

**Democracy in Dark Times**  
**CPO 3044**  
**Professor Leslie Anderson**

Class meeting times

Tuesday 4 online: 10:40-11:30

Thursday: 10:40-12:35 online and F2F CBD0234

Office hours tentatively

scheduled in the morning

Tues and Thurs 8:30-9

Please note: for those of you attending via zoom and for all of us on Tuesdays, Canvas will not allow me to schedule class to start at 10:40. It is rigid and inflexible, allowing scheduling only on the half hour. Accordingly, both Tuesday and Thursday you will be able to join that meeting as early as 10:30 am both days (Tuesdays and Thursdays). In the past students often like to zoom in early which gives them a chance to connect and talk with each other, often before I connect myself.

“Woe onto thee, O England, Whose King is a child”

paraphrase from Ecclesiastes, 10:16

John Story, member of Parliament, in Parliament, January 21, 1549.  
Story was imprisoned in the Tower for criticizing bad leadership and subsequently executed (hanged, drawn and quartered) on a charge of treason. This is the tyranny of the British Crown.

Democracy is the line that forms to the right. It is the “don’t” in don’t shove. It is the hole in the stuffed shirt through which the sawdust slowly trickles; it is the dent in the high hat. Democracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half of the time. It is the feeling of privacy in the voting booths, the feeling of communion in the libraries, the feeling of vitality everywhere. Democracy is a letter to the editor. Democracy is the score at the beginning of the ninth. It is an idea which hasn’t been disproved yet, a song the words of which have not gone bad. It’s the mustard on the hot dog and the cream in the rationed coffee.

E.B. White, quoted in Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*, Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press, 2018, p 230-231.

What have you given us?” said Mrs. Powel to Benjamin Franklin as he exited the Constitutional Convention in 1776, “A monarchy or a republic? Franklin replied, “A republic, if you can keep it.”

quoted in Cass R. Sunstein, *Impeachment: A Citizen’s Guide*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2017, p 1

“...the greatest menace to freedom is an inert people.” Louis Brandeis, Supreme Court Justice

Course Description: This class uses material on democratic breakdown, democratic decline, and democratic recovery in other parts of the world to help students understand and ponder what is happening in the United States today. Class discussion, small solo research projects, teaching tasks, class participation and the sharing of ideas will be central to this course. It is not a lecture course. We will look at democratic decline in nations that have lost their democracies and are seeking to recover them. We will look at nations that lost their democracies and successfully

recovered them. We will look at new democracies that are still in the process of democratic consolidation. And we will look at the United States.

Your assignments are several.

Do all the reading, come to class via F2F or via zoom, participate

Take a midterm exam and write a final think paper at the end of the semester

Fulfill any joint or singular teaching assignments that you have, teach a subject the class wants to learn and receive a grade from fellow students. These small teaching assignments will be on subjects that come up in class but for which there are no scholarly resources yet published.

We will use your teaching grade or grades as a third grade for the class, in addition to your midterm exam grade and your final think paper grade. Your exam and think paper are take home assignments, the exam is an open book exam and you should not pay any fee for proctoring it or them online.

We will look at Germany, Nicaragua, Argentina and the United States.

Required Books and Articles. **Except for Biskupic, these books are all on reserve at Library West course reserves.**

Daniel Ziblatt, *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy*, Cambridge, 2017, Chapters 1,2,3,4.

Norbert Frei, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past*, Columbia University Press, 2001 Chapters 1 and 4

Leslie E. Anderson, Larry Dodd and Won-ho Park, *Authoritarianism or Democracy? Nicaragua's Struggle Against Democratic Decline*. Chapters 2, 6, 7, 8 and the Conclusion. This is an unpublished book manuscript, 2020. It is available on reserve.

Leslie E. Anderson *Democratization by Institutions* Chapter 3

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* Chapters 3,4,5 and the Conclusion

Cass Sunstein, edited volume: *Can It Happen Here? Authoritarianism in America*

(chapters 4,6,9,12 These chapters are very short)

Joan Biskupic, *The Chief: The Life and Turbulent Times of Chief Justice John Roberts*

Stanley Greenberg, *RIP GOP: How the New America is Dooming the Republicans*

Read the Introduction and Chapters 2, 3, 6.

Although this may seem like a lot of books, look carefully. You are mostly reading parts of each book for a total of 23 chapters (less than 3 books) and one full book (*The Chief*)

### **Germany**

We will look first at Germany, a European example where democracy died and has been recovered. We will talk about how and why democracy died and how it was recovered. We will read the assigned chapters from two books. The chapter assignments are above.

Daniel Ziblatt, *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy*, Cambridge, 2017

Norbert Frei, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past*, Columbia University Press, 2001

### **Argentina**

We will look next at the example of Argentina, a nation with a deep authoritarian past but one that demonstrates a promising democratic trajectory today. For Argentina, we will read just one chapter (3) from

Leslie E. Anderson, *Democratization by Institutions*, University of Michigan Press, 2016.

### **Nicaragua**

We look next at Nicaragua, a case that has lost its democracy and where citizens are currently waging a valiant struggle to recover the republic. Today people are dying in the streets in an effort to remove the dictator and regain democracy. But Nicaraguans were careless with their democracy and that was true for citizens and elites alike and for leaders of all political parties. For Nicaragua we will read selected chapters from an unpublished book manuscript, *Authoritarianism or Democracy? Nicaragua's Struggle Against Democratic Decline*. I will post this material on Canvas.

### **The United States**

We will end the course with the United States. Here we will consider what has happened in the United States before, during and after 2016. We will consider the Trump presidency and the broad swath of support that exists for Trump in the US. 47% of the electorate voted for him. We will look at the 2020 election and consider what that election meant. And finally, we will consider the Supreme Court. To be clear, understanding the state of American democracy today requires that we look at the popular support for Trump and at the Supreme Court. We will read Levitsky and Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*  
Sunstein, edited volume: *Can It Happen Here? Authoritarianism in America*  
Joan Biskupic, *The Chief: The Life and Turbulent Times of Chief Justice John Roberts*

We will start this portion of the course by reconsidering the argument of Ziblatt and looking anew at Levitsky and Ziblatt. The Levitsky/Ziblatt Conclusion offers a number of potential solutions to the dilemma of the United States today. We will begin by discussing those several suggestions and applying them to the cases we have studied up to now. Then we will read the selected chapters and return to the Conclusion a second time to discuss the United States.

With respect to studying popular support for Trump we need to look at Greenberg's argument in RIP GOP. For understanding the Court, we need to read Biskupic. Student-led discussion is central to this part of the course.

My goal in this class is to help you recognize democratic breakdown while it is still a ways off. I want you to be able to recognize the process of democratic decline and breakdown. Then you can decide whether American democracy is safe or not. I will limit lectures as much as possible, using them to give you the information you need to participate in fruitful discussions. Class discussions will be central to this class. When I depart from a strict lecture schedule and move toward class discussions, scheduling becomes flexible. We may spend more or less time on a given country, departing slightly from the syllabus as a result. When the class understands what happened in each country we will move on to the next country. This means

that you need to be taking notes on what other students say as much as on what I say. You will be learning from each other as much as from me.

January 12, pass out syllabus, discuss readings, class assignments, expectations about attendance, participation and tardiness.

January 14- 28: Germany  
Read Ziblatt and Adenauer, chapters assigned above

February 2-11 Argentina  
Read assigned chapter as assigned above

**February 16: Midterm Exam. This will be a take home exam. Do not pay any fees for online proctoring of this exam. If any problems with this please contact the professor. landerso@ufl.edu**

February 23- March 4 Nicaragua  
Read unpublished book chapters as assigned

March 9 – April 21: The United States. Dates on this part of the course are subject to change.  
March 9-11: Generalized dangers and democratic decline:  
Start by reading the Conclusion of Levitsky and Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*. That Conclusion offers a number of potential solutions to the dilemma of the United States today. We will begin by discussing those several suggestions and applying them to the cases we have studied up to now. Then we will read the entire book and return to the Conclusion a second time to discuss the United States.

March 9-25. The non-democratic electorate:  
Read Greenberg, chapters assigned above.

March 30-April 15. The Court  
Read Biskupic, entire book.

Student-led discussion is central to this part of the course. In this section I will want student volunteers to research and teach the following decisions from the Court.

1. the reversal of the Voting Rights Act of 1964
4. the reversal of *Topeka v Board of Education* (racial discrimination illegal)
3. the reversal of *Plessy v Ferguson* (separate but equal education)
4. *Citizens United*
5. The Affordable Care Act: the gutting of the Medicaid provisions of the ACA

**Approximately April 21: Final Think Paper**