Political Science 534  
Socialism and Transitions to the Market  
Spring 2017

Instructor: Professor Gehlbach, 201C North Hall, 263-2391, gehlbach@polisci.wisc.edu
Lecture Time and Location: Tuesday/Thursday, 9:30-10:45, Van Hise 587
Office hours: Tuesday 1:30–3:30. Please see http://scottgehlbach.net/contact to schedule an appointment.
Course Website: Available at Learn@UW.
Classlist: polisci534-1-s17@lists.wisc.edu

Overview

This course provides an overview of state socialism, or “communism”—the political and economic system the governed much of the world’s population from 1945 to 1989—and the transition from that system to alternative modes of governance. Lectures and assigned readings will emphasize the experience of Eastern Europe and the (former) Soviet Union, where communism as a system has disappeared most completely, but many of the lessons of transition apply also to China, Vietnam, North Korea, and Cuba. A non-trivial portion of the course covers the nature of communism, as both the tasks and obstacles of transition are determined in part by the character of the previous system. However, the bulk of the material addresses postcommunist policies, institutions, and outcomes.

Reading

There are two assigned books for this course:


You will find copies at the University Bookstore and elsewhere. Other readings, listed below, are posted on the course website. I expect all reading for the week to be completed before class on Tuesday—with the exception of the first week of class, when reading should be completed by Thursday.

Grading

Your grade in the course will be based on the following elements:

• (30 percent) Class participation
• (30 percent) Midterm exam
• (40 percent) Paper

The participation grade will be based on attendance, contributions to the class discussion, and performance on weekly quizzes, in equal proportion. Quizzes will be given each Tuesday at the start of class. (Please do not be late for class.) In addition, I will give a quiz toward the beginning of the semester on the geography of (post)communism. At the end of the semester, I will throw out your lowest quiz score.

The midterm exam (in class, March 16) will combine multiple-choice, identification, and essay questions. I will have more to say about the paper (due at the start of class, May 4) later in the semester.

If you feel that any assignment has been unfairly or improperly graded, then you may request that it be regraded. Your request should be accompanied by a cover letter indicating the source of your concern. I will regrade the entire assignment in question, meaning that your revised grade may be either higher or lower than what you originally received, depending on the nature of any errors in the original grading.

Special accommodations

The University of Wisconsin–Madison, and I personally, support the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Please inform me by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized, if you need instructional accommodations. I will work either directly with you or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student’s educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Electronic devices

A substantial body of research (see, e.g., http://tinyurl.com/z64r3ve) demonstrates that students learn more when laptops and tablets are not allowed in the classroom. This is the policy of this course. (Consistent with the discussion above, I will make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities.) In addition, I ask that phones be placed in silent mode and out of view during class.

Conflicts

I will give the midterm examination only at the scheduled date and time (in class, March 16). If you anticipate being unavailable when the paper is due (start of class, May 4)—for
example, because you will be on university-sponsored travel away from Madison—you should turn in your paper in advance.

Resources

Your first resource if you have a question about the class is the course website, where I will post this syllabus, other handouts, and links to various resources. For certain questions, you will also find your classmates to be an important resource: I have placed a link to the classlist on the course website. For any other matters, please turn to me, either in office hours (which will be appropriate in most cases) or by email (if there is a pressing issue). The material in this course is cumulative, so please do not hesitate to contact me if something is unclear.

Academic Integrity

I have zero tolerance for academic misconduct, and I will respond very severely to any incidents of cheating and plagiarism. You may review the range of possible penalties at:

https://students.wisc.edu/student-conduct/academic-misconduct-sanctions

I have a strong preference for penalties at the upper end of the scale. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, you should ask me before turning in your paper. I have posted a useful document from the Writing Center on avoiding plagiarism on the course website.

Graduate Students

If you are a graduate student planning to take this course for graduate credit, please meet with me the first week of the semester so that we may develop a list of additional readings. Your grade in the course will be based on the following work, which is different from that listed above:

- (25 percent) Class participation
- (25 percent) Midterm exam
- (50 percent) Paper

The research paper, approximately 25 pages in length, should be clearly related to the material in the course. Please meet with me no later than one month before the end of the semester to discuss your topic. I reserve the right to decide that a topic is inappropriate for this course.
Schedule and Assigned Reading

I  Orientation and Introduction to Material

January 17/19


II  The Classical Socialist System

January 24/26

*Red Plenty*, Parts One and Two

January 31/February 2

*Red Plenty*, Parts Three and Four

February 7/9

*Red Plenty*, Parts Five and Six

III  Breakdown

February 14/16: Heterogeneity and Collapse

*The Return*, Chapters 1, 2, 5


February 21/23: Legacies


IV  Tasks of Transition and Initial Outcomes

February 28/March 2: Micro- and Macroeconomy


March 7/9: Privatization and Political Economy

*The Return*, ch. 6


March 14/16: Initial Outcomes


MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS MARCH 16.

March 28/30: Other Models of (Non)Transition


V  Institutions

April 4/6: Business-State Relations


April 11/13: Rule of Law


April 18/20: Elections and Media Control


April 25/27: Political Transitions


VI End of Transition? End of Socialism?

May 2/4

*The Return*, ch. 10


PAPER DUE START OF CLASS MAY 4.