studies have grappled with the question of why, with the purported end of authoritarian rule, the new regimes that came into being were either authoritarian, democratic in character, or a melding of the two. The other questions that we will address in this session are concerned with the sustainability of democracy. Why do some new democracies break down and others survive? Is there a positive relationship between the quality and the survival of democracy—as many assume? The readings are heavy this week; I apologize.


**November 23: The State, the Nation and Democratization.** The recent transitions to democracy in southern Europe and Latin America took place within longstanding, capable states. Moreover, national identities were relatively well-defined and national and state borders were roughly congruent—both of which spoke in part to how long ago colonial rule had ended. As a result, the boundaries of the state, the state’s claim to the legitimate use of coercion, and membership in the nation were not contested—though Spain provides, we must admit, a partial exception to this generalization. By contrast, in the postcommunist region and in Sub-Saharan Africa, the state is contested. Moreover, the weakness of so many of these states—that is, their difficulties in extracting compliance and controlling borders-- has made the transition to democracy far more difficult. Finally, if national identities are always fluid, they are particularly so in the two contexts of particular interest to us in this course. Indeed, their very fluidity, coupled with continuing struggles over the borders of both nations and states, means that two conditions of democratization have not been met—that is, as Dankwart Rustow argued thirty years ago, settlement of the national and the state questions.


**November 30: Open Session**