



Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University

Syllabus of the Academic Discipline «Transitions to Democracy: Historical and Political Aspects»

Degree Level	3rd (Educational-Scientific) Level
Specialty	032 History and Archaeology
Number of Credits	4 ECTS Credits (120 hours)
Classes	Lectures – 20 hours Seminars – 20 hours
Language of Teaching:	English
Department Offering the Course	History
Lecturer	Alina IOVCHEVA PhD in Political Science Associate Professor Personal Page: https://surli.cc/rgmoil E-mail: alina.iovcheva@gmail.com

1. Course Annotation

The course "Transitions to Democracy: Historical and Political Aspects" is part of the elective educational components of the educational and scientific program for the training of PhD students.

The course offers an in-depth examination of the complex and multifaceted processes involved in the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. The course is designed for graduate students, aiming to equip them with a nuanced understanding of the political, historical, economic, and social forces that shape the path to democratization. With a particular emphasis on global case studies, the course provides students with a comprehensive framework to analyse the factors that influence successful and unsuccessful transitions to democracy, the challenges they pose, and the long-term sustainability of democratic systems.

This course explores the foundational aspects of democracy, starting with its historical roots and theoretical underpinnings, which trace the evolution of democratic systems from ancient political traditions to modern-day liberal democracies. Students will study the evolution of democracy in both Western and non-Western contexts, understanding how different regions of the world conceptualize and practice democratic governance. They will explore the diverse interpretations of democracy across cultures and the varying mechanisms by which political systems shift from autocratic to democratic governance.

A major component of the course focuses on the **economic foundations** of democratization. Students will analyze how economic development and the reform of economic structures can serve

as either facilitators or obstacles in the process of democratization. The course will delve into the relationship between economic crises, economic liberalization, and the subsequent demands for political change. The role of political institutions, civil society, and political culture in supporting democratic systems will also be emphasized. In particular, students will engage with questions regarding the effectiveness of electoral systems, the importance of the rule of law, and the capacity of civil society to hold governments accountable.

Throughout the course, **political culture** and the importance of active political participation will be key themes, as students will explore how different societies develop the cultural and social norms necessary to support democracy. They will assess how political participation and civil engagement contribute to both the establishment and maintenance of democratic systems, and how these dynamics interact with existing political institutions and party systems. The course will also address the growing challenges to democracy, particularly the rise of **authoritarian backsliding**, **populism**, and **democratic erosion**. Students will analyze how the modern global political environment—marked by increasing nationalism, the erosion of democratic norms, and the rise of authoritarian leaders—threatens democratic stability in both established and nascent democracies.

Moreover, the course investigates the role of **international actors** in democratic transitions, exploring how external forces such as foreign aid, diplomatic pressure, and the influence of international organizations like the European Union or the United Nations can either support or hinder democratization. Students will critically evaluate the influence of global powers and regional organizations in the democratic processes of various countries, especially focusing on the political and economic implications of international interventions in post-conflict societies or authoritarian regimes.

Students will engage with in-depth discussions on the **democratic transitions of Eastern European countries**, analyzing the role of **the Visegrad Group** in fostering democratic reforms, as well as the broader implications of democratic transitions in post-communist states. The course will also analyze democratic setbacks in countries that once experienced promising transitions, such as in some parts of Africa and Latin America, to understand the complexity of sustaining democracy in regions with fragile political and economic environments.

Another key focus of the course will be the analysis of **the democratic model of the United States**, examining its historical evolution, the current state of its democracy, and the ongoing challenges posed by political polarization, voting rights issues, and populism. Additionally, the course will explore the concept of **democratic transition** in countries that face unique political, cultural, and historical challenges, including those in **Central and Eastern Europe** and **the Balkans**, where the legacies of war, authoritarian rule, and economic transformation continue to shape political realities.

Students will also engage with contemporary issues facing democracies in the 21st century, considering topics such as the impact of **globalization** on democracy, the rise of digital politics and social media, and the intersection of **human rights** and democratic governance. They will analyze the implications of these trends for the future of democracy, considering how new technologies and international pressures might affect the ongoing processes of democratization and the resilience of democratic institutions.

By the end of the course, students will have developed the analytical skills necessary to critically evaluate democratic transitions around the world, examining both historical and current case studies. They will be able to assess the effectiveness of different strategies for democratic consolidation and understand the internal and external challenges that new democracies face. This course will prepare students to contribute meaningfully to academic, policy, and political discussions surrounding the future of democracy and its global impact.

This course fosters critical thinking and provides students with the intellectual tools to examine democratic processes both in theory and in practice, preparing them to engage with complex political issues in their future careers.

2. The Aim and Objectives of the Course

The **aim of the course** "*Transitions to Democracy: Historical and Political Aspects*" is to explore the characteristics of democratic transitions across different countries, examining the historical, political, and social factors that shape these processes. The course focuses on the historical, political, and social dynamics of democratization, with particular emphasis on the impact of globalization, European integration, and the experiences of different regions, especially in Europe and post-communist countries.

The main **objectives of the course** are:

- To analyze the historical and political factors that contribute to democratic transitions in various countries.
- To examine the impact of globalization and European integration on democratic processes and transitions.
- To study the role of political institutions, culture, and civil society in shaping democratic transformations.
- To assess the challenges and risks associated with the democratization process in different regions.
- To compare and contrast the experiences of democratic transitions in various global contexts, with a particular focus on Europe and post-communist countries.
- To develop critical thinking skills by analyzing and interpreting scholarly texts related to democratic transitions and political transformations.

3. Outcomes:

- Understand the general and specific features of the historical development of different regions of Ukraine, Europe, and the world, the factors that determine the diversity of cultures and national communities, and effectively collaborate with representatives of different historical and cultural values.
- Know the content of the main concepts of democratic transformations; identify the components of democratic changes and the risks associated with them.
- Analyze the factors influencing global communication in the establishment of democracy.
- Identify the interconnections between past and present processes, analyze societal processes in the history of Ukraine in the context of European and world history.
- Analyze, interpret, and create scientific texts on this topic.
- Understand the context and reasons for relevant historical events and apply this knowledge in professional activities.

4. Topics:

Topic 1. Origins and Definitions of Democracy

Topic 2. Economic Component of Democratization

Topic 3. Civil Society and Democratization

Topic 4. Political Culture and Democratization

Topic 5. Political Institutions and Democracy

Topic 6. Political Processes and Democracy

Topic 7. Democratization in Different World Regions

Topic 8. The Democratic Model of the United States

Topic 9. Democratic Transition in Central and Eastern European Countries

Topic 10. Post-Communist Countries

Topic 11. Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century

Topic 12. Prospects of Democracy and Democratization

5. Methods

A variety of forms and methods of work: lecturing, conducting seminar classes, organizing independent student work under the guidance of the lecturer, supervising and controlling the completion of creative individual tasks, encouraging students to participate in discussions on problematic issues raised in the practical sessions.

6. Control

The assessment of the quality of students' knowledge is carried out through current and final (semester) control.

Forms of students' participation in the educational process subject to current control include:

- Presentation on the main topic
- Supplementing, asking questions to the speaker, reviewing the presentation
- Participation in discussions, interactive forms of organizing the class
- Analysis of legal acts, historical sources, and monographs
- Written assignments (independent work, analytical work, etc.)
- Scientific research task (project) (written work formatted according to requirements).

A positive assessment of current performance (the cumulative result of the current assessment for the semester), provided there are no missed or unmade seminar sessions, is the basis for admission to the final form of control – the pass/fail assessment.

7. Grade

Grade in Points	Grade on the National Scale	Grade on the ECTS Scale	
		Grade	Explanation
90-100	Excellent	A	Excellent (Excellent performance with only a few minor mistakes)
82-89	Good	B	Very Good (Above average level with a few mistakes)
		C	Good (Generally correct performance with a significant number of substantial mistakes)
67-74	Satisfactory	D	Satisfactory (Not bad, but with a considerable number of shortcomings)
60-66		E	Sufficient (Performance meets the minimum criteria)
35-59	Unsatisfactory	FX	Unsatisfactory (With the possibility of re-taking)
1-34		F	Unsatisfactory (With mandatory re-taking of the course)

8. Recommended Literature

1. Literature:

- Bunce, V., & Wolchik, S. (2011). "Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries". Cambridge University Press.
- Diamond, L. (1999). *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Diamond, L. (2008). "The Democratic Rollback: The Resurgence of the Predatory State". *Foreign Affairs*, 87(2), 36-48.
- Howard, M. M. (2011). "The Weakness of Postcommunist Democratic Transitions". *Journal of Democracy*, 22(2), 36-49.
- Huntington, S. P. (1991). *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. University of Oklahoma Press.
- Klein, L., & Ackerman, J. M. (2017). "The Rise of Liberal Nationalism in Europe and its Challenge to Democracy". *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 22(2), 199-220.
- Kuhn, T. (2018). "The Political Economy of Transitions: Economic Reform, Structural Adjustment and the Rise of Democracy in Eastern Europe". *East European Politics*, 34(1), 16-34.
- Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2010). "Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War". Cambridge University Press.
- Lust, E. (2011). "The Middle East: Democracy's Dilemmas". *Journal of Democracy*, 22(3), 60-73.
- McFaul, M. (2001). "The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World". *World Politics*, 54(2), 212-244.
- Mounk, Y. (2018). "The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It". Harvard University Press.
- O'Donnell, G., Schmitter, P. C. (1986). *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Przeworski, A. (1991). *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Cambridge University Press.
- Raschke, J. (2017). "The Rise of Right-Wing Populism in Europe and the Erosion of Democracy". *European Journal of Political Research*, 56(1), 45-61.
- Svolik, M. W. (2013). "When Do Dictatorships Collapse? The Political Economy of Autocratic Regimes". *American Political Science Review*, 107(1), 1-17.
- Tilly, C. (2007). *Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.

3. Online Resources:

- *Journal of Democracy*
Official website: <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org>
- *Foreign Affairs*
Official website: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com>
- *Freedom House*
Official website: <https://freedomhouse.org>
- *The Economist: Democracy Index*
Official website: <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>
- *The Brookings Institution*
Official website: <https://www.brookings.edu>
- *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*
Official website: <https://carnegieendowment.org>
- *European Union External Action*
Official website: <https://eeas.europa.eu>
- *World Bank: Governance and Democracy*
Official website: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/governance>
- *United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)*
Official website: <https://www.un.org/democracyfund>
- *Council of Europe: Democracy and Human Rights*
Official website: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/>
- *The V-Dem Institute (Varieties of Democracy)*
Official website: <https://www.v-dem.net>

- *Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)*
Official website: <https://www.idea.int>
- *International Crisis Group*
Official website: <https://www.crisisgroup.org>