Political Science 659: Politics and Society of Contemporary Eastern Europe

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Fall 2017
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Office Hours: Friday 11:30-12:30, Microbial Sciences Building 4476
Seminar: Mondays & Wednesdays 4:30-5:15, Van Hise 475

Overview:
When communism ended peacefully in Eastern Europe in 1989, the future suddenly looked hopeful again in a region that had gotten quite accustomed to perpetual economic and political stagnation. Propelled by a weakened and inward looking Russia to the East and a European Union willing to provide not only advice and assistance but eventually full membership, the region was embarking on the road to democracy in the most favorable of environments. What could possibly go wrong? A lot apparently, considering that by the early 2000’s Eastern Europe had become one of the regions of the world most skeptical about the merits of democracy. Today even some of the countries that once appeared best positioned to create well-functioning democracies seem to be sliding back.

What does the East European experience teach us about how we think about democracy and about creating and sustaining accountable governments? What were the main characteristics of the political and economic systems of the countries in the region during communism and how did they affect their post-communist trajectories? How do the East European transitions from a state-run to a market economy shine light on competing notions of equality, justice, and fairness? What do communist nostalgia and the way the communist past is remembered tell us about the present and the future of the democratic project in Eastern Europe? How did the prospect and realities of EU membership affect the transformation of East European societies? These are some of the questions that we will be addressing by looking at a variety of sources including memoirs, ethnography, and film.

Course Requirements
Readings and Film Comments – 10%
Preparation and participation in class discussion – 15%
In class presentation – 15%
Midterm – 30%
Final – 30%

Brief Comments on Course Readings
In order to facilitate in-class discussion, prior to each class, you should post a brief comment on the day’s readings in the dropbox available on the course website at the Learn@UW site. In your comments you should highlight what struck you about the assigned readings or point to an argument you find compelling or faulty. To receive
credit, comments must be around 200 words long. **Your comments are due by 2 pm each Monday and Wednesday.** The comments themselves are not graded – you get 10% of your grade just for writing them. Your grade will depend on the number of comments you sent.

**Film Comments**
There are several films that you will watch for the class through digital streaming. They will be marked with L@UW on the syllabus. You should watch the films before coming to class on the day they were assigned and post your comments by **4 pm on Sunday.** To receive credit, comments must be around 100 words long and should highlight what struck you most about the film. The film comments themselves will not be graded. Your grade will be affected by how many comments you sent.

**Adopt a Country**
After the second week of classes I will ask you each to choose an East European country. Your goal throughout the semester will be to become an “expert” on this country by following current event articles about it. This will also serve as a preparation for your in-class presentation. There is a “Current Event Articles” dropbox on the course web site where throughout the semester you can post articles about your country or about the region more generally and read what others have posted. This is an opportunity to share with your colleagues articles that you find compelling, surprising, or simply relevant to topics we are covering in class. I expect all of you will post at least once and read what others have posted.

**In-class Presentations Connecting Countries and Concepts to a Current Event:**
At the end of the semester we will devote several classes to in-class presentations. You will each prepare a 10-15 minutes (group) slide presentation on a topic or country of your choice connecting a central concept from the readings to a current event article.
- Current events articles can be chosen from any major English language newspaper or magazine in any country (e.g. *New York Times*, *Politico.eu*, *The Economist*, *The Guardian of London*, *The Wall St. Journal*, *The Financial Times*).
- You should decide on the topic of your presentation no later than the week before you present and email me a link to the article(s) you have selected with a short description of how it connects to the topic(s) covered in the readings.
- The current events article(s) used in the presentation should be posted by the day before at noon on Learn@UW under the "communications"/"discussion" tabs.
- All students should read the current events article before class.

Slides:
There should be at least 4 slides (you may add one additional slide):
1. Title and name of student
2. Discussion points from the course readings in which the main arguments in the readings and how they connect to the article(s) you have chosen should be highlighted;
3. Discussion points from the article;
4. 2-3 discussion questions; these questions should be orally posed to the class at some point during the presentation, and can also be included at the end of the earlier slides.

- Slides are due at least one hour before class (by 3:30 pm), posted also on Learn@UW

Grading scheme for presentations:
A = Current event discussion was well integrated with course material and audience was engaged in discussion of the presentation material.
B = Presentation demonstrated good command of course material and article.
C = Presentation included a current events article and topic from course material and consisted of 3-5 slides.
F = Did not attend or participate in a presentation.

- Presentations will be marked down one grade if the article is not posted by noon the day before class; 2 grades down if not posted before class.
- Presentations will be marked down one grade if the presentation slides are not posted by 3:30pm on class day.

**Midterm and Final**
The midterm will take place in class. The final exam will be take-home. You will be given a number of essay questions to choose from and will have to answer two questions. In your answers you should refer to relevant readings and build your argument in response to the arguments made in the readings and lectures.

**Readings**
Book chapters and articles that are available for electronic download on the Learn@UW course website are marked with (&).

There are also five books, which should be purchased and two, which are available online. All books will also be on reserve at the library. When chapters of these books are assigned they are marked with (#).


   http://digital.library.upenn.edu/ebooks-public/pdfs/0195119924.pdf


**Streaming Digital Films**

Links to the films will be posted on the course website. Use your NetID for the login/password. You can view the films anytime, anywhere, on any device.

**Class Schedule and Readings**

**Part I. Communist Eastern Europe**

**Sept 11: State and Economy under Communism I**


**Sept 13: State and Economy under Communism II**


Film: Man of Marble  (Poland, 1976), dir. Andrzej Wajda L@UW

**Sept 18: The Return of Civil Society**


In class movie: “Oratorio for Prague” (Czechoslovakia, 1968), dir. Jan Nemec

Film: “Man of Iron” (Poland, 1981), dir. Andrzej Wajda L@UW
Recommended: “Cry Hungary: A Revolution Remembered” BBC documentary about the 1956 revolution in Hungary

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FckhPmtE1A

**Sept 20: Antipolitics and The Power of the Powerless**
Václav Havel: “The Power of the Powerless.”

**Sept 25: Everyday Life under Communism**

**Sept 27: The 1989 Revolutions: Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany**

**Oct 2: The Fall of the Berlin Wall and the Emergence of the Post-Cold War World**

**Oct 4: Why Communism Failed**

Film: "Walesa" (Poland, 2013) dir. Andrzej Wajda L@UW

**Part II. Making and Keeping Democracy**

**Oct 9: Democracy and Democratic Transitions**


**Oct 11: Regime Diversity: Why Some Succeed, Others Fail, and Yet Others Backslide**


Oct 16: Hungary and Poland: a Closer Look at Two Democracies in Trouble

Part III. Living in Post-Communism

Oct 18: Post-communism: an East German Perspective
# Jana Hensel: After the Wall: Confessions from an East German Childhood and the Life that Came Next, Perseus Books Group: 2004. BOOK DISCUSSION
Film: “Goodbye Lenin” (Germany, 2003), dir. Wolfgang Becker L@UW

Oct 23: Transitional Justice
# Tina Rosenberg, Haunted Land, Part I: Czechoslovakia, pp. 3-125.
Film: “The Lives of Others” (Germany, 2006), dir. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck L@UW

Recommended: Tina Rosenberg: Haunted Land, Part II Poland, Part III Germany.

Oct 25: Communist nostalgia

Oct 30: The Political Economy of Reform
& Philipp Ther: Europe Since 1989: A History, Chapters 4 – Getting on the Neoliberal Bandwagon and Chapter 5 – Second Wave Neoliberalism (pp. 77-144).

Nov 1: In-class midterm

Nov 6: Party Politics

Nov 8: Democratization and Nationalism
Nov 13: The War in Bosnia

Part IV. The EU Context of East European Transformations

Nov 15: EU Accession

Nov 20: EU Integration and Quality of Democracy

Grzegorz Ekiert: “Dilemmas of Europeanisation: Eastern and Central Europe after the EU Enlargement” in Gora and Zielinska eds. *Democracy, State and Society: European Integration in Central and Eastern Europe*.

Nov 22: EU and Identity Transformations/ Student Presentations (2)
André Liebich: “How Different is the “New Europe”? Perspectives on States and Minorities” in Gora and Zielinska eds. *Democracy, State and Society: European Integration in Central and Eastern Europe*.

Zdzisław Mach: “The Identity of Europeans after the EU Enlargement” in Gora and Zielinska eds. *Democracy, State and Society: European Integration in Central and Eastern Europe*.


Thanksgiving Break: November 23–26

Nov 27: Civil Society / Student Presentations (4)


Nov 29: Student Presentations (4)
Dec 4: Student Presentations (4)

Dec 6: Europeanization of International Relations


Dec 11: The Future of Democracy in Eastern Europe

Dec 13: Assessing the East European Transitions

Take-home final exam distributed in class and due by 5pm on Dec. 15th