

OSTROM WORKSHOP COLLOQUIUM SERIES

David Samuels

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“Inequality and Democratic Survival”

Monday, January 25, 2016

12:00 – 1:00 p.m. *

Ostrom Workshop, 513 N. Park



Conventional wisdom holds that democracy endures in rich countries but is unstable in poor ones. Building on Ansell and Samuels (2014), we suggest that the sources of democratic stability lie not just with a country's *level* of wealth, but with its *distribution*. However, we conceive of inequality and its impact differently from work that focuses on the median voter's demand for redistribution. In our view, democracy's survival depends on contestation between competing economic elites, not between a unified elite and the relatively poor median voter. This leads to novel implications: Rural inequality is associated with democratic collapse, but income inequality is not. Results support our theoretical approach and reveal that democracies with low or high income inequality are likely to survive—as long as the landed elite is weak. Wealthier countries are less likely to break down—not because there is less pressure for redistribution, but because different patterns of rural inequality are associated with different levels of development.



David Samuels is Distinguished McKnight Professor of Political Science at the University of Minnesota. He received his PhD from UCSD in 1998. He currently serves as coeditor of *Comparative Political Studies*. His most recent book, *Inequality and Democratization: An Elite-Competition Approach*, won the American Political Science Association's Woodrow Wilson Foundation Award for “best book on politics, government, or international affairs,” as well as the William H. Riker best book prize from the Political Economy Section of the American Political Science Association ([website](#)).

* 2:00–3:00 p.m. Q&A session: As coeditor of *Comparative Political Studies*, Professor Samuels will give an insider's view of the article publishing process, offering tips and answering questions about best submission practices, for writing and reading reviews, and about the editorial process generally. He will also provide his views on the recent “DA-RT” debate in political science.

Presentations are open to the public and are live streamed (see our website for URL and papers). You are welcome to bring your lunch, and refreshments will be available. For questions, contact Allison Sturgeon (sturgeon@iu.edu; 812/855–3151).