

Online Appendix

A.1. Example reading lists

These are examples of reading lists that were created in the wake of Trump’s election. Several were explicitly framed as syllabi.

- Julia Azari: <https://www.vox.com/mischiefs-of-faction/2016/12/9/13898054/2016-election-research-pundits-women>
- Jeff Colgan: <https://sites.google.com/site/jeffcolgan/current-politics>
- Brendan Nyhan: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/16k0cbkpKYwsmE0ITUUiwT3OvPI9jcEGKGBdvbi9d10/edit>
- Tom Pepinsky: <https://tompepinsky.com/2016/12/21/comparative-politics-and-the-trump-administration/>
- Various faculty members at Brown University’s Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs: <http://watson.brown.edu/news/explore/2017/booklistpoliticalclimate>, especially Jeff Colgan’s list of “Top Readings on Democratic Erosion,” and Eric Petashnik’s list of “Books to Help Make Sense of the Trump Moment.”
- *Chronicle of Higher Education*’s “Trump 101”: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Trump-Syllabus/236824>
- Lisa Gaufman’s “Trump Syllabus”: <http://duckofminerva.com/2017/03/thetrumpsyllabusduckinputneeded.html>.
- N.D.B. Connolly and Keisha N. Blain’s “Trump Syllabus 2.0”: <http://www.publicbooks.org/trump-syllabus-2-0/>
- Nyrone Crawford and Matt Wray’s “Trump Syllabus 3.0”: <http://www.publicbooks.org/trump-syllabus-3-0/>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the syllabi have sparked sometimes heated debate among their creators. Connolly and Blain, for example, describe their syllabus as a corrective to the “egregious omissions and inaccuracies” of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* list.

Some of these reading lists eventually became actual university courses, including Gaufman’s “Political Populism” at the University of Bremen.

A.2. Sampling strategy for interviews

Our sampling strategy varied slightly across the three universities. At Brown, the course was taught as an upper-level undergraduate seminar with an enrollment cap of 20. We invited virtually all students who completed the course to participate in the interviews. To identify comparable students who did not take the course, we exploited the fact that the course was over-subscribed, and that admissions decisions were made on the basis of an application that students completed on the first day of class. We collected students’ email addresses as part of the application, and secured their written consent to contact them again later in the semester. In January 2018 we contacted all those who attended the first day of class, but either (1) were not admitted, (2) were admitted but chose not to enroll, or (3) enrolled but later dropped out—11 students in all.

To further increase our sample, we also contacted three students who took an upper-level undergraduate seminar on *Post-Conflict Politics* with the same professor in fall 2016. These were the only three students who had taken the course but had not yet graduated by the time the interviews were conducted. *Post-Conflict Politics* was similar in structure to *Democratic Erosion*: it was taught by the same professor; it was intended for juniors and seniors; it was small, with an enrollment cap of 20; it involved a combination of lectures, discussion, and group work; and, as one of its assignments, it required that students write comparative case studies on countries that experienced civil crisis in the recent past. These parallels should increase the comparability of our samples.

At Boston University, the course was taught as an undergraduate lecture, with an enrollment of 28 students. We randomly sampled 10 of these students and invited them to be interviewed. Because the course was not over-subscribed, we could not replicate the sampling strategy used at Brown to identify comparable students who did not take the course. Instead, we randomly sampled five students from an undergraduate course on *Political Violence* taught by the same professor in spring 2018. This course shares a number of structural similarities with *Democratic Erosion*, and with *Post-Conflict Politics* as well: it was a mid-level undergraduate lecture course with an enrollment cap of 30 in the Department of Political Science, with a mix of sophomores, juniors, and seniors. These parallels should provide grounds for comparison.

Finally, at Memphis, the course was taught as a Master's-level seminar. We contacted virtually all students who completed the course to participate in the interviews. Because the Master's program in political science is small, we also invited all other students enrolled in the program in fall 2017 to participate. Finally, to increase our sample size and maximize comparability with the other universities, we also randomly sampled three students from an upper-level undergraduate lecture course on *Politics of Developing Countries* taught by the same professor in fall 2017. As in the *Democratic Erosion* course, students wrote three short papers for *Politics of Developing Countries*, which similarly focused on a country of the student's choosing (though the focus was on economic development, not democratic erosion).

Table 1: Distribution of students interviewed

	Total	Boston University	Brown University	University of Memphis
Number of students interviewed	26	5	13	8
Number of students interviewed who took the course	14	2	7	5
Number of students interviewed who did not take the course	12	3	6	3

All students were offered a \$10 Amazon gift card to incentivize participation. The response rate was similar among students who did and did not take the course: 48% for the former, 44% for the latter. The two samples were demographically similar as well, with an average age of 22. 50% of those who took the course were female, as were 50% of those who did

not. All interviews were conducted by one of the authors in February 2018. 23 of the interviews were conducted by phone, and the remaining three in person. Table 1 shows the distribution of students interviewed across the three universities. As with the exit questionnaires and blog posts, we searched the interview transcripts for recurring themes, paying particular attention to differences and similarities between students who did and did not take the course.

A.3. Survey

At the beginning and end of the semester, students were asked to respond to the following three survey questions:

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is the highest quality, what is your assessment of the quality of democracy in the US right now? Use whatever definition of "quality" and "democracy" you believe is most appropriate.
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is the highest quality, what is your prediction for the likely quality of democracy in the US at the end of the semester (or in the next three months)? Use whatever definition of "quality" and "democracy" you believe is most appropriate.
3. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is the highest quality, what is your prediction for the likely quality of democracy in the US one year from now? Use whatever definition of "quality" and "democracy" you believe is most appropriate.

A.4. Exit questionnaire

At the end of the fall 2017 semester, students were asked to respond in writing to the following open-ended prompts:

1. Take a moment to reflect on the country you wrote about for your case study. Are there lessons we can learn by comparing your country to the US today? Does the comparison give us reason for optimism or pessimism? Are there lessons we can learn from your country about risk and protective factors for democracy more generally? (Bullet points are fine.)
2. Take a moment to reflect on how your perceptions of US democracy have changed over the 13 weeks of this course. Has the course caused you to change your evaluation of the risks that US democracy faces? What are those risks, and how serious are they? What about the risks that democracy faces around the world? (Bullet points are fine.)

A.5. Interview protocol

Students were invited by email to participate in our interviews. At the start of the interview, students were reminded that their participation was voluntary, and that their responses would never be connected to their name. We then asked students the following questions:

1. What is your current university status? [*e.g. senior, grad student, graduated*]
2. What is your major / what is your graduate degree in?
3. How old are you?

4. What is your gender?
5. Up until this point in your life, where have you lived?
6. Did you take the course “democratic erosion” in the fall?
7. How do you feel about the state of democracy in America today?
8. How vulnerable is the US to democratic erosion compared to other countries? *[probe]*
9. What countries did you think of during your response to that question?
10. How would you recognize democratic erosion when you see it?
11. In thinking about other countries that have experienced democratic erosion, does that make you feel more or less optimistic about democracy in the US?
12. Where do you see the strongest protective factors of democracy in the US?
13. What do you think are the greatest threats to the strength of democratic institutions in the US?
14. What do you think are the factors that put countries at risk for democratic erosion?
15. Do you feel differently now about US democracy than you did at the start of the fall semester (in September of last year)? Why or why not?
16. Which actors do you think are doing the most important work to prevent democratic erosion in the US right now? *[probe]*
17. Did you attend any political events last semester? If so, what events were they? What did you make of them?
18. *[Asked whether or not they have attended a political event]* Do you feel that political events like protests or marches are important for protecting democratic institutions? Why / why not?
19. Thinking about the year ahead, how do you think you will engage with politics at the local and/or national levels?
20. Is there anything else you want to add that I didn’t ask you about?