GOVT 335: THE POLITICS OF EAST CENTRAL EUROPE

Fall 2014
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Office Hours: Wed.: 11-12; Thurs.: 9-11 & by appointment

East Central Europe is a fascinating laboratory for ideas about political transition from authoritarianism. The course begins by briefly discussing the region's political, historical, and cultural context. After learning about the state socialist system, we examine alternative explanations for its collapse. We then use our knowledge of East Central Europe and political theory to make sense of how these states address the tough political issues they face during transition. Why did some countries quickly integrate into the EU while others developed quasi-authoritarian regimes for a while? Understanding why some countries experienced violence and others did not require looking at the interaction of ethnic diversity with interests, values, history, and socio-economic factors. We also examine the unusually large role of external actors, such as the EU, in facilitating or complicating political development and statebuilding after state socialism and/or war.

COURSE GOALS. This course seeks to expand the students' understanding of political transitions occurring in East Central Europe. Toward that end, this course is organized around themes and theoretical frameworks that help make sense of varied paths of transformation. It does not offer a detailed examination of individual countries in East Central Europe. This course also seeks to improve critical thinking skills and the ability of students to formulate clear and logical written and oral arguments that are supported by convincing evidence. We use books, articles, films, and a simulation as learning tools.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING.

- **Attendance and Participation (13%).** Your participation grade consists of your record of attendance and active and informed participation. Lectures, discussions, and other class activities assume that students come to class having completed, having thought critically about, and ready to discuss the required readings. Specifically, students should be prepared to discuss the authors’ arguments, the evidence the authors provide, how well the authors’ arguments hold up against alternative arguments on the topic that you have encountered, and how the readings relate to other course readings. I also encourage students to ask questions directly related to readings and discussion. Please see additional information about class participation in separate handout. In the event that students are not consistently contributing ideas to the class, I reserve the right to give pop quizzes on the substance of assigned readings.

- **Midterm (25%).** This exam, which will consist of a section on short answers, an essay, and identification of several East Central European countries on a map, will be held on Oct. 8.

- **Analytical paper (29%).** Students will write an approximately 6 paged paper in which they explore more in-depth the dynamics of a topic in political transition in several countries in East Central Europe. This paper must contain a thesis that is supported by empirical evidence and logical argumentation, and include at least two peer-reviewed, outside references. More specific guidance will be distributed in early October. It is due on Nov. 17.

- **Final (33%).** This exam will be cumulative, though it will emphasize material covered after the midterm. It will consist of sections on short answers (only on post-midterm material), and essays (cumulative). Finals: 9 a.m. section: Thursday., Dec 11 from 9-12; 10 a.m. section: Friday, Dec 12, 2-5 p.m.

Other policies. To pass this course, students must pass all course requirements. All students are responsible for saving a copy of their papers. To ensure fairness, I will not accept late papers or papers sent by e-mail. Please read and follow the Honor Code, http://www.wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/honorcodeandstudentconduct/index.php. I may make minor alterations to this syllabus in order to improve the course. To enhance the quality of class time, turn off cell phones and use computers only for course-related work.


I encourage students to come talk with me during my office hours to discuss material or pose any questions about readings, lectures, or assignments. Please let me know about any special concerns or needs that you might have.
REQUIRED TEXTS.

- Readings marked with * are available on the course blackboard site. Readings in academic journals are available online in electronic databases accessible through the W&M network.

Wed., 8/27

I. THE EAST CENTRAL EUROPEAN CONTEXT

- Introduction to the course

Fri., 8/29

(no class due to Prof. Pickering’s participation in American Political Science Association Convention).

Mon. 9/1

WHAT AND WHERE IS “EAST CENTRAL EUROPE?” What characteristics—historical, political, geographic, &/or cultural—make the East Central European region distinctive from Western Europe?


Wed., 9/3

POLITICAL CULTURE. What kinds of attitudes about and relationships with governments did East Central European citizens hold prior to communist rule? Why?


Fri., 9/5

VIOLENCE. What explains why some localities in interwar Poland experienced pogroms vs. Jews and others did not? What are the implications for understanding this violence for diverse communities in East Central Europe once democracy emerges after the fall of communist rule?


II. STATE SOCIALISM

Mon. 9/8

STATE SOCIALISM AND REACTIONS TO IT. Why did the Soviet role in establishing communism vary across the states of East Central Europe? How much control did Communist parties have over East Central European societies? How did East Central Europeans react toward their authoritarian systems?

- Wolchik and Curry, pp. 12-top of 21; 163-top 65; middle of 190-192.

Wed., 9/10

EMBRYONIC CIVIL SOCIETY. Does the green grocer support Communist rule? What was the civil society approach to the authoritarian system?


III. EXPLAINING THE COLLAPSE

Fri. 9/12

THE FALL OF STATE SOCIALISM. Do we know why state socialism fell? Why or why not?

Mon., 9/15

THE VIOLENT COLLAPSE OF YUGOSLAVIA. What factors contributed to the violent collapse of state socialism in Yugoslavia? What role – if any—did history, culture, economic policy, political elites play?


Wed., 9/17

IV. COMPARING TRANSITIONS: ISSUES AND CASES

RE-WRITING THE RULES. How did East Central European states begin to redefine their political systems and states? Is it possible to institutionally engineer a democratic state?

- For brief references on the political history, recent political developments, current political institutions, and basic cultural and socio-economic data for East Central European countries, see the CIA Factbook: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/

Fri., 9/19

POST-COMMUNIST PARTY POLITICS: THE CASE OF POLAND. Why was the balance of power between the President and Parliament contentious in Post-Communist Poland? Did political parties react as expected to incentives contained in new electoral systems?


Mon., 9/22

POST-COMMUNIST POLITICAL CULTURE. Did East Central European peoples quickly embrace democratic values? How do East European peoples feel about their new political institutions, including parties? Why?


Wed., 9/24

THE VELVET DIVORCE BETWEEN THE CZECH AND SLOVAK REPUBLICS. Why did Czech and Slovak political development diverge and then re-converge? Why do new parties keep popping up?


Fri., 9/26

THE POLITICS OF GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION. Have women become more or less politically powerful in the post-communist systems in comparison to the communist systems? Why? What are reasons behind Walesa’s remarks on sexual orientation?


Mon., 9/29

THE POLITICS OF ECONOMIC REFORM. Why did some countries generate economic growth after reforms more quickly than others? How do the different methods of privatization matter? Who are the losers of reforms?


Wed., 10/1, 7 p.m. Film night (in lieu of morning class)

PORTRAYALS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH THE FALL OF COMMUNISM. What are tangible consequences of the transition from state socialism to market democracy for the main characters of the film? What determines whether these changes are positive or negative? Why are some nostalgic? Why, even after transition, are there regional economic divisions in Poland?
• “The second Jagiellonian age” and “The Eastern Wall,” Special Report: Poland in The Economist, June 18, 2014, pp. 3-5; 8-10
• 7 p.m. Film screening: Goodbye Lenin! (2003), directed by Wolfgang Becker. Place: Morton 20.

Fri., 10/3
EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE OF PRIVATIZATION. What are the best approaches to determining the value of a socialist-owned factory? How do the Polish factory workers and managers respond to their new US owners and vice versa? Why?

Mon. 10/6
EXPLAINING THE “SECOND” WAVE. What factors led to democratic revolutions in those East Central European countries that developed illiberal regimes in the 1990s? What factors best explain the timing and depth of democratic reform?
• Valerie Bunce, “The Political Transition,” in Wolchik and Curry, eds., pp. 33-53

Wed. 10/8
MIDTERM EXAM

Fri. 10/10
NETWORKS OF CORRUPTION. Why do networks between big business and political parties form in Bulgaria? How have these networks changed over time? What are the consequences?

Mon., 10/13
FALL BREAK!

Wed., 10/15
THE CONTINUING ROLE OF THE COMMUNISTS. Why do citizens vote for successor parties of the formerly vilified Communists? Why are some Communist successor parties more thoroughly transformed and successful than others?

Fri. 10/17
THE IMPACT OF THE DUAL TRANSITION ON POLICIES OF THE POLITICAL “LEFT” AND “RIGHT” Under what conditions are parties willing to comprise their ideological views for developing public policy?

V. DEMOCRATIZATION IN CULTURALLY PLURAL STATES

Mon., 10/20
DANGERS OF POLITICAL PLURALISM IN DIVIDED SOCIETIES. What kind of nations did East European societies adopt after the fall of state socialism? When does ethno-national diversity create social and political conflict?

Wed. 10/22
DEVELOPING THE RULE OF LAW AND THE POLITICS OF JUSTICE. What issues do East European societies face in trying to address gross injustices made by past regimes? What is the impact of varying types of anti-Communist justice policies on East European societies?

Fri., 10/24
THE BALTIC STATES: How has their direct inclusion into the USSR influenced their transition away from Communism? How successfully have the Baltic states managed ethnic diversity during the transition?


Mon., 10/27
EXPLAINING VARYING LEVELS OF CONFLICT. Why did the culturally divided states of Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Kosovo experience varying levels of conflict—only some resulting in violence?


Wed., 10/29
ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS FOR VIOLENCE. What is the most powerful theoretical explanation or combination of explanations for the violence in ethnically diverse former Yugoslavia?


http://www.informaworld.com/10.1080/014198700750018388

Fri., 10/31
ROLE OF CULTURE IN VIOLENCE. Contrast Ramet’s view of explaining violence in Bosnia to Oberschall’s.

What role does culture play in these arguments?


Mon., 11/3
THE ROOTS OF VIOLENCE. Is Gagnon’s argument about inter-ethnic relations in Socialist Yugoslavia and the transition convincing?


Wed., 11/5
EMOTIONS AND VIOLENCE. What role do emotions play in violence? How easily can elites use emotions? Why aren’t the wars that engulfed former Yugoslavia ethnic wars? Do you agree? What happened to voices for moderation?


VI. INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE
Fri., 11/7
CULTIVATING GRASS-ROOTS ACTIVITY. What were some of the problems with the ways Western nations and organizations attempted to cultivate civil society in East Central Europe in the 1990s?


Mon., 11/10
THE CARROT OF INTEGRATION INTO THE EU. How does the EU influence East European countries to reform their political institutions?


Wed., 11/12
EXTERNAL INFLUENCE ON NON-LINEAR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSITIONS. How successful has the EU been in compelling East European regimes that were initially illiberal to adopt liberal institutions? Why?


Fri., 11/14
POST-ACCESSION HOOLIGANISM: Does this term accurately describe the behavior of politicians in Bulgaria and Romania after EU accession? What are the implications of the term for theories, like Vachudova’s, about the impact of the EU accession process on democratization in East Central Europe?

Mon., 11/17

**ANALYTICAL PAPER DUE IN MORTON 29 BY 5 P.M. (NO CLASS)**

Wed., 11/19

**THE EU AS THE MAGIC WAND FOR SOUTH-EAST CENTRAL EUROPE? Is EU conditionality qualitatively different in South East Central Europe than it is in East Central Europe? Why or why not?**


Fri., 11/21

**LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT CULTIVATING CIVIL SOCIETY? What does the view of an aid practitioner contribute to our understanding of Western efforts to encourage democratic activity in the former Yugoslavia?**


**SIMULATION** on the challenge of aid for building civil society in post-conflict communities

Mon., 11/24

**EXTERNAL INFLUENCE ON POST-CONFLICT DEMOCRATIZATION: THE CASE OF BOSNIA. What has externally led statebuilding been able to achieve after horrific violence in post-war Bosnia? What is the best balance of power between international and domestic officials?**


Wed., 11/26-Fri., 11/28

**THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Mon., 12/1

**POSTCONFLICT JUSTICE. To what extent have international efforts to help bring justice to post-war former Yugoslav peoples been successful? Why?**


• *Valerie Hopkins, “Over 1,000 Gather in Support of Mladic” Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, 30 May 2011.

Wed., 12/3

**INTERNATIONAL PROTECTORATES AS ANSWERS FOR POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES? Can international officials simultaneously govern and help domestic peoples govern over their own peoples?**


Fri., 12/5

**VII. EXPLAINING VARIATION IN DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION**

**THINKING AHEAD. Are East European states still transitioning more than 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall? To Where? Do they all have the same goal? What are challenges to the quality of democracy in the region?**


Additional information about participation grade

In general, here is what I consider excellent participation and attendance:

- **Level of involvement:** You make a strong effort to contribute often to large and small group discussions. You kick off discussion at times, but you do not consistently dominate the room. You know when to cut yourself off and to give others a chance to speak.
- **Substance of comments:** Your comments demonstrate knowledge of the readings and not simply your own personal experience or intuition. You bring the readings to class and point us to specific pages to back your points. Your remarks build momentum, are focused and relevant. You do not speak just to get your voice on record.
- **Attendance:** You attend class every day, unless you offer a reasonable explanation such as an documented illness, family emergency, extra ordinary work commitment, or your required presence at a non-optional William & Mary event (e.g., class field trip).
- **Common courtesy:** You arrive on time every day and take your seat quietly if you are late. You disable your cell phone and other gadgets before class starts. You do not check email or instant messages, surf the web, do other classes’ homework, or do other similar distracting behaviors during class. You listen carefully to others when they are speaking. You respect the right of your classmates to express their analysis, even if you might disagree.

(adapted from Manna 2011)

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<th>Grade range</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| **A- A** (90-100) | --Frequent contributor in large group discussions each week. Active and engaged in small groups and paired discussions.  
--Comments grounded in the readings and demonstrate depth of understanding or attempts to grapple with them; ideas help to build momentum in discussions.  
--Has self-awareness and does not ramble or try to dominate the room.  
Attends class essentially every day (e.g., 0-1 absences for the semester), always brings readings & is always courteous. |
| **B- B B+** (80-89) | --Consistent commenter each week in large group, but some runs of silence or inactivity occasionally detectable. Active and engaged in small groups or pairs, and might excel slightly more there than in the large group. Occasionally may lack good self-awareness.  
--Comments are helpful and draw upon readings, but less consistently so and occasionally may be more grounded in intuition or personal experience.  
--Attends class most days (e.g., 3 absences for the semester), brings readings most days, and is always courteous. |
| **C- C C+** (70-79) | --Infrequent participant each week in large group, but may be reasonably engaged in small groups. Attentive, but not involved. Often an imbalance between small group and large group effort. May have inconsistent self-awareness.  
--Comments are infrequently grounded in the readings; more reliant on intuition or personal experience  
--Absences becoming somewhat frequent (e.g., 4-5 absences for the semester), infrequently brings readings, but is always courteous. |
| **D- D D+** (60-69) | --Extremely rare or essentially no participation each week in large group. Rarely attentive; largely uninvolved, including in small groups. May have very little self-awareness.  
--Hard to tell to what extent this person is trying to engage the readings because comments are so infrequent, or nonexistent.  
--Frequent absences (6 absences for the semester), but is always courteous. |
| **F** (<60) | --No engagement in large group discussion. During small group or paired time, still tends to work alone or be distracted. May demonstrate no self-awareness.  
--Impossible to tell to what extent the person has tried to engage the readings.  
--Excessive absences (7 or more absences for the semester).  
--May consistently fail to demonstrate courtesy. |