

POLI 236-001: Politics of East-Central Europe

TuTh 2:00-3:15pm, Peabody 311

Fall 2017

Instructor: Katharine Aha

Office hours: Tuesday 10:30-1:30pm

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Course Description

This course is designed to present an overview of the politics of East-Central Europe from the early 20th century up to the present day. First, we will discuss the creation of independent states from large empires, and the impact of World Wars I and II. Next, we will examine the over forty years of communist rule, and its breakdown in 1989. In the last section of the course, we will discuss the difficult transition to democracy, accession to the European Union, and several topics to explore the quality of democracy in the region including dimensions of political competition and political participation. As we move throughout the course, we will maintain a comparative approach to understanding the varying political outcomes seen in the region.

Aims and Outcomes

The goals of this course are to both increase your knowledge of the politics of East-Central Europe and to practice analyzing political outcomes through a comparative approach. By the end of this course, you will have learned the historical context of the region necessary for understanding past and current events, be able to draw parallels between historical and contemporary political events, and have practiced analyzing actions taken by political actors. In addition, you will have a better understanding of different political ideologies, and will have applied what you have learned to research an East-Central European country's transition towards liberal democracy. While the focus of the course is on one region, you will be able to use the approaches and concepts learned in the class to better understand politics around the world.

Required Books

Thomas W. Simons, *Eastern Europe in the Postwar World, 2nd Edition* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

Heda Margolius Kovaly, *Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague 1941-1968* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986).

Gale Stokes, *From Stalinism to Pluralism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Milada Anna Vachudova, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage and Integration After Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Course Website (Sakai)

The course website is on Sakai (<http://sakai.unc.edu>). I will use the course website to post the syllabus, lecture slides, and other course information in an easily accessible location, and you will be

expected to post assignments on Sakai throughout the semester. Please let me know immediately if you have any issues logging into the website.

Course Grade Components

10%: Participation grade

10%: Reaction papers

5%: Map quiz

25%: Midterm exam

25%: Final exam

25%: Final paper

attendance & participation

Our meetings will combine lecture and discussions. Attending class regularly will help you considerably on the exams, and allow you to participate in discussions. I will also take attendance before each class. You are allowed four unexcused absences before missing class starts to affect your grade. Every unexcused absence after that will automatically cause your participation grade to drop by half a letter grade (five points).

I will excuse absences due to illness with documentation from a doctor or Campus Health Services, due to University-sanctioned events with documentation (i.e., you are traveling to compete in a University athletic event), and for religious observations. In the case of other personal obligations that will prevent you from attending class, please discuss it with me in advance if you would like me to consider excusing the absence.

I expect you to come to class prepared by having read and thought about the readings and any homework, and ready to actively participate. Lectures are designed with the expectation that you have read the assigned material before class begins. You will not do well in this course unless you do the readings.

Do not expect an A in participation just for showing up – regular attendance denotes average performance, which equates to a grade of seventy-five percent. Raising this grade depends on demonstrating that you have both read and thought about the reading. The only way for you to do this is to actively participate. An easy way to do this is to come to class prepared with comments and/or questions relating to the week's readings, lectures, or how current events reflect what we are studying in class. I will give you ample opportunities to participate in class – please take advantage of this time!

If I feel that students are not reading the course material, pop quizzes will be given.

One of the goals of this class is to give you a safe environment in which to speak so that you can practice analyzing political events and applying the theories we learn in class to real-world events. To this end, we will frequently engage in discussion. Guidelines we will follow to help foster meaningful discussion:

- Be respectful. Different opinions are healthy and welcome in the classroom. However, it is essential that we treat one another with respect. You do not have to agree with someone's view, but you do have to be respectful. Disrespectful students may be asked to leave the

classroom. Please take a look at UNC's harassment policy if you have questions (<http://www.unc.edu/campus/policies/harassanddiscrim.pdf>)

- Speaking in front of groups can be intimidating to some students; it is my goal to ensure that this class is a comfortable space where everyone can participate. Our discussions will be most successful when all voices are heard. If speaking in front of the class makes you nervous, come talk to me so that we can figure out some strategies to help you earn points towards your participation grade.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions! Everyone has different areas of expertise, and some concepts may be more confusing to you than others. I will be of limited help to you if you don't speak up when you need clarification, and the discussion portions of the class will not work unless you participate.

Reaction papers

During the first half of the semester, you are responsible for writing two short (~350-500 words) reaction papers. The goal of the reaction papers is to help you connect the memoir we are reading, *Under a Cruel Star*, to topics and other readings we are discussing in class. Specific prompts for each reaction paper will be posted prior to their due date. The reaction papers are due at the start of class of the due date. You must submit a hard copy and submit on Sakai. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Map quiz

The map quiz will be on September 5th. Preparing for the map quiz will familiarize you with the East-Central Europe region and important neighbors.

Exams

The midterm will be held on October 12th, and is meant to test comprehension of the readings and lecture material for the first half of the course. The final will be on Saturday, December 9th at noon in our regular classroom. The University sets the final exam schedule. The exam will primarily cover material from after the mid-term.

Final paper

The final paper will be due in class on Tuesday, December 5th. The paper should be approximately eight to ten double-spaced pages, plus a works cited page. Prior to submitting the final paper, you will have submitted your topic, introduction, and outline. Submitting these pieces prior to the submission of your final paper will provide you an opportunity to get feedback and ultimately help you to write a stronger paper that both addresses the prompt and is finished on time. Failing to turn in any of these earlier components will affect your overall paper grade. Late final papers will be penalized five points for every day the paper is late.

For this paper you will select a country from the East-Central Europe region, and assess how well that country has addressed a challenge to building liberal democracy. More information about the paper will be distributed prior to Fall Break.

Course policies

Honor Code

It is expected that all work you do in this course will be original work not previously or simultaneously handed in for credit in another course, unless this is done with the prior permission of all instructors involved. All work for this course falls under the University's Honor Code; the student's signature on her/ his work confirms that the Code rules were respected. All work must be your own – plagiarism, cheating, and related violations will not be tolerated. For more information on the honor code, please visit <http://instrument.unc.edu/>.

Familiarize yourself with the concept and practice of plagiarism in order to make sure that you avoid it. Plagiarism is defined as deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise. Take the library's tutorial at <http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/plagiarism/> and ask me if you have any questions.

Questions

If you have questions about the course, please come see me after class or during office hours, or send me an email. Please do communicate with me early if you have any challenges that impact your performance in this course; I will not be able to help you if you do not ask for help!

Rescheduling Exams

If you have to miss class on the day of an exam or wish to reschedule an exam, then you must write and explain beforehand in all but the most unusual circumstances. If you are going to miss an exam for an event you know about well in advance, please come speak to me early in the semester (ie in first week or two of class) so that we can make appropriate arrangements. Please note that I cannot allow you to take the final on a different day or at a different time without the Dean's approval; therefore, contact the Dean if you have a conflict with the time of the final and need to change it.

Conduct in Class + Additional Info

I would like you to bring your laptops to class in order to access electronic resources - however, I expect you to use them for activity related to this course. Playing on the Internet during class is highly disrespectful to people who are trying to pay attention. I may not call you out for being on another site during class, but I will notice, and it will affect your final grade. You may not have your laptops open during any sort of student presentation. If, during the course of the semester, I see that the laptops are acting as more of a distraction than a help, I reserve the right to restrict their usage.

Do not use your cell phone during class. I can tell when you're using it, and it will definitely impact your participation grade.

As a general rule, I will not email you your grades, nor will I discuss your grades with you within 24 hours of handing graded assignments back. That being said, if you have questions about my comments on your assignments, I am happy to talk to you. If you want me to regrade something, you will need to write a few (at least three) paragraphs responding specifically to my written comments and explaining why you feel you deserve a higher grade.

The CNN Cold War documentary series is a great additional resource for material covered during the first half of the semester. I have included the episode(s) that correspond with the topic being covered that week in case you are interested in watching.

Course Schedule

August 22 & 24: Introduction & The Interwar Period

Readings:

- Simons, Chapters 1 & 2

Recommended: CNN Cold War episode 1 - "Comrades"

August 29 & 31: WWII & the Communists Rise to Power

Readings:

- Simons, Chapter 3
- Kovaly, pp. 5-51
- from Stokes, The Stalinist Moment: Yalta

Recommended: CNN Cold War episodes 2/3/4 - "Iron Curtain"/"Marshall Plan"/"Berlin"

September 5: Map quiz

September 7 & 12: Stalinism

Readings:

- Simons, Chapter 4
- Kovaly, pp. 52-125
- from Stokes, Stalinists
- from Stokes, The Purge Trials

Assignments: 1st reaction paper due September 12th

Recommended: CNN Cold War episode 6 - "Reds"

September 14 & 19: De-Stalinization & the Hungarian Revolution

Readings:

- Simons, Chapter 5
- Kovaly, pp. 126-192
- from Stokes, The Hungarian Revolution
- OpEd: "Hungary's Prime Minister a Champion for Illiberalism," Sakai

Recommended: CNN Cold War episode 7 - "After Stalin"

September 21 & 26: Reform Efforts & the Prague Spring

Readings:

- Simons, Chapter 6
- from Stokes, The Prague Spring, and The Brezhnev Doctrine
- OpEd: "Putin's Deadly Doctrine: 'Protecting' Russians in Ukraine has Fatal Consequences," Sakai

Assignments: 2nd reaction paper due September 26th

Recommended: CNN Cold War episode 14 - "Red Spring"

September 28: Goulash Communism

Readings:

- Simons, Chapter 7

Recommended: CNN Cold War episode 19 - "Freeze"

October 3 & October 5: Return to Politics

Readings:

- Simons, Chapter 8
- from Stokes: Solidarity, Return to Solidarity, "Name Changes in Bulgaria"

October 10: Finishing remaining material & review

Assignments: Please email questions by midnight on Sunday

October 12: MIDTERM

October 17: *Good Bye, Lenin!*

October 19: Fall Break

Assignments: Finish *Good Bye, Lenin!*

October 24 & 26: The Revolutions of 1989

Readings:

- Simons, Chapter 9
- from Stokes, The Revolutions of 1989

Assignments: Email proposed topic for final paper by October 26th

Recommended: CNN Cold War episode 23 & 24 - "The Wall Comes Down" & "Conclusions"

October 31 & November 2: Democratic Transition

Readings:

- Vachudova, Intro (skim), Chapters 1 & 2

November 7: EU Accession Process

Readings: Vachudova, selections from Chapters 3-7

Assignments: Paper introductions due. Bring hard copy to class and submit on Sakai.

November 9 & 14: EU Enlargement

Readings:

- Vachudova, Chapter 8
- Article: "European Parliament chastises Hungary on rights, eyes sanctions process," Sakai
- Article: "EU threatens Poland with sanctions as judiciary stand-off escalates," Sakai
- Article: "EU sanctions Czechs, Poles, and Hungarians over refugee policy," Sakai

November 16: Dimensions of Political Competition

Assignments: Paper outlines due. Bring hard copy to class and submit on Sakai.

November 21: Political Participation

Readings:

- Ceka, selection from “The Perils of Political Competition: Explaining Participation and Trust in Political Parties in Eastern Europe,” Sakai

November 28: Populism

Readings:

- Opinion: “Will Populist Parties Run Europe?,” Sakai

November 30: Ethnic minorities

Readings:

- Vermeersch, *The Romani Movement: Minority Politics and Ethnic Mobilization in Contemporary Europe*, Chapter 1, Sakai

December 5: Wrap-up and Review

Assignments: Final papers due. Bring hard copy to class and submit on Sakai.

FINAL EXAM: Saturday, December 9th, noon