POLI 331: Politics in East Central Europe

POLI 331
Winter 2018
Wed/Fri 11:35-12:55
Currie Gymnasium, 408/9

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Course description
Nearly 30 years after the collapse of communism, the Central European countries, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Romania have completed their “return to Europe” by joining the European Union and NATO. The other Balkan countries (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Kosovo) are heading along the same trajectory, albeit at different paces. In this course, we will explore the unprecedented “triple transition” in national identities, political institutions, and economic systems that resulted from the breakdown of the Communist regimes in the Soviet Bloc. Some of the questions which this course will address include: Why did Communism collapse? What was the most effective way to transition from a command to a market economy? Why did inter-ethnic strife accompany the breakdown of Yugoslavia, but not Czechoslovakia? Have the transition and consolidation of democratic regimes in the region been completed? Did the EU play a decisive role in the consolidation of democracy in East Central Europe and the Balkans? Are Central European democracies backsliding into authoritarianism? The course will combine due attention to the milestones of post-communist trajectories in Eastern Europe and the Balkans and a survey of theoretical attempts to explain various facets of the “triple transition.”

Course requirements
Students will be evaluated on the basis of four measures:
• Discussion participation (15%)
• Map & facts quiz (15%)
• In-class midterm (30%)
• Final (40%)

Map and facts quiz
The quiz will be held in class on February 7th. It is worth 15% of your grade. Some tips on how to prepare for the quiz:
1) Make sure you know which countries the following terms refer to: Soviet Bloc, COMECON, Warsaw Pact, Balkans, East-Central Europe, Visegrad countries, South-Eastern Europe, post-Communist EU members/candidates, post-Communist NATO members/candidates. Also make sure you know the entire list of independent states that emerged from the collapse of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Mistakes on these very easy and predictable questions will be graded harshly!
2) You have to be able to recognize the names of important figures that we have discussed. Don’t worry, you will not have to learn to spell Leszek Balczerowicz,
but you may need to answer who he was or what country’s politics/economics he was active in. Of course, the readings mention more figures than one could possibly memorize. As a rule of thumb, focus on those figures who appear both in the readings and in lecture.

3) Memorize important dates and events. You may have to come up with the dates of a list of events, or order events according to the year they took place. Again, focus on those that are covered both in lecture and in the readings.

Conferences
Conferences start during the third week of the semester. Participation in conference discussions will be the basis of your participation grade.

Midterm
The midterm will be held in class on March 14th. The exam will be comprised of term IDs and/or a short essay question. You will be tested on the material covered in lecture and contained in the readings. The midterm is worth 30% of your grade.

Final
The cumulative final will be held on a university selected date during exam period. It will include term IDs and a choice of essay questions. The essay questions will be theoretically-driven, so to best prepare for the exam, go over the major theories we have discussed in lecture and encountered in the readings. Of course, be prepared to back up your theoretical argument with some empirical facts as well. The final is worth 40% of your grade.

Grading scale

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>3.16-3.50</td>
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On Academic Integrity
McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).
L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/integrity).

**Required readings**

All assigned articles are available through McGill Library’s online resources. I have also included them in the course pack, which you can purchase from McGill Bookstore.

The following books are available at Paragraph Books, located at 2220 McGill College Avenue (corner of Sherbrooke Street):

1. Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and Destruction of Socialism and the State*, Cambridge UP, 1999 (this book is available as an e-book through the library, i.e. you can access it electronically for free)

**Lecture Schedule**

**PART I: What was Communism and why did it collapse?**

**What was communism/socialism? (Jan 10, Jan 12):**

- Also read a series of op-ed/blogposts on “Sex under Communism”, posted on MyCourses.

**Perestroika and 1989 (Jan 17, Jan 19):**


**Why did socialism/communism collapse? (Jan 24):**


**PART II: Post-Socialist Transitions**
The “triple” transition (Jan 26)
- Ramet and Wagner in Sabrina Ramet, pp. 9-37
- Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe, Johns Hopkins UP, 1996, pp. 3-38

Wars in Former Yugoslavia (Jan 31)
- Sabrina Ramet, pp. 111-137, 235-377 (in the individual chapters on the former Yugoslav republics, pay close attention to the timeline and to the discussion of the war years)

Why did the Yugoslavs fight each other? (Feb 2)

February 7th, IN CLASS MAP & FACTS QUIZ

Economic reforms (Feb 7)

Why did some countries reform their economies quicker/better than others? (Feb 9)
- Bohle and Greskovits, pp. 7-96

What happened to the Communists? Transitional justice and lustration (Feb 14)
What happened to the Communist parties? Party systems and voting (Feb 16)

Democratization outcomes by late 1990s-early 2000s (Feb 21)
  - Gebert, Leff, Harris and Bozoki and Simon in Sabrina Ramet, pp. 139-233.
  - Bohle and Greskovits, pp. 138-182
  - Stan, Spirova and Fischer in Sabrina Ramet, pp. 379-445; also revisit the chapters on former Yugoslav republics (pp. 235-377), but this time pay attention to the post-war regime trajectories.
  - Bohle and Greskovits, pp. 182-223

Explaining democratization outcomes: legacies (Feb 23)

Explaining democratization outcomes: EU conditionality (Feb 28, Mar 2)
  - Sedelmeier in Sabrina Ramet, pp. 519-536

March 14th, IN CLASS MIDTERM

PART III: Post-socialist democracies: current challenges

Populism and democratic decline (Mar 16, Mar 21)
  - Miklos Bankuti, Gabor Halmay, Kim Lane Schepple, “Hungary’s Illiberal Turn: Disabling the Constitution,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 23, iss. 3 (July 2012), pp. 138-146
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- Erin Jenne, Cas Mudde, “Hungary’s Illiberal Turn: Can Outsiders Help?” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 23, iss. 3 (July 2012), pp. 147-155

The radical right (Mar 23, Mar 28)

Corruption and the rule of law (Mar 30, Apr 4)
- Kim Scheppele, *First, Let’s Pick All the Judges*, @Paul Krugman’s NYT blog [here](#)

EU leverage after accession (Apr 6, Apr 11)

The post-Communist states and the future of the EU (Apr 13)

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CUMULATIVE FINAL to be held on a university-selected date.