

**Political Science 659:  
Politics and Society of Contemporary Eastern Europe**

Professor Boriana Nikolova

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 (#).

1. Joseph Rothschild, *Return to Diversity: A Political History Of East Central Europe Since World War II*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

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

2. Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolutions of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague*, New York: Random House, 1993.

3. Tina Rosenberg, *Haunted Land: Facing Europe's Ghosts After Communism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1996.

4. Slavenka Drakulic, *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*, Harper Perennial: 1992.
5. Mary Elise Sarotte: *1989 The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe*, Princeton University Press: 2009.
6. Jana Hensel: *After the Wall: Confessions from an East German Childhood and the Life that Came Next*, Perseus Books Group: 2004.
7. Magdalena Gora and Katarzyna Zielinska eds. *Democracy, State and Society: European Integration in Central and Eastern Europe*, Jagiellonian University Press, 2011 (available as ebook at UW library)

### **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**

# Joseph Rothschild, "The Communists Come to Power" in *Return to Diversity*, pp. 76- 125.

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

& Katherine Verdery, "What Was Socialism and Why Did it Fall?" in *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next*, Princeton University Press, 1996.

# Joseph Rothschild, "The Dialectics of Stalinism and Titoism" in *Return to Diversity*, pp. 125-147.

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

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

# Joseph Rothschild, "The Revenge of the Repressed" in *Return to Diversity* pp. 147-191.

# Joseph Rothschild, "A Precarious Stalemate" pp. 191-211 (covers Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary).

In class movie: "Oratorio for Prague" (Czechoslovakia, 1968), dir. Jan Nemeč

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**

#Slavenka Drakulic, *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*, Harper Perennial: 1991. BOOK DISCUSSION

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

# T.G. Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague*.

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

#Mary Elise Sarotte: *1989 The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe*, Princeton University House: 2009. BOOK DISCUSSION

**Oct 4: Why Communism Failed**

&Valerie Bunce, "The Empire Strikes Back: The Evolution of the Eastern Bloc from a Soviet Asset to a Soviet Liability," *International Organization*, 39 (1), 1985.

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

**Part II. Making and Keeping Democracy**

**Oct 9: Democracy and Democratic Transitions**

& Thomas Carothers: "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13 (January 2002), pp. 5-21.

& Nancy Bermeo: "Democratic Backsliding," *Journal of Democracy*, Jan 2016, Vol.27, Number 1, pp. 5-19

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

& Ekiert and Ziblatt: "Democracy in Eastern and Central Europe One Hundred Years On," *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, Volume 27 Number 1 February 2013.

& Henry Hale: "25 Years After the USSR- What's Gone Wrong?" *Journal of Democracy*, July 2016, Volume 27, Number 3.

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

& Janos Kornai: "Hungary U-turn: Retreating from Democracy," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 26, 3, July 2015.

& Joanna Fomina and Jacek Kucharczyk: "Populism and Protest in Poland," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 27, 4, October 2016.

**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**

& Henry Vogt: *Between Utopia and Disillusionment. A Narrative of Political Transformation in Eastern Europe*, Chapter 2- Revolution as Utopia and Chapter 4: Utopia not Fulfilled: Disillusionment.

**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**

& Margit Tavits and Natalia Letki, "When Left Is Right: Party Ideology and Policy in Post-Communist Europe," *The American Political Science Review*, 103. 4 (Nov 2009).

& Grigore Pop-Eleches, "Throwing Out the Bums: Protest Voting and Unorthodox Parties after Communism," *World Politics*, Volume 62, Number 2, April 2010, pp. 221- 260.

**Nov 8: Democratization and Nationalism**

& Valerie Bunce, "Subversive Institutions: The end of the Soviet State in a Comparative Perspective" in *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 1998, 14, 4.

**Nov 13: The War in Bosnia**

Peter Andreas: *Blue Helmets and Black Markets: The Business of Survival in the Siege of Sarajevo*, Cornell University Press, 2008, Chapters 1,2,3 pp. 1-89.

**Part IV. The EU Context of East European Transformations****Nov 15: EU Accession**

& Milada Anna Vachudova, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration After Communism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Introduction, pp. 1-10, Chapter 4, "The Impact of Passive Leverage" pp. 81-105, Chapter 6, "The Impact of Active Leverage I: Making the Political System More Competitive, 1994-1998" pp. 139- 181.

**Nov 20: EU Integration and Quality of Democracy**

Christopher Lord: "The Quality of Democracy" in Gora and Zielinska eds. *Democracy, State and Society: European Integration in Central and Eastern Europe*.

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*.

& Philipp Ther: *Europe Since 1989: A History*, Birth Pangs of United Europe, pp. 306-314

**Thanksgiving Break: November 23–26****Nov 27: Civil Society / Student Presentations (4)**

Imogen Sudbery: "The European Union as Political Resource: NGOs as Change Agents?" in Gora and Zielinska eds. *Democracy, State and Society: European Integration in Central and Eastern Europe*.

& Ekiert and Kubik: "Myths and Realities of Civil Society," *Journal of Democracy* Volume 25, Number 1 January 2014.

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

#### **Dec 4: Student Presentations (4)**

#### **Dec 6: Europeanization of International Relations**

Maria Mälksoo: "From Existential Politics Towards Normal Politics? The Baltic States in the Enlarged Europe" in Gora and Zielinska eds. *Democracy, State and Society: European Integration in Central and Eastern Europe*.

Copsey and Pomorska: "Poland's Power and Influence in the European Union: The Case of Its Eastern Policy" in Gora and Zielinska eds. *Democracy, State and Society: European Integration in Central and Eastern Europe*.

& Philipp Ther: *Europe Since 1989: A History*, The Conflict Over Ukraine, pp. 314-329.

#### **Dec 11: The Future of Democracy in Eastern Europe**

& Dawson and Hanley: "The Fading Mirage of the 'Liberal Consensus,'" *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 27, 1, Jan 2016.

& Ivan Krastev: "Liberalism's Failure to Deliver," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 27, 1, Jan 2016.

#### **Dec 13: Assessing the East European Transitions**

& Matynia: "Twenty Years Later: A Call for Existential Revolution: Vaclav Havel in Conversation with Adam Michnik."

& Philipp Ther: *Europe Since 1989: A History*, Chapter 10 – The Roads Not Taken, pp. 289-306.

**Take-home final exam distributed in class and due by 5pm on Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>**