

APSA Teaching & Learning Symposium

# Student Engagement Before Class

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Dain Yoo

PhD Candidate | Georgetown University

# Why Engage Students Before Class?

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- Enhances preparedness and participation by encouraging students to engage with their peer's insights and ideas
- Helps instructors gauge how well students grasp the course material and set themes for class discussion accordingly
  - Based on my experience of TAing four semesters of Comparative Political Systems (Introductory course for comparative politics)
  - Initiated during pandemic in facilitating online engagement
  - More applicable to smaller group of class (or discussion sections)

# 1. Google Form to collect discussion questions

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The screenshot shows a Google Form interface. At the top left, the title 'CPS 2022 - Section 11 - Study Questions' is displayed next to a folder icon and a star icon. On the top right, there are icons for help, preview, undo, redo, a purple 'Send' button, and a vertical ellipsis menu. Below the title bar, there are three tabs: 'Questions' (active), 'Responses' (with a '16' badge), and 'Settings'. The main content area contains three sections:

- Title Section:** A header box with the title 'CPS 2022 - Section 11 - Study Questions', a horizontal line, and a rich text editor toolbar with icons for bold (B), italic (I), underline (U), link (G), and unlink (X). Below the toolbar is the text 'W12. Varieties of Dictatorships II' and a note: 'This form is automatically collecting emails from all respondents. [Change settings](#)'.
- Text Question 1:** A question box with the text: 'What stands out for you from this week's lectures? (i.e. key point/argument, application that occurs to you as you reflect on the material this week) Be concise but specific in expressing this in your own words.' followed by a red asterisk. Below the question is a 'Long answer text' input field.
- Text Question 2:** A question box with the text: 'Any questions you would like to make sure we cover? Please note any concepts or definitions you would like us to clarify, or open questions you'd like us to engage.' followed by a red asterisk. Below the question is a 'Long answer text' input field.

On the right side of the form, there is a vertical toolbar with icons for adding a new question (+), duplicating, deleting, changing the question type (T), adding an image, adding a video, and a list icon.

# Example: Authoritarianism and the Dictator's Dilemma

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The idea of competitive authoritarianism was really interesting in demonstrating how the distinction between democracy and autocracy is fluid and many countries may claim one system but in practice act in a system which is in the middle of the two extremes. I also like the application of this idea to create a spectrum of political regime types for countries and how this spectrum is not rigid and can be changed over time.

What stood out was how the dictator's dilemma is a self-reinforcing equilibrium and how that a solution to this equilibrium are to break or change the rules of the game (exit or exile, overthrow, institutional change). An example is with Pinochet in Chile, a dictator who couldn't trust the love of his subjects so he attempted to change the rules of the game by calling for a referendum.

Reflecting on the "Dictator's Dilemma" by Wintrobe, the dilemma really seems to be driven by this fear and uncertainty that leads to the assumption that the people does not truly support the dictator, and I wonder if it takes into account situations when the people actually does sincerely praise the actions of the dictators, such as for bringing order and stability or economic progress?

The definition of democracy by De Tocqueville is very white male- and Western-centric—is there some other path to democracy that doesn't involve the monarchy to democracy transition that was fairly exclusive to Europe?

What accounts for the extreme longevity of certain autocracies, while others crash and burn fairly quickly (e.g. Francoist Spain vs. Musharraf in Pakistan)? Also, for more open class discussion: which do you think is more effective in a transition from autocracy; an incremental strategy focusing on institutions (like in Chile), or a coercive violent revolution? Why?

With the uncertainty of the elections and the fairness of them, could we currently say the US is a competitive authoritarian state? Or on the way?

I think I'm good

# Student Feedback on Using Google Forms

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She is very well-prepared for the weekly discussion and implements different approaches to inspire students to engage in discussion. She also takes students' feedback very seriously. In particular, she sends out a google survey each week right after class and asks for our opinions on lectures.

She made sure that each of us had a voice in what we were talking about by sending out the weekly form. She also called on all of us in class and demonstrated that it was important for her to hear all of our opinions and voices.

I think our TA did a really good job at listening to the topics we wanted to discuss in section because it helped us voice what we were confused about in lectures and we could use our time valuably to talk about what we wanted to address. It was helpful that she also came prepared with questions to discuss that related to the topics we were most confused about.

Dain was a great TA! I really enjoyed our weekly discussion sections, and I found it to be a great way for me to easily clarify any questions/concerns I had with the content we had learned on any given week. Additionally, She was a very fair grader and made herself very available to me and my classmates during office hours.

Mandatory word limit and explanation will force students to truly analyze their work, and what they learned. Otherwise, they're just writing a BS review and being done with it.

## 2. Google Docs to engage in discussion

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perception of threats (i.e. maybe bringing Nugent (2020)'s concept of targeted repression?), since their indicators weren't as convincing in directly measuring the perception factor.

One furthering question is, if it has been demonstrated that semi-democracies are the ones that exert the most repressive forms of violence, it's puzzling as to why the similar logic of 'accepting of dominance' is not present in these states. If citizens of semi-democracy know that their governments will violently repress their activities of opposition by perceiving it as imminent threats, why would they not be cowed and quiescent like those in autocracies? Would it be due to a lack of institutionalized coercive apparatus, institutional structure that sends mixed messages or even

Personally, the cases in Latin America were quite interesting as I could see a contrasting role of police/military in the aftermath of democratization in South Korea. The police in South Korea played a critical role in brutally repressing the protestors and serving for the interest of the authoritarian regime until the 1980s, and this is why the democratic leaders in the 1990s gradually reduced the size and role of the police, as well as the military. Although there was a critical split within the elites, especially with the conservative wing advocating for the police and intelligence to preserve its powers, the public opinion or the societal preferences converged towards police reform. While the South Korean case seems to be explained by the theory of Gonzalez, the fundamental question is, then, why are the societal preferences and demands in Latin America converged towards the status quo of having a strong and repressive police forces, when they are aware that the high rate of violence and crimes are in part due to the corrupt patronage with the police forces? I only have little knowledge of the region, but is a fundamental police reform not enough to reduce crimes and violence, and is that why the people rather favor repressive police forces?

I agree that her theory does not solve this crucial puzzle.

Reply

Dain - the key point of interest for me is your statement "in part". I bring that up as there seemed to me, at least, an unanswered question around directionality, i.e., increased crime rates are stated as a condition emerging after transition but not explained. That crime rates continue to rise is more clearly tied to police repression after the democratic transition. As such, I read the preference convergence toward repressive police as a reaction to the mostly unexplained rising crime problem.

Reply

These are really interesting critiques. Empirically, how would we disentangle?

# 3. Polls & Relevant Descriptive Data/Research for Icebreaking

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## Pathway to Transition

1. Collapse
2. Negotiated (Regime-led, Opposition-led)
3. Overthrown (Foreign, Domestic)
4. Emergence from civil war
5. State creation

Authoritarian Regime and Transition Type Dataset (ARTT)  
91 transitions occurring in 74 countries from 1970-2004.

### Chile

Polity Transition Year:	1989
Authoritarian Regime Type:	Military-Individual
Authoritarian Regime Length:	17
Transition Type:	Negotiated-Regime-Led

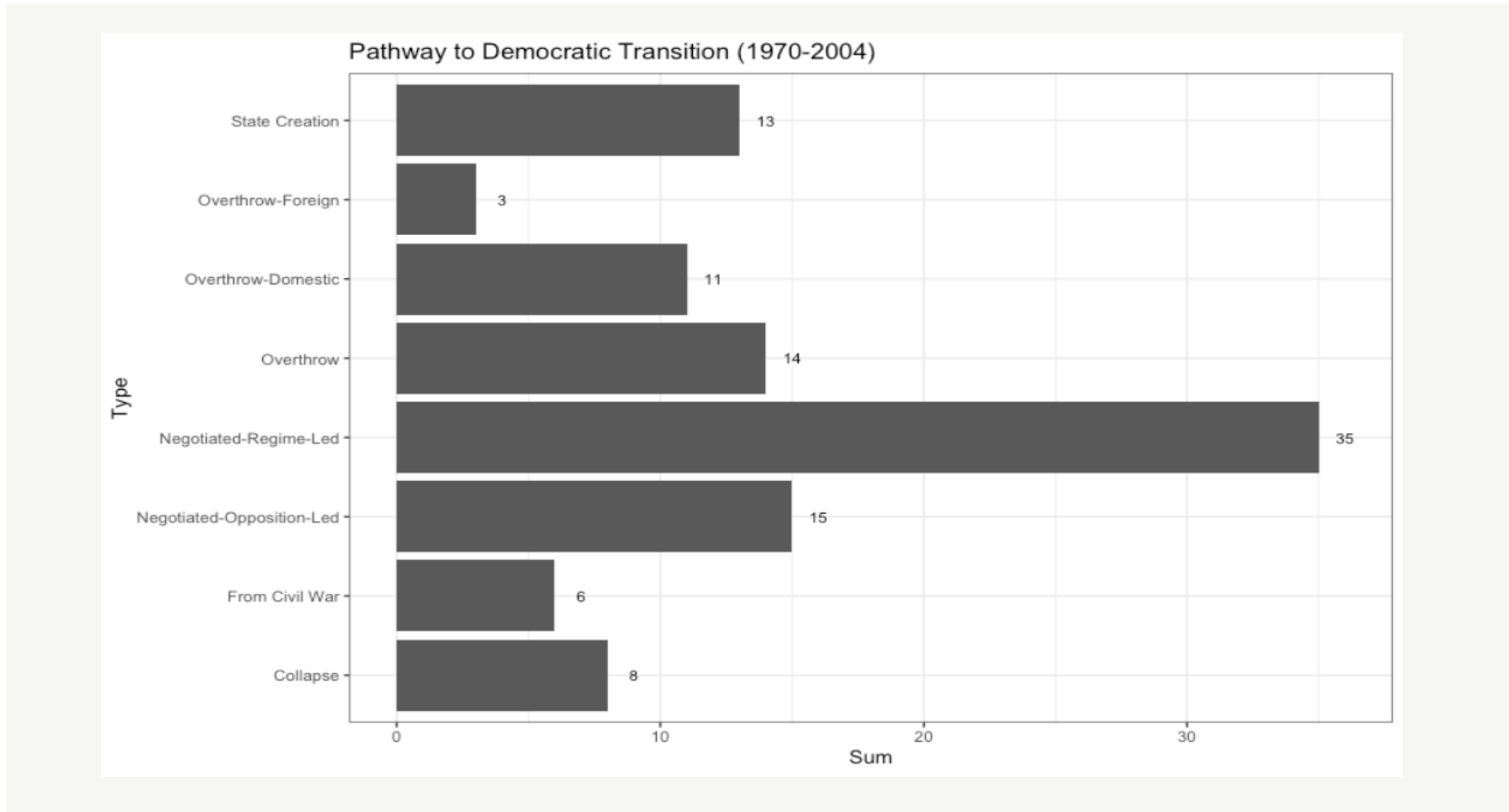
On 11 September 1973, Augusto Pinochet led a military coup that overthrew the regime of President Salvador Allende. The military regime quickly declared a state of siege, suspended the Constitution, dissolved Congress, and banned political parties. A new constitution was approved in a fraudulent national plebiscite held in September 1980, and came into force in March 1981. It established that in 1988 there would be another plebiscite in which the voters would accept or reject a single candidate proposed by the Military Junta. Pinochet was, as expected, the candidate proposed, and he was denied a second 8 year term by 54.5 percent of the vote. After Pinochet's defeat in the 1988 plebiscite, the Constitution was amended to ease provisions for future amendments to the constitution, and Patricio Aylwin won a sweeping victory in the democratic elections held in December 1989.

### Congo, Republic of the

Polity Transition Year:	1992
Authoritarian Regime Type:	Military-Individual
Authoritarian Regime Length:	14
Transition Type:	Negotiated-Regime-Led

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Thank you!