

HIST 399, Democracy and Crisis
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Ordinary people and pundits alike have been alarmed in recent years about the threats to democracy, often asserting that democracy is in crisis. What can the historical experience of democracies tell us about their weakness--but also about the resources that can make them resilient? We'll examine both historical and contemporary cases to think together about the health of democracy and the threats it faces. Are the forces that have destroyed democracies in the past the same ones that threaten them now? Are we seeing a renewal of fascism? Or has the nature of democratic crisis changed since the mid-twentieth century? Our topics will include the demise of democracies in Germany and Italy that led to the rise of Nazism and Fascism; interwar democratic experiments in Sweden and "Red Vienna"; the varieties of authoritarian and far right movements; and recent cases including the United States, Poland and Hungary's so-called "illiberal democracies," and the worldwide rise of authoritarian populism.