

Authoritarianism in the 21st Century

Course code: POS367/667

Term and year: Fall 2026

Day and time: Monday, 11:15am

Instructor: doc. Pelin Ayan Musil, PhD

Instructor contact: pelin.ayan@aauni.edu

Consultation hours: Monday, 14.00-15.00

Credits US/ECTS	3/6	Level	Advanced
Length	15 weeks	Pre-requisite	None
Contact hours	42 hours	Course type	BA elective/MA required

1. Course Description

The overwhelming majority of regimes in the 21st century is authoritarian, but our theoretical understanding of how authoritarian regimes persist remains less developed compared to the vast amount of knowledge we have gained on democratic regimes. Moreover, in recent years, many advanced democracies and semi-democratic regimes have retreated as the leading authoritarian regimes like Russia, China and Saudi Arabia bolstered up in the global arena. We live at a historical stage whereby 'authoritarianism goes global.' It is time we explore the varieties and inner workings of diverse authoritarian regimes and the way they challenge the democratic regimes today. How do authoritarian regimes persist and consolidate? What different types of authoritarian regimes are there? What strategies and toolkits do the autocrats use to sustain their power? What weakens the power of the autocrats? Why is authoritarianism becoming more salient at the global level? This course introduces the most prominent and up-to-date theoretical approaches to authoritarian regimes to shed light on such questions. It utilizes the comparative method in political science and works with a variety of case studies from Asia, Latin America, Africa, Middle East as well as Europe. The goal is to clarify our understanding and make a theoretically informed assessment of contemporary authoritarianism and its increasing influence within domestic and international domains.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify, describe, and classify different types of authoritarian regimes across the world.
- Explain and empirically identify the key strategies and institutions through which authoritarian rulers maintain and consolidate power.
- Apply major theoretical approaches to explain the survival and transformation of authoritarian regimes.
- Develop an in-depth expertise on a selected authoritarian regime and analyze it from a comparative perspective, using publicly available empirical evidence.
- Communicate theoretically informed analysis in both academic writing and other professional formats.

3. Reading Material

Required Materials

- Anastasiya Astapova, Vasil Navumau, Ryhor Nizhnikau & Leonid Polishchuk (2022). "Authoritarian Cooptation of Civil Society: The Case of Belarus." *Europe-Asia Studies*, 74 (1): 1-30.
- Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, & Erica Frantz (2014). "Autocratic breakdown and regime transitions: A new data set." *Perspectives on politics* 12 (2): 313-331.
- Bon Sang Koo, Jun Young Choi & Junseok Kim (2016). "Analyzing Kim Jong-un's Survival Strategy from the Comparative Authoritarian Perspective." *Pacific Focus*, 31: 211– 231.
- Christian Davenport (2007). "State Repression and Political Order." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10 (1): 1-23.
- Fiona Shen-Bayh (2018). "Strategies of repression: Judicial and extrajudicial methods of autocratic survival." *World Politics* 70(3): 321-357.
- Gabriele Natalizia & Lorenzo Termine (2025). "Safe over similar? A structural interpretation of changing patterns in U.S. democracy promotion." *Contemporary Politics*. 1-18. doi:10.1080/13569775.2025.2590087.
- Heike Holbig (2013). "Ideology after the end of ideology. China and the quest for autocratic legitimization." *Democratization* 20 (1): 61-81.
- Jean Lachapelle (2022). "Repression Reconsidered: Bystander Effects and Legitimation in Authoritarian Regimes." *Comparative Politics*, 54 (4): 695-716.
- Jakob Tolstrup (2015). "Black Knights and Elections in Authoritarian Regimes: Why and How Russia Supports Authoritarian Incumbents in Post-Soviet States." *European Journal of Political Research* 54(4): 673–690.
- Jennifer Gandhi & Ellen Lust-Okar (2009). "Elections Under Authoritarianism." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12: 403–422.
- Johannes Gerschewski (2013). "The Three Pillars of Stability: Legitimation, Repression, and Co-optation in Autocratic Regimes." *Democratization* 20 (1): 13-38.
- Juan J. Linz (1978). *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, Christopher Walker (2016). *Authoritarianism Goes Global: The Challenge to Democracy*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Leah Gilbert and Payam Mohseni (2011). "Beyond authoritarianism: The conceptualization of hybrid regimes." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 46(3): 270-297.
- Lucan A. Way (2005). "Authoritarian State Building and the Sources of Regime Competitiveness in the Fourth Wave: The Cases of Belarus, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine." *World Politics* 57(2): 231-261.
- Marlies Glasius (2018). "What authoritarianism is... and is not: a practice perspective." *International affairs* 94 (3): 515-533.
- Max Bader (2011). "Hegemonic political parties in post-Soviet Eurasia: Towards party-based authoritarianism?" *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 44 (3): 189–197.
- Milan W. Svolik (2012). *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Peter Pomerantsev (2015). "Authoritarianism Goes Global: The Kremlin's Information War." *Journal of Democracy*, 26(4): 40–50.
- Sergei Guriev & Daniel Treisman (2019). "Informational Autocrats." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 33(4): 100-127.
- Solomon Jr, P. H. (2007). Courts and judges in authoritarian regimes. *World Politics*, 60(1), 122-145.

- Stan Hok-wui Wong (2012). "Authoritarian Co-optation in the Age of Globalisation: Evidence from Hong Kong." *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 42 (2): 182-209.
- Steffen Kailitz (2024). "Typologies of autocratic regimes." *Research Handbook on Authoritarianism*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 11-24.

4. Teaching methodology

The course will be taught in the form of both seminars and lectures, and encourages students to participate actively in weekly discussions by contributing questions and comments. A central aim of the course is to enable each student to develop an in-depth expertise on a contemporary authoritarian regime of their choice while learning to analyze that case from a comparative and theoretically informed perspective. Throughout the semester, students will apply the concepts and theories introduced in the course in order to develop an analysis of their selected regime through weekly seminar discussions, and by examining issues such as regime type, legitimation, co-optation, repression, elections, parties, the judiciary, information manipulation, opposition, and external influences. This cumulative expertise will also inform the *Country Expert Podcast* and the *Final Research Paper*. Students are therefore expected to come to class having completed the readings and studied their case from the perspective of the weekly topic, which will form the basis for instructor-led seminar discussions and comparative analysis across cases. Each class will conclude with a 10-minute briefing by the lecturer, followed by student questions, outlining the expectations and preparation required for the following week's discussion.

Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
31 August	Topic: Introduction to the Course Content What is Authoritarianism? Description: The students will be introduced to the course and its requirements. There will be an exchange of expectations about the course between the students and the lecturer, followed by an introductory lecture on "What is Authoritarianism?". Reading: Milan W. Svoblik (2012). "Introduction: The Anatomy of Dictatorship" in <i>The Politics of Authoritarian Rule</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-17. Juan J. Linz (1978). <i>Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes</i>. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers. Assignments/deadlines: Complete the exercises: "Think like a dictator"; "Totalitarian regimes are NOT authoritarian regimes. How do we detect the difference?"
7 September (This class will be held online on a pre-agreed day and time)	Topic: Where does democracy end and authoritarianism begin? Description: The students will be introduced to the differences and similarities between illiberal democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes. They will learn how each category relates to a particular authoritarian practice. Reading: Leah Gilbert and Payam Mohseni (2011). "Beyond authoritarianism: The conceptualization of hybrid regimes." <i>Studies in Comparative International Development</i> 46(3): 270-297. Marlies Glasius. (2018). What authoritarianism is... and is not: a practice perspective. <i>International affairs</i>, 94(3), 515-533.

	Assignments/deadlines: Bring case studies comparing hybrid and authoritarian regimes. Use the V-Dem database and yearly reports to distinguish illiberal democracies from hybrid regimes and hybrid regimes from authoritarian regimes.
14 September Assignment 2 Expert briefing to be submitted after this class (15 September)	Topic: What kinds of authoritarian regimes exist? Description: The students will understand the differences among types of contemporary authoritarian regimes, i.e. military regime, personalistic regime, theocracy, one-party regime. Readings: Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, & Erica Frantz (2014). "Autocratic breakdown and regime transitions: A new data set." <i>Perspectives on politics</i> 12 (2): 313-331. Steffen Kailitz. "Typologies of autocratic regimes." <i>Research Handbook on Authoritarianism</i>. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2024. 11-24. Assignments/deadlines: Present the case you have selected in this course identifying its type and degree of authoritarianism.
21 September	Topic: Elite strategy I: Legitimation Description: The session will explain the strategy of legitimation, and how and why it is vital for authoritarian regime survival. Readings: Johannes Gerschewski (2013). "The Three Pillars of Stability: Legitimation, Repression, and Co-optation in Autocratic Regimes." <i>Democratization</i> 20 (1): 13-38. Heike Holbig (2013). "Ideology after the end of ideology. China and the quest for autocratic legitimation." <i>Democratization</i> 20 (1): 61-81. Assignments/deadlines: Identify the main strategy through which your chosen regime seeks to legitimize its rule. Find one concrete example of a legitimation claim or practice. Is legitimacy based primarily on ideology, nationalism, economic performance, religion, security, leadership, democratic claims, or something else?
28 September	Holiday – St. Wenceslas Day
5 October	Topic: Elite strategy II: Co-optation Description: The session will explain the authoritarian strategy of co-optation, how and why it is vital for authoritarian regime survival. Reading: Stan Hok-wui Wong (2012). "Authoritarian Co-optation in the Age of Globalisation: Evidence from Hong Kong." <i>Journal of Contemporary Asia</i>, 42 (2): 182-209. Anastasiya Astapova, Vasil Navumau, Ryhor Nizhnikau & Leonid Polishchuk (2022). "Authoritarian Cooptation of Civil Society: The Case of Belarus." <i>Europe-Asia Studies</i>, 74 (1): 1-30. Assignments/deadlines: Identify one important group that your chosen regime attempts to co-opt. Who is being co-opted, through what resources or institutions, and why does the regime need this group's cooperation? What might happen if this group withdrew its support?

12 October	Topic: Elite strategy III: Repression Description: The session will explain the authoritarian strategy of repression, how and why it is vital for authoritarian regime survival. Reading: Christian Davenport (2007). "State Repression and Political Order." <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i> 10 (1): 1-23. Jean Lachapelle (2022). "Repression Reconsidered: Bystander Effects and Legitimation in Authoritarian Regimes." <i>Comparative Politics</i>, 54 (4): 695-716 Assignments/deadlines: Find one documented example of repression by your chosen regime. Identify the target, the method used, and the intended political effect. Classify it as high- or low-intensity repression. Why might the regime have chosen this form of repression rather than a more or less coercive alternative?
19 October	Topic: Mid-Term Exam Description: During this class session, students will write a midterm exam. Assignments/Deadlines: The exam will consist of short-answer questions based on course readings and class lectures. It will last one hour, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. It will be a closed-book exam. Students are expected to provide concise, to-the-point answers to the questions, demonstrating their knowledge of the readings and lectures. The responses should not exceed three sentences per question. Students are NOT allowed to leave the classroom during this one hour. Student preparation for next week's course readings
26 October	Mid-Term Break
2 November	Topic: Institutions of authoritarianism I: Elections Description: Why hold elections, if you don't want to lose? The students will understand the function of elections under authoritarianism, how dictators benefit from holding elections. Reading: Jennifer Gandhi & Ellen Lust-Okar (2009). "Elections Under Authoritarianism." <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>, 12: 403-422. Assignments/deadlines: Examine the most recent national election held under your chosen regime. Identify one way in which the electoral playing field was manipulated or made unequal. Then answer the larger question: Why does this regime continue to hold elections? What does the ruler gain from them? If your chosen regime does not hold elections, explain what might be the reason for their absence.
9 November	Topic: Institutions of authoritarianism II: Parties Description: Why does a dictator need a ruling party? The students will understand the function of a political party under authoritarianism, how dictators benefit from controlling parties.

	Reading: Milan W. Svolik (2012). "Why Authoritarian Parties? The Regime Party as an Instrument of Co-optation and Control." In <i>The Politics of Authoritarian Rule</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 162-195. Max Bader (2011). "Hegemonic political parties in post-Soviet Eurasia: Towards party-based authoritarianism?" <i>Communist and Post-Communist Studies</i>, 44 (3): 189-197. Assignments/deadlines: Identify the principal ruling/regime party, where one exists. What function does it perform beyond winning elections? Consider elite recruitment, patronage, mobilization, monitoring, territorial organization, co-optation, or succession. Could the regime function equally well without this party?
16 November	Topic: Institutions of authoritarianism III: Judiciary Description: Why use courts, if the ruler can simply repress? The students will understand the function of a judiciary and the courts under authoritarianism. They will be introduced to the concept of 'show trials.' Reading: Fiona Shen-Bayh (2018). "Strategies of repression: Judicial and extrajudicial methods of autocratic survival." <i>World Politics</i> 70(3): 321-357. Assignments/deadlines: Find one documented case in which a court, prosecutor, or legal procedure was used to achieve a political objective in your chosen regime. What was the objective, and why might using law have been preferable to direct coercion?
23 November	Topic: Autocrats' New Toolkits: Disinformation in the Digital Age Description: The session examines how contemporary authoritarian regimes use information manipulation as a tool of domestic control and international influence. It also explores how digital technologies have transformed traditional propaganda and censorship and considers the use of disinformation to shape perceptions, undermine trust, and influence political processes at home and abroad. Readings: Sergei Guriev & Daniel Treisman (2019). "Informational Autocrats." <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i>, 33(4): 100-127. Peter Pomerantsev (2015). "Authoritarianism Goes Global: The Kremlin's Information War." <i>Journal of Democracy</i>, 26(4): 40-50. Assignments/deadlines: Find one documented example of digital information manipulation or disinformation involving your chosen regime. Identify the target audience, method, and intended political effect. Was the primary objective persuasion, distraction, demobilization, polarization, discrediting opponents, or creating uncertainty?
30 November	External Context of Authoritarian Regimes Description: This session examines how the international environment affects the survival of authoritarian regimes. Focusing on the United States and Russia, it explores how the strategic interests of external powers can either constrain or bolster authoritarian rulers and asks when

Assignment 3 Country expert podcasts to be submitted after this class (December 2)	democracy promotion gives way to geopolitical and security considerations. Reading: Jakob Tolstrup (2015). "Black Knights and Elections in Authoritarian Regimes: Why and How Russia Supports Authoritarian Incumbents in Post-Soviet States." <i>European Journal of Political Research</i> 54(4): 673–690. Gabriele Natalizia & Lorenzo Termine (2025). "Safe over similar? A structural interpretation of changing patterns in U.S. democracy promotion." <i>Contemporary Politics</i>. 1-18. doi:10.1080/13569775.2025.2590087. Assignments/deadlines: Identify the most important external actor affecting the survival of your chosen regime. Does this actor strengthen the regime, constrain it, or do both? Identify the mechanism through which this external influence operates and provide one concrete example.
7 December	Topic: Topic: Opposing Authoritarian Regimes Description: The students will learn about varieties of opposition actors and strategies used under authoritarian regimes. Reading: Luca Tomini, Suzan Gibril, and Venelin Bochev. (2023). "Standing up against autocratization across political regimes: A comparative analysis of resistance actors and strategies." <i>Democratization</i> 30 (1): 119-138 Assignments/deadlines: 1/ Identify the main actors opposing your chosen authoritarian regime. Who are they (e.g., political parties, civil society organizations, protest movements, activists, independent media, or other actors), and what strategies do they use to resist or challenge the regime? 2/ Prepare for the Country Expert Roundtable, listen to at least two podcasts delivered by two of your classmates.
14 December	Topic: Consultations on Final Papers Description: The students will share a draft of their final paper with the instructor 2 days in advance and receive feedback during the consultations during class hours. Assignments/deadlines: Share a draft of the paper with the instructor via email two days prior to the consultation session (by 11 December, 2026 Friday 11.59pm CET).
18 December	Submission of Final Papers on NEO by 11.59 pm CET.

5. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (hours)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Class Participation	42	15%	Regular contribution to class discussions, critique of readings, merging theory with facts, interacting with classmates' points	1,2
Expert Briefing (1000 words)	18	10%	Demonstrate the ability to form a meaningful briefing building upon a selected case study and course materials	1,2,3
Mid-term exam: Short Answer Questions on Concepts and Theories	32	25%	Ability to demonstrate an understanding of course material with sufficiently detailed answers to questions on authoritarian regimes	1,3
Country Expert Podcast	26	15%	Ability to form a focused discussion on a selected issue on a selected case and to be articulate enough to appeal to a non-specialized audience	1, 2,3
Final Research Paper	32	35%	Ability to formulate a clear explanatory question, develop an explicit argument, correctly engage relevant theoretical literature, use appropriate evidence to evaluate the argument	1,2,3
TOTAL	150	100%		

*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

6. Detailed description of the assignments

Assignment 1: Class Participation

Active participation in seminar discussions is an essential part of the course. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings and study the country of their choice before each class and to contribute to discussions by applying the concepts and theories introduced in the readings to their selected authoritarian regime. Contributions may include presenting relevant empirical evidence, applying theoretical concepts, making comparisons across cases, responding to questions, or constructively engaging with other students' arguments.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Be present in classes	10%
Preparation and knowledge of the readings	40%
Analysis of the selected regime based on reliable empirical evidence*	35%
Responding substantively to others or raising questions that advance the discussion	15%

**This area will start being assessed starting in Week 4.*

Assignment 2: Expert Briefing: Introducing Your Regime

Following the in-class discussion in Week 3, students will write a 1000-word long expert briefing on one contemporary authoritarian regime that they will follow throughout the semester and on which they will develop country expertise. The Expert Briefing should provide a baseline assessment of the regime. Students should identify the country's authoritarian regime type, justify the degree of authoritarianism based on global democracy indexes and reliable policy reports. They should use the concepts and typologies introduced during the first three classes. The assignment should be submitted **on NEO by 15 September, 2026 11.59pm CET**.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Correctly present the criteria and typologies introduced in the course to classify the regime and support the classification with relevant evidence (reference to the course readings)	30%
Support claims with accurate, relevant, and credible publicly available evidence (reference to appropriate public/academic sources).	30%
Show an ability to be reasoned and convincing (concepts matching evidence)	40%

Assignment 3: Mid-term Exam

On 19 October, 2026, students will write a midterm exam. The exam will consist of short-answer questions based on course readings and class lectures. It will last one hour, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. It will be a closed-book exam. Students are expected to provide concise, to-the-point answers to the questions, demonstrating their knowledge of the readings and lectures. The responses should not exceed three sentences per question. Students will type their responses online and submit the exam paper **on NEO**. Students are not allowed to leave the classroom before submitting their papers.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Be articulate in answering exam questions	50%
Demonstrate knowledge of core concepts or theories of authoritarianism in answers	50%

Assignment 4: Country Expert Podcasts

Students will produce an 8–10-minute podcast addressing a theoretically relevant question or puzzle concerning their selected authoritarian regime. The podcast should not provide a general description of the country but should develop a clear argument in response to the chosen question. Students are expected to apply concepts and theories from the course and support their analysis with credible empirical evidence. The podcast should be designed for an educated non-specialist audience and should conclude by reflecting on what the case can tell us more broadly about contemporary authoritarianism. The podcast assignment should be submitted **on NEO on 2 December 2026, by 11.59pm CET**.

On December 7, we will organize a Country Experts Roundtable where students will provide brief peer feedback identifying the podcast's main argument, comparing the case with their own selected regime, and formulating one analytical question for the author. The peer-review exercise will provide the basis for comparative discussion during the Country Experts

Roundtable. Students will not grade one another's podcasts; the quality and completion of the peer review will instead form part of each student's own podcast assessment.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Puzzle and argument Is there a clearly identifiable question focused on one issue and a clear answer?	40%
Theory and evidence Are course concepts actually <i>used to explain</i> the case and supported empirically?	40%
Communication Can an educated non-specialist follow the argument?	20%

Assignment 5: Final Research Paper

Students will write a 3,500–4,500-word research paper addressing a theoretically significant puzzle concerning authoritarian rule in their selected country. The paper should develop an explanatory argument grounded in the theoretical literature covered in the course and use appropriate empirical evidence to assess that argument. Students must place their primary case in a comparative perspective (i.e. check where the country stands across other authoritarian regimes in the world) to assess what is distinctive about the primary case, evaluate the proposed explanation. A good research paper is one that is focused only on one argument (if there are two arguments, it means two different papers) and aims to substantiate that argument as much as possible through articulating the main explanatory mechanism.

The instructor will dedicate the last class on 14 December 2026 to provide feedback to draft papers/outlines; so please send your drafts two days in advance to the instructor via email by 11 December 2026, midnight.

Final papers must be submitted on NEO by 18 December, 2026, 11.59pm CET.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Formulating a clear explanatory question, developing an explicit argument, correctly engaging relevant theoretical literature, and identifying the mechanism connecting the explanation to the outcome. Considering at least one plausible alternative explanation.	50%
Using appropriate evidence to evaluate the argument and employing an analytical viewpoint rather than simply describing facts or events.	40%
A sound reference list and bibliography	10%

7. General Requirements and School Policies

General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

Electronic communication and submission

The university and instructors shall only use students' university email address for communication, with additional communication via NEO LMS or Microsoft Teams. Students sending e-mail to an instructor shall clearly state the course code and the topic in the subject heading, for example, "COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question". All electronic submissions are through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take-home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

Attendance

Attendance, i.e., presence in class in real-time, at AAU courses is default mandatory; however, it is not graded as such. (Grades may be impacted by missed assignments or lack of participation.) Still, students must attend at least two thirds of classes (which makes 9 classes altogether) to complete the course. If they do not meet this condition and most of their absences are excused, they will be administratively withdrawn from the course. If they do not meet this condition and most of their absences are not excused, they will receive a grade of "FW" (Failure to Withdraw). Students may also be marked absent if they miss a significant part of a class (for example by arriving late or leaving early).

Absence excuse and make-up options

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), and the student wishes to request that the absence be excused, the student should submit an Absence Excuse Request Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence to the Dean of Students within one week of the absence. Each student may excuse up to two sick days per term without any supporting documentation; however, an Absence Excuse Request Form must still be submitted for these instances. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Request Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean of Students are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows. Assignments missed due to unexcused absences which cannot be made up, may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

Late work: If you fail to submit your work by the deadline, submissions will be accepted for up to 24 hours with a 10-point penalty. No submissions will be accepted after this 24-hour grace period.

Electronic devices

Electronic devices (e.g. phones, tablets, laptops) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams unless required by the exam format and the instructor.

Eating is not allowed during classes.

Cheating and disruptive behavior

If a student engages in disruptive conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the class and shall report the behavior to the student's Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misconduct, the student will fail the exam or assignment and be expelled from the exam or class.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism obscures the authorship of a work or the degree of its originality. Students are expected to create and submit works of which they are the author. Plagiarism can apply to all works of authorship – verbal, audiovisual, visual, computer programs, etc. Examples are:

- **Verbatim plagiarism:** verbatim use of another's work or part of it without proper acknowledgement of the source and designation as a verbatim quotation,
- **Paraphrasing plagiarism:** paraphrasing someone else's work or part of it without proper acknowledgement of the source,
- **Data plagiarism:** use of other people's data without proper acknowledgement of the source,
- **False quotation:** publishing a text that is not a verbatim quotation as a verbatim quotation,
- **Fictitious citation:** quoting, paraphrasing, or referring to an incorrect or a non-existent work,
- **Inaccurate citation:** citing sources in such a way that they cannot be found and verified,
- **Ghostwriting:** commissioning work from others and passing it off as one's own,
- **Patchwriting:** using someone else's work or works (albeit with proper acknowledgement of sources and proper attribution) to such an extent that the output contains almost no original contribution,
- **Self-plagiarism:** unacknowledged reuse of one's own work (or part of it) that has been produced or submitted as part of another course of study or that has been published in the past,
- **Collaborative plagiarism:** delivering the result of collective collaboration as one's own individual output.

At minimum, plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment and shall be reported to the student's Dean. A mitigating circumstance may be the case of novice students, and the benefit of the doubt may be given if it is reasonable to assume that the small-scale plagiarism was the result of ignorance rather than intent. An aggravating circumstance in plagiarism is an act intended to make the plagiarism more difficult to detect. Such conduct includes, for example, the additional modification of individual words or phrases, the creation of typos, the use of machine translation tools or the creation of synonymous text, etc. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Intentional or repeated plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

Use of Artificial Intelligence and Academic Tutoring Center

The use of artificial intelligence tools to search sources, to process, analyze and summarize data, and to provide suggestions or feedback in order to improve content, structure, or style, defined here as AI-assisted writing, is not in itself plagiarism. However, it is plagiarism if, as a result, it obscures the authorship of the work produced or the degree of its originality (see the examples above).

AAU acknowledges prudent and honest use of AI-assisted writing, that is, the use of AI for orientation, consultation, and practice is allowed. For some courses and assignments, however, the use of AI is counterproductive to learning outcomes; therefore, the course syllabus may prohibit AI assistance.

A work (text, image, video, sound, code, etc.) generated by artificial intelligence based on a mass of existing data, defined here as AI-generated work, is not considered a work of authorship. Therefore, if an AI-generated work (e.g. text) is part of the author's work, it must be marked as AI-generated. Otherwise, it obscures the authorship and/or the degree of originality, and thus constitutes plagiarism. Unless explicitly permitted by the instructor, submission of AI-generated work is prohibited.

If unsure about technical aspects of writing, and to improve their academic writing, students are encouraged to consult with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at:
<http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

Course accessibility and inclusion

Students with disabilities should contact the Dean of Students to discuss reasonable accommodations. Academic accommodations are not retroactive.

Students who will be absent from course activities due to religious holidays may seek reasonable accommodations by contacting the Dean of Students in writing within the first two weeks of the term. All requests must include specific dates for which the student requests accommodations.

8. Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95–100	Excellent performance. The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A–	90–94	
B+	87–89	Good performance. The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83–86	
B–	80–82	
C+	77–79	Fair performance. The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73–76	
C–	70–72	Poor. The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D+	65–69	
D	60–64	Fail. The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.
F	0–59	

* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Prepared by: Dr Pelin Ayan Musil
Date: 17 August 2026

Approved by: Dr Silviya Lechner
Date: 21 August 2026