**Democratic Backsliding**  
PLSC S361

**Instructor:** Milan Svolik, Elizabeth S. & A. Varick Stout Professor of Political Science  
**Class Meetings:** TTh 1pm-4:15pm  
**Office Hours:** TBD, 2-3pm in RKZ 330, and by appointment  
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**Course Web Page:** canvas.yale.edu

**Course Description:** This class examines the process of democratic backsliding, including its causes and consequences. Our analysis will build on prominent contemporary and historical cases of democratic backsliding, especially Hungary, Poland, Turkey, and Venezuela. Implications for democratic stability in the United States will be considered.

**Assignments and Requirements:** Students are required to attend weekly classes, read the assigned material, discuss assigned research articles, and complete class assignments. Most assignments will be brief case studies or quantitative analyses.

- **Assignment 1:** An analysis of a contemporary case of democratic backsliding (case study, 5 double-spaced pages max.)  
  - Due Date: TBD
- **Assignment 2:** Analytical book review (analytical essay, 5 double-spaced pages max.)  
  - Due Date: TBD
- **Final project:** a research paper on a topic approved by the instructor  
  - Due Date: TBD

The final grade will be composed as follows: class participation (10%), a paragraph-per-reading summary of the readings assigned for each meeting (10%), assignments 1 and 2 (20% each), final research paper proposal (10%), final research paper (30%). Class participation includes serving as a discussion leader of an assigned/chosen article (and includes preparing a brief summary or slides shared with the rest of the class).

**Course Outline:**

1) **Introduction**

2) **Democratic Backsliding: Patterns and Exemplars**
   - Two of the following:

3) Democratic Backsliding: Historical Parallels

4) Democracy and Dictatorship: Empirical Patterns

5) Democracy and Dictatorship: Explanations

6) Democratic Backsliding: Concepts & Measurement

7) Case Study: The United States

8) Mechanisms: Civic Culture

9) **Mechanisms: Polarization**

10) **Mechanisms: Populism and the Far Right**

11) **Mechanisms: Defective Voters?**

12) **Mechanisms: Institutions**

13) **Book Reviews: Discussion**

14) **Interventions**