GOVT 150W: WAR AND PEACE IN THE BALKANS

Fall 2012
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Office Hours: Tu., 9-11; Wed., 11-12 p.m. and by appointment.

How can we explain the violence and the peace that have occurred among different peoples and at different times in the Balkan states? Do culture and history doom the diverse peoples of the Balkans to violence and non-democratic regimes? What role do politicians and institutions play in manipulating ethnicity? How effective have been efforts by the international community to promote a stable peace? The conflict that has occurred in parts of the Balkans has generated the most severe violence that Europe has experienced since WWII. Understanding the factors contributing to the violence should help lead to an understanding of how best to address the current violence and how to prevent it.

COURSE GOALS. The main goal of this course is to improve the ability of students to formulate clear and logical written and oral arguments that are supported by convincing evidence. This course encourages students to think scientifically and critically about readings. And finally, this course seeks to expand students’ knowledge of political developments in the Balkans and of the ways in which politicians manipulate ethnicity. This course satisfies W&M’s lower-division writing requirement, which is designed to help freshmen improve their writing skills. The philosophy of this course is that students learn most by doing. So we will write often and organize class time to allow for students to convey their analyses. In the research paper, we will emphasize the process of writing by working on several stages of this process: the development of a thesis and a research plan, the writing of a draft, and the editing of a draft into a final paper. The writing of a draft and a final paper gives students the opportunity to receive feedback and to respond to it. This allows the crafting an improved paper. In addition to learning from readings, we will also view several documentary films in class and engage in a simulation on international aid for democratization.

EXPECTATIONS. Students are expected to attend class and to participate actively in discussion. This means that students should come to class having completed, and having thought critically about, the required readings. Specifically, students should be prepared to discuss questions posed for each class and to discuss the authors’ arguments, the evidence the authors provide, how well the authors’ arguments hold up against alternative arguments, and how the readings relate to other course readings. Students will be expected to offer specific evidence to support their arguments. As a result, students must bring readings to class. Student preparation is also critical because the course is a small seminar that features discussion; this is not a lecture course. I also encourage students to ask questions about the readings. In addition to active and informed class participation (18%), grading will be based on the written assignments described below.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS.

• Each student will prepare two reaction papers (three double spaced pages each) that critically and creatively reflect on readings for that day. While they may include a brief (one paragraph) summary, reaction papers must be much more than summaries. These are analytical pieces, rather than descriptive or opinion pieces. These papers should include a thesis statement, raise interesting ideas and/or questions for class discussion, and demonstrate that you have thought critically about the readings. The strongest papers have a comparative aspect. They either compare an argument in one reading to that of another reading in that week, a previous week, or even another class (citation required). Or, they compare one author’s argument to a discussion that we have had in class or to a recent news analysis. Another possibility is to stress a common theme in several readings. Or, in your reaction, you might critically evaluate an argument or several by drawing on the work of an author or two. Issues that can be addressed include, “Does he or she marshal convincing evidence to support the thesis?” If not, how might the argument be improved? These will be spread throughout the course; a sign-up sheet will be distributed at the beginning of the course. Each student should bring his or her reaction paper to, and be prepared to comment on it in, class. Several examples will be posted on blackboard. These papers are due to me 24 hours before class. These papers and ONLY these papers may be submitted by e-mail. However, the student should not consider the paper to have been successfully received until he/she receives an e-mail confirmation by the instructor. Otherwise, the student must submit it to Professor Pickering’s office by the deadline. (24%)

• A one-page, in-class commentary on the film by Tone Bringa, We are all Neighbors. Due 10/8 (8%).

• A recent article pulled from the internet or a newspaper concerning: ethnicity in the Balkans, and/or democratization in the Balkans and a one half page of bullet points articulating how the article supports or undercuts arguments made in course texts about ethnicity, nationalism, or democratization. Due 4/26 (3%)

• A 10-12-page research paper in which the student conducts original research that deals with one of the major themes covered in this course. This paper must contain a thesis that is supported by empirical evidence and logical
argumentation. The writing of the research paper includes: a one-page proposal (due 10/8, 5%) a full first draft (due 11/7, 22%), and a full revision (due 12/13, 20%). The final paper, which is in lieu of a final exam, must represent a significant revision of the draft that takes into serious consideration the instructor’s comments on the draft. **Students should also incorporate one change that they develop on their own.** These changes need to be highlighted in an approximately one-paged, bullet-pointed memo that accompanies your final paper.

No student may pass this class without satisfying each and every segment of the above requirements. Any student who receives a “C-” or better in this course will have satisfied the lower-division writing requirement. Please read and follow the Honor Code: http://www.wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/honorcode/index.php. To ensure fairness, I will not accept late papers. I may make minor adjustments to the syllabus in order to improve the course. During class, computers must be used only for class purposes and cell phones/PDAs must be turned completely off.

I encourage students to come talk with me during my office hours to discuss material; ideas and sources for research topics, alert me to special learning needs, or pose any questions about readings, lectures, or assignments.


**Required texts:**
- Readings marked with * are posted on blackboard. Readings in academic journals are available through the Swem library’s electronic databases.

**MULTINATIONAL EMPIRE VS. NATION-STATE**

8/29, Introduction to the course

9/3, “WHAT AND WHERE ARE THE BALKANS?” What commonalities do the Balkan states share? How are the Balkans states’ historical experiences different from those of West European states? What are the benefits of thinking scientifically?
- Find a map and locate the Balkans

9/5, “INTER-COMMUNAL RELATIONS BEFORE NATIONS.” How did the peoples of the Balkans define themselves before the spread of the idea of the “nation”? How did the different Balkan peoples get along during this time period?

9/10, “THE FAILURE OF THE FIRST ATTEMPTS AT ‘NATION-STATES’ AND WWII.” Why did the Balkan countries’ first attempts to build sovereign nation-states fail in between WWI and WWII? How clear were identity groups during the genocide in WWII Sarajevo?
- Mazower Ch. 4: Building the nation-state, 115-130.
9/12, “THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNISM.” Why and how was communist rule established in the Balkans after WWII? How unique was the establishment and impact of the communist takeover in Yugoslavia?
  [http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0010-4159%28197604%298%3A3%3C465%3AVASCIT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-B]

9/17, “COMMUNISM’ IN PRACTICE.” What were the strengths and weaknesses of communist economic and political policies? What were the varying policies that Romania and Bulgaria used to manage diversity?
- Mazower, pp. 132-140.

9/19, “THE VIOLENT COLLAPSE OF YUGOSLAVIA.” Compare the types of evidence that Drakulic and Toal & Dahlman use to explain the collapse of Yugoslavia. How did Communist Yugoslavia’s policies for managing diversity differ from Romania & Bulgaria’s?

CHOOSING CIVIC OR ETHNIC STATES
9/24, “NATIONALISM AND POLITICAL TRANSITION” Why did the idea of the ethnic-based nation become so politically important after the fall of communist rule? What choices did political leaders make to exacerbate relations between ethnic-based nations?
  [http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.wm.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v009/9.1hislope.html]
  [http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0037-6779%28199322%2952%3C179%3ANANSIP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-0]

9/26, “MANIPULATING THE PAST.” How did Yugoslav communist policies contribute to a situation where the past could be easily manipulated? Should the “Pigeon Cave” have been performed?
  [http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0094-0496%28199405%2921%3A2%3C367%3ADYNIAT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-P]

CASES OF NON-VIOLENT AND VIOLENT CONFLICT DURING POST-SOCIALISM
10/1, “COMPETING CLAIMS OVER BOSNIA.” Why did Bosnia fail to peacefully democratize? Was this failure inevitable?

10/3, “VIOLENCE AS TOP-DOWN OR BOTTOM-UP?” Contrast Simic’s explanation for violence in former Yugoslavia to Gagnon’s critique of popular explanations of the violence.

10/8, “ETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA.” Are the data that Gagnon uses to portray relations among ethnic groups in socialist Yugoslavia of high quality? What other kinds of data would be useful to have?
- In class film: Tone Bringa's We are all Neighbors
- Paper Proposal due.
10/10, “WERE THE YUGOSLAV WARS ‘ETHNIC?’” Why doesn’t Gagnon characterize the wars in Yugoslavia as “ethnic?” Do you agree with his explanation for the violence?


Fall Break!

10/17, “FROM COEXISTENCE TO VIOLENT NATIONALISM.” Does Oberschall successfully combine theoretical explanations for violence to explain the outbreak and conduct of mass violence in Bosnia?


10/22, “INTER AND INTRA-ETHNIC VIOLENCE.” How does a look at a microcase of violence in Bosnia help us understand violence? What role did conflict within an ethno-national group play in contributing to inter-ethnic conflict?


10/24, “RECONCILING INTRA-ETHNIC DISPUTES.” Why do Albanians turn to informal mediators rather than formal legal institutions to reconcile blood feuds among ethnic Albanians? Why do some mediation strategies work toward reconciliation better than others?


10/29, “COPING WITH DIVERSITY?” Why have Romania and Bulgaria been able to peacefully manage their ethnic diversity in the post-communist period? Could the same strategies help diverse Macedonia?


11/5, “TRYING TO REVERSE THE DESTRUCTION OF BOSNIA’S MULTIENTHICITY.” How did delayed international intervention in the Bosnian war affect conditions for building a diverse democratic state after the war? Do the plusses outweigh the minuses of intensive international intervention into post-war Bosnia?


11/7, PAPER DUE at 5 p.m. in Morton 29 – no class

11/12, “ORDINARY REACTIONS TO AUTHORITARIANISM AND NATO BOMBING.” Why does the author’s views about NATO intervention into Serbia change over time? What do we learn from this diary that we might not learn from a text written by an “objective” academic?


11/14, “THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY’S RECORD IN KOSOVO/A.” What are the situations where the international community’s rule over Kosovo has been constructive in building a tolerant and democratic state? What are the situations where the international community’s rule over Kosovo has been unconstructive?

11/19, “A PRACTITIONER’S VIEW OF TRANSITION IN KOSOVO/A.” How would Lane do things differently as an international official in Kosovo if he had the opportunity? Do you agree that such actions would help the peoples of Kosovo? What do the on-line comments on the situation of Serb returnees to Kosovo suggest about the future?

THANKSGIVING

11/26, “PROMOTING ‘JUSTICE?’” Do the strategies for promoting justice that have been adopted in post-War Balkans mesh well with local understandings of justice? What do the readings suggest would be constructive steps to take to better promote justice or social reconstruction in the region?

11/28, “EDUCATION AND RECONCILIATION.” What are the obstacles to constructively discussing in schools the violence that has recently occurred within a state? Do the authors develop successful strategies to overcome these hurdles?

THE FUTURE

12/3, “ARE THE FORMER YUGOSLAV STATES MOVING TOWARD EUROPE?” Have the European Union’s policies for integrating Balkan states facilitated democratization and reconciliation in the Balkans?

12/5, “TOWARD SMALLER OR LARGER UNITS, WAR OR PEACE?” Why do segments of the Croatian population view EU integration negatively? What are the most constructive steps to take to move toward peace in the Balkans?