

**Interpretative Methodologies and Methods Group @ APSA  
2020 Charles Taylor Book Award**

**Citation**

Lisa Wedeen, University of Chicago  
*Authoritarian Apprehensions: Ideology, Judgment, and Mourning in Syria*  
(University of Chicago Press, 2019)

*Authoritarian Apprehensions: Ideology, Judgment, and Mourning in Syria* (University of Chicago Press, 2019) is a truly exceptional book, developing important insights into authoritarianism and civil conflict while showcasing the value of interpretive work. Wedeen's ethnography focuses on the case of Bashar Al Asad's Syria, capturing the excitement and anxiety of the revolutionary aspirations that animated the uprising of 2011 followed by the complex trajectory of resistance and complacency that developed once a brutal civil war took hold. The violence that ravaged Syria forced Wedeen to leave the country in the middle of her fieldwork, and left her unable to turn to the kinds of sources that are typically at the heart of ethnographic scholarship. But these challenges served only to push Wedeen in new and innovative directions, as she looked to a variety of cultural products—films, videos, television serials, comedies, and online content—to grasp the ideological contours of the revolution and its aftermath. Through the reach and depth of analysis that such careful attention to these sources yields, the book makes a profound contribution to interpretive methods, to our understandings of ideology and authoritarianism, and to the contradictions and ambiguities that suffuse human behavior.

Selection committee

Erica Simmons, chair (University of Wisconsin-Madison)  
Matthew Longo (Leiden University)  
Robyn Marasco (CUNY-Hunter College)