

PA388K: Global Perspectives on Electoral Integrity

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Elections have become a global norm. Yet, we are currently living through a worldwide democratic recession. Many countries transitioning to democracy after the end of the Cold War have struggled to consolidate democratic governance. In these countries, elections appear to have become merely a legitimizing façade providing external and internal legitimacy by obscuring the continuation of authoritarian rule. In other previously consolidated democracies, electoral integrity is deteriorating amid democratic backsliding. Throughout the world, citizens' trust in elections and the institutions that organize them is eroding, leading to democratic malaise and, at times, even violence.

This seminar provides an orientation to the global study of electoral integrity. The seminar is anchored in theories of democratization, democratic backsliding, and electoral authoritarianism. However, it will also provide in-depth discussions of specific threats and issues related to electoral integrity, such as electoral violence, campaign finance, electoral boundary delimitation, and electoral administration. It will discuss the institutions and actors tasked with enhancing electoral integrity, such as civil society, the media, election management bodies, and international observers. Throughout the semester, we will also learn from practitioners working on the global frontline of securing electoral integrity.

Course Objectives:

In this seminar, students will

- Develop a theoretical understanding of the role of elections in contemporary democratic and authoritarian regimes
- Explore diverse case studies of elections around the world to gain a comparative understanding of global electoral integrity
- Appreciate the broad repertoire of electoral manipulation tools utilized in varying contexts
- Explore the relationship between electoral integrity, trust in institutions, and democratic legitimacy
- Learn about practical interventions aimed at enhancing electoral integrity