

Defending Democracy at Home and Abroad

Spring 2022-2023

Continuing Studies and Political Science

POL62

Tuesdays, 5:30-7:00 PM PT

April 11 - May 30, 2023

CEMEX Auditorium, Stanford University

Michael McFaul

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Course Description

The United States, once a key champion of democracy around the world, has experienced unprecedented polarization during the past decade, with divisions running deep over Covid, voting rights and election results, and questions of identity and inclusion. These divisions have only been exacerbated by America's own tech companies, whose business models encourage citizens to engage with divisive content rather than a healthy democratic process. Divided domestically and embracing new strains of illiberalism, the US has also retreated internationally, neglecting traditional alliances and its commitment to democracy abroad. That America has struggled to defend democracy abroad isn't an accident. It's directly related to the dents in its democracy at home.

Democracy is in decline worldwide. Old democracies are not performing as well as before. Growing competition between democratic and authoritarian countries is playing out on the global stage, with several countries undecided as to their alignment either way. Infrastructure investments, strategic alignments, and soft power are all part of the mix of geopolitical tools deployed in this competition. The same holds true for technology, which deeply impacts power relationships, values, and freedoms across the globe. Can the US sustain democracy abroad, let alone at home? It's not a given.

This course will explore the battle for the future of democracy. We will examine the merits of democracy compared with the alternatives, challenges to democracy both in the United States and around the world, and solutions for defending and advancing democracy at home and abroad. A political philosopher, a former European parliamentarian, and a former US ambassador to Russia, the course instructors bring together a unique set of experiences that guarantee thoughtful and provocative discussions about one of the most important issues of our time.

Course Outline

April 11, 2023: Democracy and Foreign Policy; Restoring Democracy at Home, Promoting Democracy Abroad

Dr. Michael McFaul, Dr. Rob Reich, and Dr. Marietje Schaake

April 18, 2023: Causes and Trends of Democracy & Dictatorship in the World

Dr. Larry Diamond, Senior Fellow of Global Democracy at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University

April 25, 2023: Threats to American Democracy

Dr. Hakeem Jefferson, Associate Professor of Political Science, Stanford University

May 2, 2023: US-China Competition and The US Ability to Engage Internationally

Dr. Michael McFaul

May 9, 2023: The Fight for Freedom in Ukraine

Dr. Michael McFaul

May 16, 2023: The Populist Challenge to Democracy

Tsakhagiin Elbegdorj, Former President and Prime Minister of Mongolia

May 23, 2023: The Tech Challenge to Democratic Principles

TBD

May 30, 2023: The Future: Ideas for Revitalizing American Democracy, the “Free World,” and Advancing Democracy Globally

Dr. Michael McFaul, Dr. Rob Reich, and Dr. Marietje Schaake

Assignment for Credit

In order to receive credit, participating students must complete one of two assignments each week:

1. Two well thought-out questions for the guest speaker posted before class on Tuesday (by Sunday night at 11:59 PM).
2. Two short paragraph reflections on the guest speaker and class discussion after class on Tuesday. (By Friday night 11:59 PM).

We will provide more information about these assignments on the first day on class.

Enrollment Policies

Continuing Studies students who enroll in Section A of this course will attend in person on campus. Continuing Studies students who enroll in Section B of this course will participate live over Zoom. Students will have access to class recordings for the duration of the course. This course is designed for the entire Stanford community, and Continuing Studies students will be joined by Stanford undergraduate and graduate students. This course is designed for the entire Stanford community, and Continuing Studies students will be joined by Stanford undergraduate and graduate students.

Student Record Privacy Policy

<http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/registrar/students/ferpa>

Access and Accommodations

Stanford is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for disabled students. Disabled students are a valued and essential part of the Stanford community. We welcome you to our class. If you experience disability, please register with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate your needs, support appropriate and reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Academic Accommodation Letter for faculty. To get started, or to re-initiate services, please visit <https://oae.stanford.edu>. If you already have an Academic Accommodation Letter, we invite you to share your letter with us. Academic Accommodation Letters should be shared at the earliest possible opportunity so we may partner with you and OAE to identify any barriers to access and inclusion that might be encountered in your experience of this course.

Additional Resources for Learning

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) located within the Office

of Accessible Education (OAE). SDRC staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the SDRC as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations.

Student Disability Resource Center Office of Accessible Education

<http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oea>

Statement on Open Discourse

The course is a space for students committed to a rigorous examination of ethics, technology, public policy, and related topics. The course is also a space for respectful, critical inquiry through the free exchange of ideas. Our goal is to come to a greater understanding of – not a consensus on – the issues the course addresses. To that end, this space is defined by mutual respect that allows us, together, to grapple with a range of ideas, evidence, values, and conclusions. The following principles guide our interaction in this space:

- All viewpoints are welcome.
- Treat every member of the course with respect, even if they disagree with another student's view.
- Treat every claim as open to examination, even if it comes from someone with more experience or expertise than you.
- Reasonable minds can differ on any number of perspectives, opinions, and conclusions.
- Our passions and social and political commitments are welcomed in this space. They are also subject to respectful challenge.
- Some perspectives, opinions, and conclusions are unreasonable or based on falsehoods and should be identified as such.
- No ideas are immune from scrutiny and debate.
- Evidence and reasoning guide our conclusions.