

East-Central European Politics

Fall 2005

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When: Wednesdays 18:30-21:15

Course Description:

The post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe have, over the past decade and a half, undergone simultaneous and unprecedented transformations in their political, economic and social life. One can speak of the economic transformation of replacing state socialism with principles of a market economy; an institutional transformation of replacing multinational states with nation-states; a social transformation in the life standards and value orientations of populations; and a democratic transformation in the nature and norms of political decision-making. We describe these transformations as largely peaceful, but they also led to significant socio-economic shocks and dislocations.

These simultaneous political and economic transformations have produced a wide range of “winners” and “losers” in Central European societies, evidenced by growing inequalities in income and personal wealth, regional unemployment, and the support of (reformed?) communist parties among different social groups. The democratization of political life has led to a mixed bag of stability, nationalism and neo-authoritarianism in different countries, and serious deficits in the accountability of public officials persist even in the most “consolidated” states. Further, economic and political integration across the continent, exemplified by EU and NATO expansion, has reconfigured the role and capacities of states to nurture their domestic economies. How should we make sense of these transformations? What are Eastern European states “transitioning” to? – Western models of liberal democracy and free-market capitalism? – or are they developing political and economic systems that are distinctively shaped by their past? How does one assess the quality of democratic practices, and what factors can best deepen democracy in the region? What role have social movements and civic associations played in the process of consolidating post-communist democracies? Lastly, what are the categories of analysis we should use to make sense of these issues?

This is a lecture course on post-communist politics, and is divided into two blocks. The main, first block introduces students to debates about the collapse of communism and the politics of democratization and economic transition. The second block surveys contemporary problems in post-communist politics, such as the stability of party systems, gender politics, the role of civil society in post-communist politics, and the accession of post-communist states to the European Union.

Course Expectations:

A typical class will have at least one hour devoted to class discussion. Each student is expected to participate in class discussions in an informed and vigorous manner. This will require careful and attentive reading of the assigned material before we discuss the material in class. Therefore, it is a must that you do the reading when it is assigned.

Course Requirements:

Your grade for this course will be based on the following elements:

1. **Oral/written analysis and class participation:** You will choose a week for which you will write a short, one-page, single-spaced analysis of a reading for that day. Due to the number of students in the class, this means that there will be roughly two analyses per week. The written analysis should 1) identify and summarize the main points or arguments of the reading; 2) assess those arguments/points; 3) and pose relevant questions on the reading for the class. A class email will be distributed, and the students writing analyses must **email their analysis as a word attachment to their fellow students at least 24 hours before the class begins**. During the class, those students will also give a short presentation on the reading (about 5-10 minutes), which should pose questions and facilitate class discussion.
2. **Midterm.** An in-class midterm will take place on October 19, consisting of 6 IDs and a short essay. Details on the midterm – including the list if possible IDs, will be handed out well ahead of time.
3. **NGO Research proposal.** A 4-page research proposal (for your research project) is due on November 2. *A research proposal should identify the NGO you will investigate, explain why it was chosen, how it is “political,” etc. It should also discuss the main issues to be addressed in your NGO research project, as well as the sources you will use.* The analysis must include:
 - A 1-page discussion of the NGO and the main issues and questions your research project will address. You should be able to explain what issues your investigation will raise about post-communist politics more generally.
 - A 1-page discussion of the methods and primary and secondary sources for your project (NGO website, interviews, etc), including a discussion of the main questions you will ask in the case of an interview.
 - A 2-page review of the secondary literature for your given topic. Yes, you need to have read and analyzed background materials by this time!
 - Bibliography
4. **NGO Research project and report.** As a major component of this course, you will choose, explore/research and write a 10 page (double-spaced, TNR font 12) research report on a particular NGO, civic association or related group of your choice. More information on the requirements and structure of the report will be provided during the semester. The research report will be due on December 14.
5. **Project Presentations.** Students are required to give an oral presentation on their research project either on December 7 or 14 (this is subject to change, depending on the number of students enrolled). Tentatively, the presentations should last approximately 15 minutes, including time for discussion.

These exercises will be weighted as follows:

Oral/written analysis & class participation	10%
Midterm	30%
Research proposal	15%
Research report	35%
Presentations	10%

Required Readings:

A comprehensive course reader (used for this course in spring semester, 2005) contains a majority of the required readings. The reader is available for pick up in the library. A secondary reader/handout will be made available containing the remainder of the readings.

Course Schedule

Part I: The Politics of Transition

1 (Aug 31) Introduction

Renata Salecl, "Normalization in the Socialist Regime" – handout

Vaclav Havel, "Power of the Powerless" (excerpt) – handout

2 (Sept 7) Were communist regimes in crisis?

Robert Strayer, "The Gorbachev Experiment," chapter 3 of *Why Did the Soviet Union Collapse?*

Gail Stokes, chapter 4 of *The Walls Came Tumbling Down* ("Solidarity: the Return of the Repressed in Poland")

3 (Sept 14) Explaining the "Collapse" of Communism

Robert Strayer, "Unintended Consequences: Economic Crisis and Social Awakening" chapter 4 of *Why Did the Soviet Union Collapse?*

Gail Stokes, chapter 5 of *The Walls Came Tumbling Down* ("The Glorious Revolutions of 1989")

4 (Sept 21) Democratic and Economic Transitions I: Concepts and Events

Gail Stokes, "1990 and 1991: The First Two Years of a Long Time" in *The Walls Came Tumbling Down: The Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe*

Leszek Balcerowicz, "Understanding Post-communist Transitions" chapter 5 of *Democracy after Communism*

5 (Oct 5) Democratic and Economic Transitions II: Strategies

Mitchell Orenstein, "Strategies of Transformation" and "Privatization," chapters 1 and 4 of *Out of the Red*

6 (Oct 12) Nationalism and the End of Multinational States: The Case of Czechoslovakia

Vaclav Zak, "The Velvet Divorce – Institutional Foundations" chapter 13 of *The End of Czechoslovakia*

Kevin Kraus, “Slovakia’s Second Transition” – [handout](#)

Michael Krause, “The Czech Republic’s First Decade” – [handout](#)

7 (Oct 19) **Midterm**

8 (Oct 26) **No class – Mid-term Break**

Part II: Trends in Contemporary Post-Communist Politics

9 (Nov 2) **What Happened to Communist Parties after 1989?**
!!!Background analysis DUE!!!

Tomas Kostecky, “A New Day: Parties in the Post-Communist Period”

Anna Grzymala-Busse, “The Programmatic Turnaround of Communist Successor Parties in East Central Europe”

10 (Nov 9) **The Impact of Civic Engagement on Politics in the CEE**

Mate Szabo, “Civic Engagement in East-Central Europe” – [handout](#)

Michael Smith, “Green Democracy: Local Referendum Politics...” [handout](#)

11 (Nov 16) **Gender Politics in Central and Eastern Europe**

Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, “The Politics of Gender after Socialism: Dilemmas of Public and Private” – [handout](#)

Barbara Einhorn, “Self-Determination Under Threat: The State and Reproductive Rights” – [handout](#)

12 (Nov 23) **Globalization and Environmental Politics**

Adam Fagin and Petr Jehlicka, “Sustainable Development in the Czech Republic: A Doomed Process?” – [handout](#)

Various NGOs, “Conflict Areas between TEN-T and Nature Conservation” – [handout](#)

13 (Nov 30) **Politics of EU Enlargement**

David Cameron, “The Challenges of Accession” *East European Politics & Societies* Vol. 17/1, (2003); p. 24-41.

Economist Enlargement Survey, Nov 22, 2003 – [handout](#)

14 (Dec 7) **The EU and the Future of Eastern Europe**

Articles from The Economist – handout

Second half of class: Student Presentations

15 (Dec 14) **Student Presentations – Research report Due**