Dictators and rebels: authoritarian rule and resistance under authoritarianism



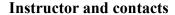
Protests in Belarus, 2020. Photo: Andrej Stryzhak

Class Time

Location

Monday/Wednesday 3-4.15 pm

Humanities 243



Guzel Garifullina

guzel.garifullina@richmond.edu

Jepson Hall 130

Office hours: by appointment

Course website: https://blackboard.richmond.edu

Course description

In this course, we will explore authoritarian rule – and resistance to authoritarianism. What strategies do authoritarian leaders use to stay in power? How effective are repression and information control? What can people in those regimes do to resist? How do authoritarian leaders come to power and how are they overthrown?

Course goals and learning outcomes

After completing this course, you will understand how contemporary authoritarianism functions and how people who live under such a regime (which is up to half of the world population) can experience it, adapt to it, and resist it. We will discuss relevant scholarly findings and illustrate them with historical and contemporary cases. In addition to a general understanding of authoritarian regimes, you will develop your unique regional interest and expertise by picking a country and developing a portfolio of analytical notes about its political development. Knowledge and skills developed throughout this course will help you be a better citizen, navigate contemporary political debates, and prepare for a career in international institutions, public policy, or related spheres.

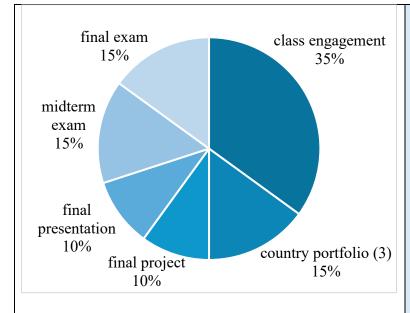
Prerequisites

This course does not have any prerequisites. It is beneficial if you have a regional interest and/or have previously taken courses in comparative politics or international relations – either of those would help you narrow down your own interests as you engage with the course material. I am always open to discussing alternative paper topics/countries, etc. that align with your goals.

Reading

There is no required textbook, all course readings (articles and book chapters) will be available on Blackboard.

Assignments and grading



*Late submission policy

All written assignments are due at 11:59 pm on the designated date.

10% of the total points for the assignment will be deducted for each 24-hour period that the assignment is late. For assignments less than 24 hours late, the deduction will be proportional.

Each of you has 2 (two) no-penalty 24-hour extensions to use on the written assignments during the semester. You do not need to ask me or explain anything – just put a written note in your submission indicating that you chose to use one of your extensions. These extensions are available to all, because life happens.

If you need additional extensions, discuss it with me at least 24 hours before the assignment's original deadline (the earlier, the better). I reserve the right to grant or deny an extension on a case-by-case basis. Afterdeadline requests can be only granted in exceptional circumstances.

1. Class engagement (35%)

Your engagement with the class material is critical in this course. This portion of the grade contains all the ways you will be participating in our class meetings and engaging with required reading.

What	% grade	How often	Details		
Contribute to	10%	Every class	There are various ways to participate in		
class			this class – all of them help us have more		
conversations			interesting conversations in class.		
			• Current events: What is happening		
			in the world right now that is		
			relevant to today's topic? We will		
			start every class with an		
			opportunity to talk about current		
			events – anyone can jump in with		
			a recent event they read about and		
			explain how it illustrates		

			something we are talking about in class. That's a chance to have a "prepared" thing to boost your participation score • Individual contributions to class discussion (answering questions, offering comments, participating in the reading discussion, etc.) • Emailing/talking to the instructor about class material. Your meaningful questions and reflections outside of class can count as elements of your participation. Grading: After each class, you get a participation mark: plus, check, or minus. In the end of the semester, if you have mostly "plus" marks, you get an "A" for this participation element, mostly "checks" – a "B", and mostly "minuses" results in a "C".
Lead class discussions	10%	Twice during the semester	Use your own takes on the class readings to lead a 20-25 minute conversation about the topic. Avoid factual questions, start thought-provoking conversations. You will sign up to lead the discussion in Week 1 of class, each of you will lead class reading discussion twice during the semester Grading: You can earn up to 5 points every time you lead a discussion, based on the quality of your questions and the depth of your engagement with the readings.
Participate and reflect on class activities	15%	During and after each of three class games/activities	There will be three interactive class experiences that will take entire class periods. I will provide details in class. Specific dates are marked in the class schedule below. You are graded both on your participation and the submission of associated assignments and reflections.

2. Country portfolio assignments (~2 pages each) (15% total)

These assignments build your regional expertise. Throughout the semester, you will explore the political institutions and events in a county of your choice. You will use that knowledge to contribute to class discussions and to write your final paper.

PORTFOLIO 1 (due Week 4)

Pick a country, describe its basic institutions (type of authoritarianism) and current leader. Describe how the current leader came to power. Identify 2 trustworthy news sources in this country's language. You will use these sources in the following assignments. Describe how you found the sources and how you evaluated their trustworthiness.

PORTFOLIO 2 (due Week 8)

What strategies does this leader use, based on the evidence you see in the news reports in the past 6 months? Identify 2-3 strategies from the ones discussed in class and observed in your selected case, explain their relative prominence, and illustrate with examples from the country's recent history.

PORTFOLIO 3 (due Week 12)

How is the opposition organized in your country? Describe their strategies and recent actions/success specifically regarding electoral and revolutionary resistance

Pick a country¹

- 1. Algeria
- 2. Azerbaijan
- 3. Belarus
- 4. Burkina Faso
- 5. Cambodia
- 6. Cuba
- 7. Egypt
- 8. Gabon
- 9. Haiti
- 10. Kazakhstan
- 11. Kyrgyzstan
- 12. Laos
- 13. Libya
- 14. Mali
- 15. Mozambique
- 16. Nicaragua
- 17. Pakistan
- 18. Oatar
- 19. Serbia
- 20. Thailand
- 21. Turkey
- 22. Turkmenistan
- 23. United Arab Emirates
- 24. Vietnam
- 25. Zimbabwe

If you want to focus on a country that's not on this list – please talk to me, we will see if that would be a good case to explore.

Finding local sources for your portfolios:

- Focus on online news portals/online newspaper portals. Find one state-run media in the country and one opposition/critical source. DO NOT use primarily English-language sources for countries where it's not universally spoken you need sources whose audience is inside the country.
- Particularly for the critical source, it will be difficult you might need to go into some Reddit discussions to see what people inside and outside of this country consider credible and why. Authoritarian governments are normally not fond of independent media.

¹ A sign-up sheet will be available in Week 1

3. Final project (choose one) (10%)

This is a short piece, and you will decide which of those formats is more interesting/useful for you. The main purpose is to make you reflect on the class content and apply it in a way that matches your goals. Discuss your preliminary ideas with me <u>no later than 2 weeks before the final project is due</u>. I will provide tips and guidance on the expected format.

OPTION 1: policy memo	 Use your portfolio and additional resources to write a short policy memo with a prediction: what do you think will be the political trajectory of this country in the next year? 5 years? Explain how the evidence you collected supports these predictions. This is essentially a political risk assessment.
OPTION 2: essay	 Write a reflection paper bringing together (1) a work of fiction (see the suggested list below), (2) at least one of the class readings and (3) evidence you observed in your portfolio case You can focus on these Strategies of the authoritarian leader/regime elite and their effectiveness Strategies of resistance and their effectiveness Or suggest your own theme that you see present across (1)-(3) and want to explore
OPTION 3: creative project	 Design and craft a poster or a <i>zine</i> that engages with a class topic at the <u>Book Arts Studio</u> at UR². Submit a copy of your project with a brief one-page note explaining: (1) how you created it, (2) how you see its meaning, and (3) which idea(s) discussed in this class it engages with. Include in-text citations to 2-3 sources, which can be from the class readings or other sources you found that were important for your understanding of the idea(s) you bring up.

Whichever format you choose – be ready to present and discuss your work during the last week of class.

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² Do you want to make a resistance poster calling for action? A handmade magazine with reflections about the power of violence? There is no limit to what you can explore that way. A representative of the Book Arts Studio will make a short presentation in class, and the Studio has regular orientation sessions and workshops to provide hands-on instruction. To learn more, explore the <u>Book Arts LibGuide</u> and <u>Zines! LibGuide</u> and reach out to me as early in the semester as you want to discuss your ideas.

Suggested works of fiction for the essays

You can pick a work of fiction from the list below (or suggest your own) for your final project. I expect you to choose based on some preliminary ideas you have as you're working on a country portfolio and class readings.

Warning: some of these works contain depictions of violence, including torture and sexual violence. I suggest you read a synopsis/spoilers first if you are worried about processing these topics – or talk to me. Reach out to me if you have any concerns or questions before or during working on this assignment.

Type	Name and year of production	Main theme(s)
Watch	Andor Season 1 (2022) Season 2 (2025) (feel free to reflect on selected episodes) The Lives of Others (2006) The Death of Stalin (2018) The Official Story (1985)	- resistance movements and ethical dimensions of a rebellion - the sources of strength and weakness for an authoritarian regime surveillance state leadership succession and elite conflicts in personalist regimes repression and human rights violations under authoritarian regimes
Jojo Rabbit (2019) Read The Queue (2012) by Basma Abdel Aziz		repression and resistance under repression nature of authoritarianism and citizen experience of authoritarianism
	One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich (1962) by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn Story of a Secret State: My Report to the World (1944) by Jan Karski	humanity and individual resistance repression and resistance under repression

Feel free to suggest (and discuss with me) other works of fiction that can help you explore specific themes.

4. Final presentation (10%)

We will dedicate the last week of class to your presentations and a class discussion. You will present your final projects and engage in a discussion connecting knowledge you gained while working on your country portfolios and your final projects with things we have been reading and discussing in class.

I will provide a presentation template for everyone. You will be graded on your ability to explain the ideas you formulate in your final project, bring up relevant details from your country portfolios, and engage with class materials in a discussion.

5. Midterm exam and final exam (15% and 15%)

These in-class exams will consist of multiple-choice and short-answer questions that focus on the key concepts and theories covered in class lectures and readings. Short-answer questions would also ask you to discuss historical and current cases (discussed in class) relevant to specific topics.

Weekly schedule and readings

Week	Monday	Wednesday	Assignments and due dates
1	Course overview and expectations. Readings: Course syllabus	Authoritarianism. Definition and types/examples. Readings: The Autocrat's Dilemma (Chapter 3 from: Frye, T.	
		(2022). Weak Strongman: The Limits of Power in Putin's Russia., pp. 37-49)	
2	How do autocrats come to power? Coups	Coups (cont'd): self-coups	
	Readings: Goldberg, P. A. (1975). The politics of the Allende overthrow in Chile. <i>Political Science Quarterly</i> , 90(1), 93-116. Myanmar's Troubled History: Coups, Military Rule, and Ethnic Conflict	Readings: Ridge, H. M. (2022). Dismantling new democracies: the case of Tunisia. <i>Democratization</i> , 29(8), 1539-1556.	
3	Elections: why do people vote for autocrats?	Elections (cont'd): how do elected strongmen consolidate their power?	
	Readings: Weyland, K. (2003). Economic voting reconsidered: Crisis and charisma in the election of Hugo Chávez. <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> , <i>36</i> (7), 822-848.	Readings: Two individuals share their perspectives on democratic backsliding process as it occurred in Hungary: - Former US ambassador to Hungary - Former Hungarian parliament member	

4	How do autocrats stay in power? Repression	Repression (cont'd): technological innovation and repression	Portfolio 1 due September 15 th (Monday)
	Readings: Kwak, S. (2024). No Regime Change in Myanmar, So Far: Exploring the Conceptual Chains between Civil Resistance and Junta Repression. Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs, 46(2), 271-294. Esberg, J. (2018). The audience of repression: Killings and disappearances in Pinochet's Chile. Available at SSRN 3246120. (SELECTED SECTIONS)	Readings: Engineers of the Soul (Chapter 2 from: Chin, J. and L. Lin (2022). Surveillance State: Inside China's Quest to Launch a New Era of Social Control, pp. 39-68)	
5	Friends with money: corruption Readings WATCH: A Dangerous Assignment: Uncovering Corruption in Maduro's Venezuela (full documentary, 1 h 28 min)	Friends abroad: Autocracy, Inc. Readings Introduction from: Applebaum, A. (2024). Autocracy, Inc: The dictators who want to run the World. Random House, pp.1-20	
6	Propaganda Readings: Liñán, M. V. (2010). History as a propaganda tool in Putin's Russia. <i>Communist and Post-Communist Studies</i> , 43(2), 167-178. Gulenko, P. (2021). Political discussion as a propaganda spectacle: Propaganda talk shows on contemporary Russian television. <i>Media</i> , <i>Culture</i>	Propaganda (cont'd): technological innovation and propaganda Readings: Controlling the narrative (Chapter 3 from: Applebaum, A. (2024). <i>Autocracy, Inc: The dictators who want to run the World</i> . Random House, pp.76-115)	

	& Society, 43(5), 906-924. (SELECTED SECTIONS)		
7	Class game 1 Readings: Everyday Authoritarianism is Boring and Tolerable The Misunderstanding of Everyday Life Under Authoritarianism	Midterm exam	Game reflection due October 6 th (Monday) in class
8	Fall break – no class	Museum visit and activity Readings: My Dictator: Growing up in Ceausescu's Romania Irimie, R. C. (2014). Everyday life under communism. The case of Romania. SEA-Practical Application of Science, 2(03), 266-283. The fall of communism in Romania – archive, December 1989	Reflection due October 17 th (Friday)
9	How do people resist autocrats? Everyday resistance: why do people do it? Class demonstration: The Book Arts Studio Readings: Sun, P. (2016). The collar revolution: Everyday clothing in Guangdong as resistance in the Cultural Revolution. <i>The China Quarterly</i> , 227, 773-795.	Everyday resistance (cont'd): how does it work? Readings: Mullen, M. (2016). <i>Pathways that changed Myanmar</i> . Bloomsbury Publishing. (Ch.4 Everyday Resistance, pp.75-110)	Portfolio 2 due October 20 th (Monday)
10	Opposition and elections: why participate?	Opposition and elections (cont'd): how to win?	

	Readings: Why Venezuela's opposition has urged voters to boycott upcoming regional elections Jiménez, M. (2023). Contesting autocracy: Repression and opposition coordination in Venezuela. <i>Political Studies</i> , 71(1), 47-68.	Readings: Turchenko, M., & Golosov, G. V. (2021). Smart enough to make a difference? An empirical test of the efficacy of strategic voting in Russia's authoritarian elections. <i>Post-Soviet Affairs</i> , <i>37</i> (1), 65-79.	
11	Organized resistance outside institutions: motivation and collective action problems Readings: Would you join the resistance if stuck in an authoritarian regime? Here's the psychology (TheConversation) Clément, K. (2015). Unlikely mobilisations: How ordinary Russian people become involved in collective action. European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology, 2(3-4), 211-240.	Organized resistance outside institutions (cont'd): strategies and momentum Readings: Egreteau, R. (2023). Profile: Blending old and new repertoires of contention in Myanmar's anti-coup protests (2021). Social Movement Studies, 22(5-6), 822-829.	
12	How do autocrats lose power? Revolutions: the classics Readings: Reasons for the February Revolution – BBC Bitesize Guide (5 pages) 1917: Revolution (Chapter 1 from: McAuley, M. (1992). Soviet Politics, 1917-1991, pp.12-23)	Revolutions (cont'd): redefine or abandon revolutions? Readings: What Does Revolution Mean in the 21st Century? Interview with Mark Beissinger The Spring of Surprise (Chapter 7 from: Bayat, A. (2020). Revolution without revolutionaries: Making sense of the Arab Spring. Stanford University Press, pp. 135-152)	Portfolio 3 due November 10 th (Monday)
13	Pacts Readings:	Class game 2 Readings:	Game reflection due November 21 st (Friday)

	The Guardian. Polish round table talks - archive, 1989 Kramer, K. (2006). Arab political pacts: an unlikely scenario. <i>Journal of Democracy</i> , 17(4), 160-165	Game materials posted on Blackboard	
14	Dictators and death Readings: Kendall-Taylor, A., & Frantz, E. (2016). When dictators die. <i>Journal of Democracy</i> , <i>27</i> (4), 159-171.	Thanksgiving break – no class	Final papers and presentation slides due November 24 th (Monday)
15	Paper presentations and final discussion	Paper presentations and final discussion	

Course Policies

Academic Integrity and Collaboration

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are vital for any intellectual community. For the oral or written assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics or seek advice from your peers. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit is the result of your own research and writing. You should also adhere to standard citation practices in the discipline by properly citing any written works that you reference in your assignments. You will be expected to pursue your academic studies with integrity and must follow the Honor Code. The shortened version of the honor pledge is the following: "I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work."

All assignments are expected to be the student's original work. The Jepson School follows the provisions of the Honor System as outlined by the School of Arts and Sciences. This means that no student is to use, rely on or turn in work that was paid-for, copied, excessively summarized without citation, created in collaboration (without permission), produced by AI, or is otherwise not the original work of the student for the specific assignment (without explicit permission).

AI Use

Awarding of Credit

To be successful in this course, a student should expect to devote 10-14 hours each week, including class time and time spent on course-related activities. registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/academic-credit.html

Disability Accommodations

The University of Richmond's office of Disability Services strives to ensure that students with disabilities and/or temporary conditions (i.e., concussions & injuries) are provided opportunity for full participation and equal access. Students who are approved for academic accommodations must complete the following steps to implement their accommodations in each class:

- 1) Submit their Disability Accommodation Notice (DAN) to each of their professors via the Disability Services Student Portal available at this link: sl.richmond.edu/be.
- 2) Request a meeting with each professor to create an accommodation implementation plan. Disability Services is available to assist, as needed.

It is important to complete these steps as soon as possible because accommodations are never retroactive, and professors are permitted a reasonable amount of time for implementation. Students who are experiencing a barrier to access due to a disability and/or temporary condition are encouraged to apply for accommodations by visiting <u>disability.richmond.edu</u>. Disability Services can be reached at <u>disability@richmond.edu</u> or 804-662-5001

Honor System

The Jepson School supports the provisions of the Honor System. The shortened version of the honor pledge is: "I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work."

https://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/index.html

Religious Observance

Students should notify their instructors within the first two weeks of classes if they will need accommodations for religious observance.

registrar.richmond.edu/planning/religiousobs.html

Addressing Microaggressions on Campus

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership³. Recent research has found that, when professors do not address microaggressions in class, microaggressions foster alienation of marginalized groups⁴. Furthermore, both students and faculty who are exposed to microaggressions more often are more likely to have depressive symptoms and negative affect (a negative view of the world)⁵. A comfortable and productive environment where meaningful learning happens can be collectively created through actions, words, or environmental cues that promote the inclusion and success of marginalized members, recognizing their embodied identity, validating their realities, resisting sexism, ableism, and racism⁶.

The University of Richmond is committed to building an inclusive community. To this end, the Student Center for Equity and Inclusion (SCEI) was created in 2021 and offers ongoing support and assistance for a diverse student body. With this in mind, as a community member at the University of Richmond, I pledge to address microaggressions in the classroom by holding myself, other students, and faculty accountable for what is said and being receptive to criticism when perpetuating these slights, snubs, or insults.

https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00130.x

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³ Sue, S., Zane, N., Nagayama Hall, G. C., & Berger, L. K. (2009). The Case for Cultural Competency in Psychotherapeutic Interventions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60(1), 525–548. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163651

⁴ Bergom, I., Wright, M.C., Brown, M.K. and Brooks, M. (2011), Promoting College Student Development through Collaborative Learning: A Case Study of Hevruta. *About Campus*, *15*, 19-25. https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.20044

⁵ Nadal, K. L., Griffin, K. E., Wong, Y., Hamit, S., & Rasmus, M. (2014). The Impact of Racial Microaggressions on Mental Health: Counseling Implications for Clients of Color. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 92(1), 57–66.

⁶ Rolón-Dow, R. (2019). Stories of Microaggressions and Microaffirmation: A Framework for Understanding Campus Racial Climate. *NCID Currents*, *I*(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/currents.17387731.0001.106

⁷ <u>https://inclusion.richmond.edu/</u>

Resources

If you experience difficulties in this course, do not hesitate to consult with me. There are also other resources that can support you in your efforts to meet course requirements.

Academic Skills Center (asc.richmond.edu):

Assists students in assessing their academic strengths and weaknesses; honing their academic skills through teaching effective test preparation, critical reading and thinking, information conceptualization, concentration, and related techniques; working on specific subject areas (e.g., calculus, chemistry, accounting, etc.); and encouraging campus and community involvement. Tutors will be available virtually. The on-call peer tutors available for these appointments are listed in the Box file: On-Call Online Tutors

(https://richmond.box.com/s/dpe37chr2zodr3o1amtj8omjk72v2ktb). Email Roger Mancastroppa (rmancast@richmond.edu) and Hope Walton (hwalton@richmond.edu) for appointments in academic and life skills to request a Zoom conference.

Boatwright Library Research Librarians: (library.richmond.edu/help/ask/ or 289-8876):

Research librarians help students with all steps of their research, from identifying or narrowing a topic to locating, accessing, evaluating, and citing information resources. Librarians support students in their classes across the curriculum and provide library instruction, tutorials, research guides, and individual help. All research support will be provided online or by appointment and students can contact a librarian for help via email (library@richmond.edu), text (804-277-9ASK), chat, or Zoom (by appointment).

Career Services: (careerservices.richmond.edu or 289-8547):

Can assist you in exploring your interests and abilities, choosing a major or course of study, connecting with internships and jobs, and investigating graduate and professional school options. We encourage you to schedule an appointment with a career advisor early in your time at UR.

Counseling and Psychological Services (caps.richmond.edu or 289-8119):

Assists currently enrolled, full-time, degree-seeking students in improving their mental health and well-being, and in handling challenges that may impede their growth and development. Services include brief consultations, short-term counseling and psychotherapy, skills-building classes, crisis intervention, psychiatric consultation, and related services.

Disability Services (disability.richmond.edu)

The Office of Disability Services works to ensure that qualified students with a disability (whether incoming or current) are provided with reasonable accommodations that enable students to participate fully in activities, programs, services, and benefits provided to all students. Please let your professors know as soon as possible if you have an accommodation that requires academic coordination and planning.

Speech Center (speech.richmond.edu or 289-6409):

Assists with preparation and practice in the pursuit of excellence in public expression. Recording, playback, coaching, and critique sessions offered by teams of student consultants trained to assist in developing ideas, arranging key points for more effective organization, improving style and delivery, and handling multimedia aids for individual and group presentations. Remote practice sessions can be arranged; we look forward to meeting your public speaking needs.

Writing Center (writing.richmond.edu or 289-8263):

Assists writers at all levels of experience, across all majors. Students can schedule appointments with trained writing consultants who offer friendly critiques of written work.