

Authoritarian Politics

Understanding Undemocratic Governance

2024 Learning Cluster
Soka University of America

Dr. Shane Joshua Barter

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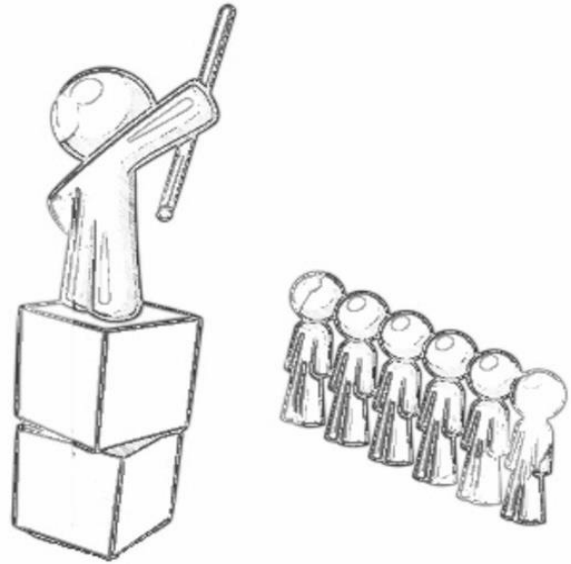
Office: Maathai 310

Office Hours: 230-330

Zoom: 356 921 7732

Classes: 10-1130, 1-230

Maathai 305



Since the mid-2000s, the world has seen a marked decline in democracy and freedom. This has not necessarily meant that democracies have collapsed into autocracy, but instead regimes in all world regions have eroded. However, the overall result is a growth of autocratic political regimes, which face little pressure to democratize or respect human rights.

Autocracy has long existed as a residual, with all regimes that are not ‘democratic’ lumped together as ‘authoritarian’. There is a sense that when politics lack free elections, they are constituted by brute force and dictatorial self-interest, providing no space for citizens. This understanding of autocracy has changed in recent years, as scholars have come to recognize that authoritarians do not rule by brute force, but also require legitimacy, institutions, development, loyal elites, and public support. Crucially, different types of autocracy exist, and these have important effects for stability, peace, development, and well-being. Entering 2024, the world of autocracy includes military regimes in Egypt, Thailand, Myanmar, Mali, and Sudan; dictatorships in Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Cambodia; communist-party rule in China, Vietnam, Laos, and Cuba; absolute monarchy in Brunei, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Emirates; as well as theocratic, soft authoritarian, and warlord states.

This Learning Cluster seeks to open the black box of non-democratic governance. We seek to understand the different forms of autocracy and why they matter. We seek to understand the nature of authoritarian elections, parties, development, education, media, propaganda, and more. Students will learn what autocracy is, its forms, and the role of institutions. We will study everyday life under autocracy. We will also tackle normative concerns: Is autocracy a problem we must resolve? Can global citizens tolerate non-democracy? If we withhold judgement, are we betraying those struggling for democracy?

We acknowledge and celebrate the Acjachemen Nation on whose traditional lands we meet at Soka University of America. We pay our respect to Acjachemen communities past, present, and emerging.

POLICIES (our Constitution)

Above all, communicate. Introduce yourself, let me know if you have suggestions or concerns. If you must miss a class, tell me beforehand. If you are struggling, let me know, let's talk. Communication is the most important factor in making this course a success.

Participation: I place great emphasis on constructive engagement. The classroom is a place to share ideas / opinions and to challenge each other, but always respectfully: Listen to other students; communicate effectively regarding assignments; arrive on time; avoid gender, racial, or religious insensitivities; and complete the required readings. The best participation tends to come in the form of insightful questions. Quantity is not always the same thing as quality. Be open to having your viewpoints changed.

Punctuality & Attendance: I expect students to arrive to class on time. Especially for Learning Clusters, where classes are condensed, I expect students to attend and participate.

Deadlines: Late assignments will be deducted 5% per day, including weekends. I expect students to submit assignments on time; you need to be in the habit of on-time submission to keep the class moving and to prepare for the professional world.

Writing: I expect professionalism in written assignments. Students should consult with the instructor regarding the research question, argument, and organization of written assignments. Some basics: Avoid casual internet sources (i.e., wiki) and contractions, include page numbers, utilize a clear citation style. In terms of research, aim for mostly primary and peer-reviewed sources.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. It is understood broadly as academic dishonesty, including stealing words, ideas, and references from others. The Brightspace dropbox will put your paper through Turnitin. Do not let this scare you- just try not to cut corners, ask me about grey areas. Students are not permitted to utilize AI software to generate content for this course. All assignments will pass through an AI detection filter linked to Turnitin. Evidence of the use of AI will result in failing the course.

Disability & Inclusion: This course is intended for all students, including those with mental or physical disabilities, illness, injuries, impairments, or any other condition that may negatively affect one's equal access to education. If you anticipate any issues related to the format, materials, or requirements of this course, please communicate so we can explore options. Students may also wish to work with the Office of Disability Services to discuss options, including official accommodations.

ROSTER

Sakura Arai	Gabe Boldizar	Ryoko Chikara	Aya Elgamel
Yuji Ishiyama	Bidhisha Kaphle	Wakana Kinoshita	Lev Nakamura
Keito Tsuji		Takumi Yabune	

BUDGET (\$2000) (≈\$800 spent 20 JAN, (≈\$1000 remains)

Persian Groceries	\$100.54	Alexei Honorarium	\$200
Van 19 JAN	\$133.84	Yemeni Lunch 19 JAN	\$307.38
Gas 19 JAN	\$30.87	Soka Gifts	≈50
Van 25 JAN	≈150	Lunch 5 JAN	≈250
Gas 25 JAN	≈50	Snacks Etc 25 JAN	≈200
Kang Honorarium	≈200	LC Fair Materials	≈100

GRADING

97-100	A+	4.0	87-89	B+	3.3	77-79	C+	2.3	67-69	D+	1.7
94-96	A	4.0	84-86	B	3.0	74-76	C	2.0	64-66	D	1.3
90-93	A-	3.7	80-83	B-	2.7	70-73	C-	1.7	60-63	D-	1.0

ASSIGNMENTS

30%	Participation	Ongoing
10%	Presentation: Forms of Autocracy	Tuesday, 09 January
20%	Book Review	Friday, 12 January
5%	Propaganda Project	Wednesday, 17 January
5%	Essay Proposal	Thursday, 25 January
30%	Research Essay	Thursday, 01 February

Participation: 30% of your grade will be earned through respectful participation: Speak up; engage with classmates; communicate with the instructor; and practice punctuality, attendance, and attentiveness. The best forms of participation can be questions that generate discussion. If you do not understand an article or concept, no worries, just develop some questions to learn more! **Ongoing.**

Presentation: 10% of your grade will be earned through a presentation on a particular form of autocracy, including key features and examples. Students will work in pairs, although single presentations and groups of three will be considered (after all, we have 11 students!), with 8 minutes allotted per student (which means if people are on time, we can end in 90 mins...timing will be enforced). Students should have presentations ready to go before class begins, this is your responsibility. Students must select the regime type before the end of class on Monday, 08 January. Presentations will take place after lunch on **Tuesday, 09 January.**

Book Review: 20% of your grade will be earned by reading a scholarly book related to autocratic government, then writing a 3-4 page book review and sharing with class (for about 5 mins). Students must have their book approved by the professor by 20 December. Due **Friday 12 January** via Dropbox, as a docx file, before class.

Propaganda Project: 5% of your grade will be earned through creating a piece of propaganda to encourage certain behaviour for this course, Soka University of America, or a given country. Emphasis here is on creativity and design. I hope to use these in some way in the LC Fair, so nothing too offensive, please. Due **Wednesday 17 January** in class.

Essay Proposal: 5% of your grade will be earned through a 3+ page essay proposal. Proposals should include a tentative research question and hypothesis, a bullet point outline of your paper, and an annotated bibliography (provide bibliographic details and brief summaries of three sources for your paper, which must be either primary or peer-reviewed sources). Due **Thursday 25 January** via email before class.

Research Essay: 30% of your grade will be earned through composing a brief research paper (6-8 pages). I want you to tackle a topic that interests you, so we will work together to develop your topic. In the paper, I want to see a clear argument and engagement with quality sources. Due **Thursday, 01 February** (via Dropbox, as a docx file, before noon).

Monday, 08 January

AM (10-1130) Session 01	Introduction What is autocracy? Is autocracy a problem? Can we tolerate it? About the course; Empathy & Analysis
Reading	Andrei Kolesnikov, " Putin's War Has Moved Russia From Authoritarianism to Hybrid Totalitarianism ," <i>Carnegie Endowment</i> (19 April 2022) AND Abdul Rahman, " A Decade after Military Coup, Egyptians Continue to Struggle with Authoritarian Rule ," <i>People's Dispatch</i> 03 July 2023) AND Tom Pepinsky, " Everyday Authoritarianism is Boring and Tolerable " AND Susan Shirk, "China in Xi's New Era: The Return to Personalist Rule," <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 29:2 (2018); 22-36
Lunch	
PM (1-230) Session 02	Studying Autocracy Residual to Analysis; Political Science Black Box; Cold War; US Politics;
Reading	David Art, "What Do We Know About Authoritarianism After Ten Years?" <i>Comparative Politics</i> 44:3 (2012); 351-373

Tuesday, 09 January

AM (10-1130) Session 03	Understanding Autocracy Syllabus Kahoot quiz Left- and Right-wing authoritarianism; political psychology Universe of cases; gray areas (illiberal democracy; populism; disorder / war); measures
Reading	Costello, Thomas H. et al, "Clarifying the Structure and Nature of Left-Wing Authoritarianism," <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> 122:1 (2022); 135-170 AND Rochana Bajpai and Yasser Kureshi, "Mechanisms of Democratic Authoritarianism: Decentering the Executive in South Asia and Beyond," <i>Democratization</i> 29:8 (2022); 1375-1396
Lunch	
PM (1-230) Session 04	Forms of Autocracy: Student Presentations Monarchy; military junta; communism; dictatorship; theocracy; fascism

Wednesday, 10 January

AM (10-1130) Session 05	Autocratic Leadership Authoritarian personalities; Forms of power; Presidents, Sultans; Generals; Succession
Reading	Jason Brownlee, "Hereditary Succession in Modern Autocracies," <i>World Politics</i> 59:4 (2007); 595-628
Lunch	
PM (1-230) Session 06	Autocratic Elections and Parties Why do non-democratic countries hold elections?
Reading	Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar, "Elections under Authoritarianism," <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i> 12 (2009); 403-422

Thursday, 11 January

AM (10-1130) Session 07	Autocratic Institutions How to autocrats use institutions to rule, and rule institutions? Legislatures; Militaries; Constitutions; Courts
Reading	Tamir Moustafa, "Law and Courts in Authoritarian Regimes," <i>Annual Review of Law and Social Sciences</i> 19 (2014); 281-299
Lunch	
PM (1-230) Session 08	Subnational Autocracy Can autocracy be decentralized? Do subnational governments matter? Decentralization; Federations; Juxtaposition; Territorial Autonomy
Reading	Shane's working paper on authoritarian self-government- please give critical feedback!

Friday, 12 January

(1030-1130) Session 09	Students Share Book Reviews Book Reviews Due before Class (via Dropbox)
Reading	Your books! About 5 mins, open discussion, no PPT
Lunch	
PM (1-230) Session 10	Documentaries: Dictatorship
Film	<i>Dictator's Playbook</i> (PBS): Kim Il Sung (01); Saddam Hussein (02); Benito Mussolini (03); Manuel Noriega (04); Francisco Franco (05); Idi Amin (06). Choose one, watch before class, discuss. In class, watch Voice of America, "Turkey: Breaking the Silence"

Monday, 15 January: Martin Luther King, Jr Holiday (no classes)

Tuesday, 16 January

AM (10-1130) Session 11	Development: Economic Growth What forms of autocracy support development and poverty alleviation? FDI; economic planning; clientelism and corruption
Reading	Carl Henrik Knutsen, "Autocracy and Variation in Economic Development Outcomes," <i>V-Dem Working Paper</i> (2018)
Lunch	
PM (1-230) Session 12	Development: Clientelism and Corruption What roles does corruption play in fueling autocracy? Clan politics; KKN; guanxi; oil, kleptocracy
Reading	Eric Chang and Miriam Golden, "Sources of Corruption in Authoritarian Regimes," <i>Social Science Quarterly</i> 91:1 (2010); 1-20

Wednesday, 17 January

AM (10-1130) Session 13	Religion and Autocracy Faith as a means of authoritarian control and resistance
Reading	Elna Schleutker, "Co-optation and Repression of Religion in Authoritarian Regimes," <i>Politics and Religion</i> 14:2 (2021); 209-240
Lunch	
PM (1-230) Session 14	Propaganda and Media What is the role of the media in autocratic states? Licensing; self-censorship; state ownership; Silent Contest (China)
Reading	Barbara Mittler, "Popular Propaganda? Art and Culture in Revolutionary China," <i>Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society</i> 152:4 (2008); 466-489

Thursday, 18 January

1-3pm Session 15	Education How can education support autocracy? Why do autocracies struggle to support world-class universities? Literacy; primary schooling; engineering; Central European University; Singapore
Reading	Barbara Schulte, "Innovation & Control: Universities, the Knowledge Economy, and the Authoritarian State in China," <i>Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy</i> 5:1 (2019); 30-42
AND	
Saipira Furstenberg, Tena Prelec, and John Heathershaw, " The Internationalization of Universities and the Repression of Academic Freedom ," <i>Freedom House</i> (2020)	
Dinner	
615pm Session 16	Academic Freedom and Autocracy: A Discussion with Alexei Trochev https://zoom.us/j/3569217732
Background Reading	Alexei Trochev, "Kazakhstan: The State of Non-Democracy," <i>Global Review of Constitutional Law</i> (2017); 161-165
	Alexei Trochev joins at 630pm (830am in Kazakhstan)

Friday, 19 January

Session 17	Field Trip to Los Angeles Consulates: Turkey, Qatar, Azerbaijan	
Schedule	0730	Shane gets van (students get breakfasts)
	0930	Leave Campus
	1015	Russian Market and Deli (via Japanese grocery and book stores)
	1200	House of Mandi Yemeni Restaurant (walk Little Arabia)
	1400	Indian, Persian Groceries (and thrift stores for some reason)

Monday, 22 January

AM (10-1130) Session 18	The International Relations of Autocracy International Organizations: Warsaw Pact; Shanghai Cooperation Agreement; Gulf Cooperation Council; OIC; Foreign aid and dependency
Reading	Alexander Libman and Anastassia V. Obydenkova, "Understanding Authoritarian Regionalism," <i>Democratization</i> 29:4 (2018); 151-165
Lunch	
PM (1-230) Session 19	Public Relations & Soft Power Sportswashing; Olympics; WWE; World Cup; Saudi; celebrities; parades & spectacle
Reading	Arron Ettinger, "Saudi Arabia, Sports Diplomacy, and Authoritarian Capitalism in World Politics," <i>International Journal of Sport Policy and Sports</i> 15:3 (2023); 531-547

Tuesday, 23 January

AM (10-1130) Session 20	Minority Rights in Autocracy Religious Minorities; Rohingya in Myanmar; Christians in Egypt
Reading	Ceren Belge and Ekrem Karakoç, "Minorities in the Middle East: Ethnicity, Religion, and Support for Authoritarianism," <i>Political Research Quarterly</i> 68:2 (2015); 280-292
Lunch	
PM (1-230) Session 21	Gender Rights in Autocracy Chechnya; Russia; Saudi
Reading	Sergey Katsuba, "The Decade of Violence: A Comprehensive Analysis of Hate Crimes Against LGBTQ in Russia in the Era of the 'Gay Propaganda Law' (2010–2020)," <i>Victims and Offenders</i> (2023); 1-24
OR	
	Omar G. Encarnación, "Gay Rights: Why Democracy Matters," <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 25:3 (2014); 90-104

Wednesday, 24 January

2-330pm Session 22	Civil Society in Autocracy Rightful Resistance; Pussy Riot; cyberactivism;
Reading	Kevin J. O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance Revisited," <i>The Journal of Peasant Studies</i> 40:6 (2013); 1051-1062
AND	
	Anonymous, " The Centrality of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Myanmar's Post-Coup Era ," <i>New Mandala</i> (2021)
350-5pm Session 23	NGOs in Autocracy: A Discussion with Rashid Kang https://zoom.us/j/3569217732
Background Reading	Elizabeth Plantan, "Not All NGOs are Treated Equally," <i>Comparative Politics</i> 54:3 (2022); 501-524
	Rashid Kang joins at 400pm (800am in Shanghai)

Thursday, 25 January

Session 24	Field Trip #2	
Schedule	AM	Leave Campus
	1100	Discussion at the Consulate of the Republic of Turkey Consul General Mr. Sinan Kuzum Vice Consul Ms. Gizem Kumas
	1230	Lunch: Ethiopian or Russian
	PM	Second meeting or Activity Azerbaijan; Wende Museum of Los Angeles; Tibetan Association of Southern California?

Friday, 26 January

AM (10-1130)	Popular Culture in Autocracy	
Session 25	Reading Circles; samizdat; art and film	
Readings	Hyung-Min Joo, "Voices of Freedom: Samizdat," <i>Europe-Asia Studies</i> 56:4 (2004); 571-594	
	AND	
	Human Rights Foundation, " Art in Protest "	
Lunch		
PM (1-230)	Personal Narratives in Autocracy	
Session 26		
Reading	Student will each read a short story from <i>The Accusation</i> , an anthology of stories from an anonymous North Korean writer (let me know if you have a similar reading) Watch <i>Goodbye, Lenin</i> (2 hours, via Ikeda Library)?	

Monday, 29 January

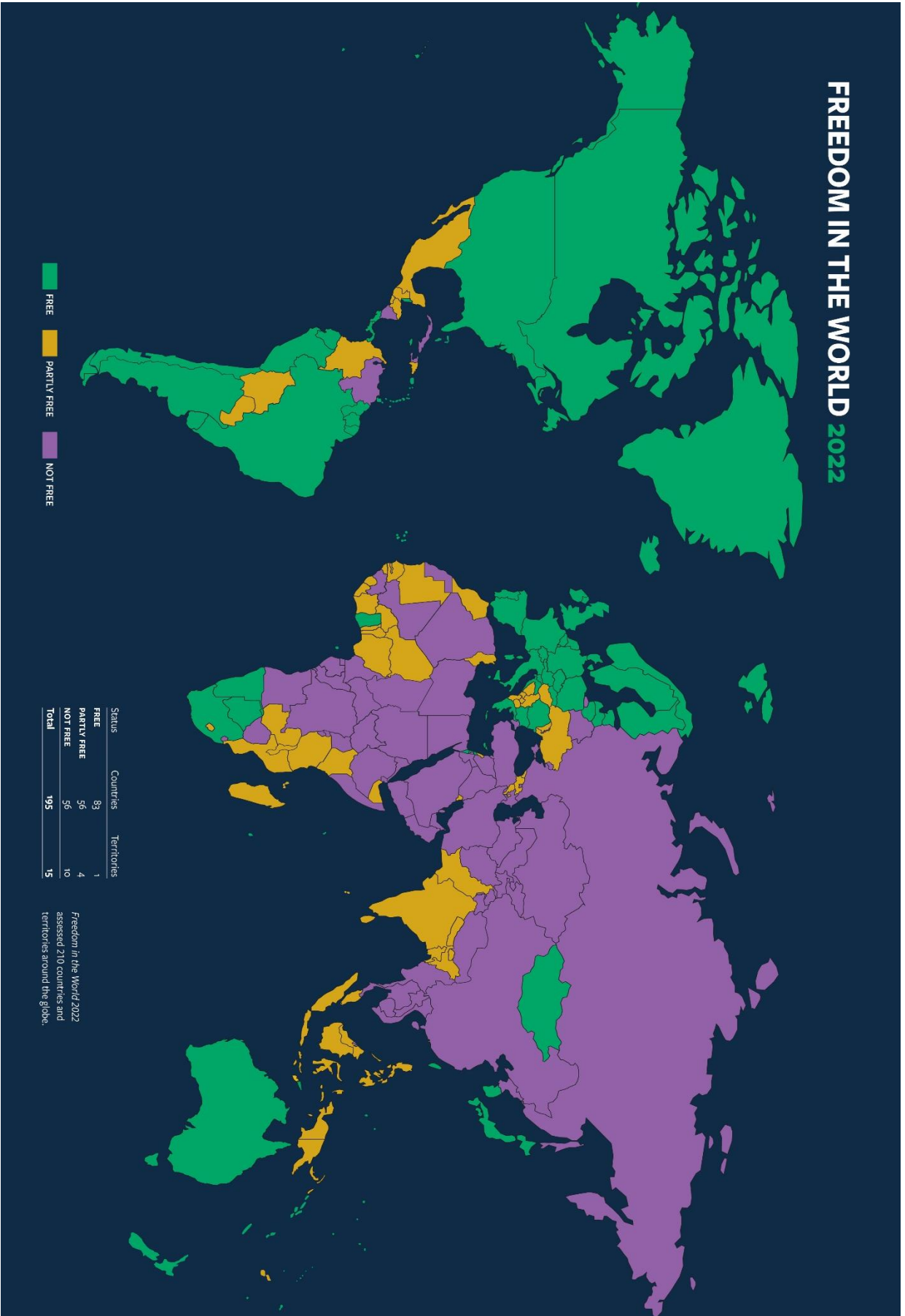
AM (10-1130)	How Does Autocracy Die? How Do They Emerge from Democracy?	
Session 27	Collapse; Reform; Transitions (Taiwan and Korea)	
Reading	Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Erica Frantz, "How Autocracies Fall," <i>The Washington Quarterly</i> 37:1 (2014); 35-47	
Lunch		
PM (1-230)	Conclusions & Evaluations	
Session 28	Is Non-Democracy a Problem?	

Tuesday, 30 January: Work Day

Wednesday, 31 January: LC Fair

Thursday, 01 February: Essays Due (by noon)

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2022



FREE PARTLY FREE NOT FREE

Status	Countries	Territories
FREE	83	1
PARTLY FREE	56	4
NOT FREE	56	10
Total	195	15

Freedom in the World 2022
assessed 210 countries and
territories around the globe.