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## Time and Location

Thursdays, 8:15 – 9:45, online (details see on ILIAS)

## Description

Authoritarian governments rely on different means to stay in power. One main tool for this purpose is the control of information. In this seminar, we will discuss the use of censorship, propaganda and other ways to restrict and influence the flow of information for domestic and international audiences. For this, we will mainly read theoretical and empirical quantitative literature that focuses on the reasons and consequences of these means. The course requires a solid background in research design and quantitative methods. The main goal of this course is to give students an overview of the relevant literature and to enable them to think about own research ideas and designs.

## Grading

Although (the majority of) this class will be online, I intend to hold the seminar live. Thus, it is necessary that students come prepared to class as the critical discussion of the assigned readings is in the center of this seminar. The final grade will be based on the following components:

- Participation: 15%
- Response paper: 20%
- Summary Papers (Wikiproject): 15%
- Research design paper: 50%

**Participation (15%):** You are expected to participate in every session. Students are required to thoroughly read the mandatory readings in a given week and skim the additional studies. When doing the weekly readings, I encourage you to keep the following questions in mind:

- After reading the title and abstract: Ask yourself why this paper was assigned in the given week. Is the question (policy) relevant? What independent and dependent variable does the reading explore? What theoretical and/or empirical strategy do you expect?
- After reading the introduction: Does the paper have a clear theoretical argument with distinct scope conditions? Are the empirical/theoretical findings novel? Can you think of counter-examples? Do you believe the findings? If not, how could the paper convince you?
- After reading the entire paper: Does the paper deliver what the intro promised? Do you like the presentation of the findings? What did you like and dislike about the writing style? What did the paper fail to deliver? What additional evidence would you have wanted to see? What's left for scholars to explore in the future?

Still, you have two jokers, which means that I will tolerate up to two unexcused absences. Every absence beyond that requires a doctors certificate (if due to sickness) or some other written documentation. Failure to comply with this rule will result in you failing the course. In addition to participation in class, I will consider your engagement with online tools on ILIAS, e.g., mini surveys, Wikiproject (see below) etc. in this grade as well.

**Response Paper (20%):** Two response papers (each count 10%). In the first session, you can give a preference for papers and sessions, for which you want to write your response papers. You can select one of the assigned readings, mandatory or additional, for the respective session, with the exception of papers marked with an asterisk (\*) that cannot be selected. Your response paper should have three paragraphs. In the first paragraph, summarize the research question, argument, methods and findings presented. Do so very briefly and without technical details. The second paragraph describes how and where this question fits into the literature, i.e., I expect a short literature review. Here you should draw links to other work we discussed as well as search, read, and cite additional literature. Finally, in the third paragraph, critically discuss **one** aspect of the paper in detail. Focus on one point that let's you doubt the validity or claims made in the study. This can be either a theoretical, conceptual, methodological, or empirical aspect. Your response paper should be about 1 page (1/6 summary, 2/6 literature review and 3/6 critical discussion), single-spaced, one inch margins, and is due at 12 noon on Wednesdays before class (submit as PDF via ILIAS). The response papers will be (if preferred anonymized) uploaded to "Wiki" on ILIAS (see next paragraph).

**Summary Papers/Wikiproject (15%):** During the semester we will create a collaborative Wiki of articles on authoritarian information control. For this you are expected to write two summary papers (each count 5%). The idea is to summarize research papers that were mentioned in the second paragraph (literature review) in one of the response papers or papers for which no response paper had been written. In these articles you should summarize the study, i.e., the research question, argument, methods, and findings. This summary should go into more detail compared to the summary paragraph in the response papers, roughly half a page, single-spaced, one inch margins, and is due to noon (12:00) on June 10 and July 8. I will again upload a (if preferred anonymized) version of these on the Wiki. Furthermore, during the semester, you should also engage with the Wiki, write comments, add shorter summaries/abstracts for other linked articles, and/or add links to other studies etc., this activity will be considered in this grade as well (counting 5%).

**Research Design Paper (50%):** Due on September 15, 2020 (submit via ILIAS, no late submissions). The purpose of this paper is to describe a research question related to the topic of this course, and develop a (quantitative or qualitative) design to answer this question without actually carrying out the research. In particular, your research design paper must

1. introduce the research question and its relevance,
2. relate the question to the existing literature,
3. spell out the theoretical framework that explains the phenomenon you are studying,
4. describe the empirical cases and the data, and
5. introduce the (qualitative or quantitative) approach you employ to answer your question,
6. discuss expectations and potential shortcomings.

If you are unsure about possible topics for your paper and/or about the approach you should take, I would be happy to provide feedback at early stages of your project. The final version of your paper should be about 15 pages (main text, excluding title page and references), 12pt font, line spacing 1.5, with one inch margins. It accounts for 50% of the course grade. We will use the last sessions of the course to organize a mini-workshop, where students briefly present the ideas for their research projects and fellow students will serve as discussants.

**Grading** The grading for the response, summary and research design paper will be done according to the 1.0–5.0 scale. Each grade element must receive a 4.0 or above for you to pass. The final score (the weighted average of written submissions and participation, as defined above) will be rounded to the nearest grade to determine your final grade for the course.

## Online Resources

Readings are available from the [ILIAS](#) module for this course. Registration requires a password: bigbrother. Please fill out the preregistration survey if you want to participate in the course. This system is also to be used for submissions of response- and term papers.

## Legal

Please familiarize yourself with the Departments policies for academic integrity. See <https://www.polver.uni-konstanz.de/en/advice-and-service/academic-working/plagiarism/>. Please complete the form available on this website and submit it along with your final paper. We do not require this form for the response papers, but the Departments academic integrity policy applies nevertheless.

## Course Readings

The readings for this course consist of books and academic papers on the topics to be discussed in class. Readings are available on the ILIAS system (see above). If you need a more in-depth introduction to the topic (optional), the following references may be helpful:

Friedrich, C. J., & Brzezinski, Z. K. (1965). *Totalitarian Dictatorship*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP

Wintrobe, R. (2000). *The Political Economy of Dictatorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Wedeen, L. (2015). *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. University of Chicago Press

Roberts, M. E. (2018). *Censored: Distraction and Diversion Inside Chinas Great Firewall*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

If you need a refresher in how to do research in political science:

Kellstedt, P. M., & Whitten, G. D. (2018). *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. Cambridge University Press

## Schedule

Book chapters and papers are listed in the order in which I recommend you to read them.

### Part I. Introduction

#### April 30 (Week 1): Why Authoritarian Information Control?

Frantz, E., & Kendall-Taylor, A. (2014). A dictator's toolkit: Understanding how co-optation affects repression in autocracies. *Journal of Peace Research*, 51(3), 332–346\*

Guriev, S., & Treisman, D. (2019). Informational autocrats. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 33(4), 100–127\*

Additional readings:

Gerschewski, J. (2013). The three pillars of stability: Legitimation, repression, and co-optation in autocratic regimes. *Democratization*, 20(1), 13–38\*

Edmond, C. (2013). Information manipulation, coordination, and regime change. *Review of Economic Studies*, 80(4), 1422–1458\*

### Part II. Propaganda

#### May 7(Week 2): Propaganda to Survive! Survey Evidence:

Geddes, B., & Zaller, J. (1989). Sources of popular support for authoritarian regimes. *American Journal of Political Science*, 33(2), 319–347

Huang, H. (2015). Propaganda as signaling. *Comparative Politics*, 47(4), 419–444

Additional Reading:

Enikolopov, R., Petrova, M., & Zhuravskaya, E. (2011). Media and political persuasion: Evidence from Russia. *American Economic Review*, 101(7), 3253–85

#### May 14 (Week 3): Propaganda to Survive? Experimental Evidence:

Huang, H. (2018). The pathology of hard propaganda. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(3), 1034–1038

Bush, S. S., Erlich, A., Prather, L., & Zeira, Y. (2016). The effects of authoritarian iconography: An experimental test. *Comparative Political Studies*, 49(13), 1704–1738

#### May 21 (Week 4): Holiday

Have a look at the Wiki in ILIAS and edit, comment and/or add new links and studies.

#### May 28 (Week 5): Political Outcomes of Propaganda

Yanagizawa-Drott, D. (2014). Propaganda and conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan genocide. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 129(4), 1947–1994

Selb, P., & Munzert, S. (2018). Examining a most likely case for strong campaign effects: Hitler's speeches and the rise of the nazi party, 1927–1933. *American Political Science Review*, 112(4), 1050–1066

Additional reading:

Adena, M., Enikolopov, R., Petrova, M., Santarosa, V., & Zhuravskaya, E. (2015). Radio and the rise of the Nazis in prewar Germany. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 130(4), 1885–1939

#### **June 4 (Week 6): Don't Call it Propaganda!**

Rozenas, A., & Stukal, D. (2019). How autocrats manipulate economic news: Evidence from Russia's state-controlled television. *The Journal of Politics*, 81, 982–996

Morales, J. S. (2019). Perceived popularity and online political dissent: Evidence from Twitter in Venezuela. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 25, 5–27

Additional reading:

King, G., Pan, J., & Roberts, M. E. (2017). How the Chinese government fabricates social media posts for strategic distraction, not engaged argument. *American Political Science Review*, 111(3), 484–501

#### **June 11 (Week 7): Holiday**

Have a look at the Wiki in ILIAS and edit, comment and/or add new links and studies.  
Besides, use the time to think about own research ideas!

### **Part III. Censorship**

#### **June 18 (Week 8): Who Censors and Does it Work?**

Egorov, G., Guriev, S., & Sonin, K. (2009). Why resource-poor dictators allow freer media: A theory and evidence from panel data. *American Political Science Review*, 103(4), 645–668

Gläsel, C., & Paula, K. (2019). Sometimes less is more: Censorship, news falsification, and disapproval in 1989 East Germany. *American Journal of Political Science, Online First*

Additional Reading:

Stier, S. (2015). Democracy, autocracy and the news: the impact of regime type on media freedom. *Democratization*, 22(7), 1273–1295

Chen, Y., & Yang, D. Y. (2019). The impact of media censorship: 1984 or brave new world? *American Economic Review*, 109(6), 2294–2332

#### **June 25 (Week 9): Control Through Fear? Surveillance & Self-Censorship**

Xu, X. (2019). To repress or to co-opt? authoritarian control in the age of digital surveillance. *American Journal of Political Science, forthcoming*

Robinson, D., & Tannenberg, M. (2019). Self-censorship of regime support in authoritarian states: Evidence from list experiments in China. *Research & Politics*, 6(3), 1–9

Additional reading:

Gohdes, A. R., & Carey, S. C. (2017). Canaries in a coal-mine? what the killings of journalists tell us about future repression. *Journal of Peace Research*, 54(2), 157–174



### **Part IV. International Information Control**

#### **July 2 (Week 10): (Not) Spreading (Dis-)Information**

Baum, M. A., & Zhukov, Y. M. (2015). Filtering revolution: Reporting bias in international newspaper coverage of the Libyan civil war. *Journal of Peace Research*, 52(3), 384–400

Peisakhin, L., & Rozenas, A. (2018). Electoral effects of biased media: Russian television in Ukraine. *American Journal of Political Science*, 62(3), 535–550

Additional reading:

Golovchenko, Y., Buntain, C., Eady, G., Brown, M. A., & Tucker, J. A. (2020). Cross-platform state propaganda: Russian trolls on Twitter and YouTube during the 2016 US presidential election. *The International Journal of Press/Politics, Online First*, 1–33

## **Part VI. Workshops**

Mini-Workshop: Pitch your research projects in three slides (approx. 5 minutes). Details and schedule to be announced. Please submit your slides the day before the presentation via ILIAS and send them (at latest then) to your discussant.

### **July 9 (Week 11): Workshop I**

Depending on the number of participants, we will discuss some of the additional readings in more detail in this week.

### **July 16 (Week 12): Workshop II**