

Govt225

**THE POLITICS OF POSTCOMMUNISM:
RUSSIA, EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE, AND CENTRAL ASIA**
Spring 2015

Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 11 – 12.15 p.m.

Place: Kirby 104 (auditorium)



KATALIN FÁBIÁN

Office: Kirby 103, Tel: (610) 330-5392, Email: fabiank@lafayette.edu

Office Hours: by appointment and on Tuesday and Thursday, 2.30 – 4.30 p.m.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

This seminar will examine the complex phenomenon of political regime change, focusing on the contemporary transitions to democracy and capitalism in Russia, East-Central Europe, and Central Asia. We will examine post-communist politics and societies during the 20th and into the 21st century. The class will entertain both broad thematic issues and the detailed analysis of countries in the region. We will develop explanations for the many types of change and the layers of continuity in the region's politics and society. We will explore the connections between various political processes of the transition by studying the history, economics, ideology, identity, various political institutions and policy processes. Govt225 uses an interdisciplinary approach that presents the post-communist region as a diverse field of geopolitical, economic, social, and cultural change.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- ❖ describe the main historical processes that produced, maintained, and eventually undermined communism,
- ❖ identify the characteristics of political, economic and cultural trends in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia,
- ❖ explain the ideological origins of political practices and economic institutions that have governed and defined Eastern Europe and Eurasia over the 20th century and led to this large and complex region's increasing reintegration to global exchanges in the 21st century, and
- ❖ analyze the successes and continuing challenges facing post-communist countries.

READINGS:

The course is designed to respond to world events as well as students' interests. Readings will be added, and possibly subtracted, to suit the direction of the class and international news that emerge as relevant and interesting. All participants are welcome to suggest appropriate supplementary reading.

Paul Beck, Edward Mast, and Perry Tapper. 1997. *The History of Eastern Europe for Beginners*. Writers and Readers Publishing. On reserve in Kirby Library and on Moodle (in the folder "Syllabus and Guides").

Colin McEvedy. 2003. *The New Penguin Atlas of Recent History: Europe Since 1815*. Penguin. On reserve in Kirby Library and on Moodle (in the folder "Syllabus and Guides").

Stephen White, Paul G. Lewis, Judy Batt, eds. 2013. *Developments in Central and East European Politics 5*. Duke University Press.

Stephen Wegren, ed. 2013. *Return to Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*, Rowman and Littlefield, 5th Edition.

Anders Åslund. 2012. *How Capitalism Was Built*. Second Edition. Cambridge University Press.

Sally N. Cummings. 2012. *Understanding Central Asia: Politics and Contested Transformations*. Routledge.

Stanley Brunn, Stanley Toops, and Richard Gilbreath. 2012. *The Routledge Atlas of Central Eurasian Affairs* [electronic resource, <http://libcat.lafayette.edu/record=b2104976>, on reserve in Kirby Library and on Moodle (in the folder "Syllabus and Guides").

Students should regularly check the RSS feeds on Moodle from *TOL* (Transitions On-Line) (<http://www.tol.cz>) and *The New York Times* (<http://international.nytimes.com>). RFE/RL (<http://www.rferl.org>) and World News Connection (Skillman Library databases, <http://0-wnc.dialog.com.libcat.lafayette.edu>) are also excellent sources for up-to-date information.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

	Weight	Due dates
Discussion Question & News Brief	10%	once during the semester
Map Quiz	10%	Feb. 19
Case Study (5% each → 30% altogether), Peer Review (10%, each), Essays on Lessons of Comparative Transitions (40%)		
❖ 1) Geography	5%	Feb. 6
❖ 2) Pre-Communist History	5%	Feb. 13
❖ 3) Communist-Era History	5%	Feb. 27
❖ 4) Political Transition	5%	March 27
○ Part 1) Institutions		
○ Part 2) Behaviors		

❖ 5) Economic Transition	5%	April 10
❖ 6) Social Transition and Gender	5%	April 24
❖ Peer edits	10%	three days after case study upload
❖ Comparative Analysis		
○ Midterm Exam	15%	3pm Friday, March 13
○ Final Comprehensive Exam	25%	3pm, Friday, May 9
Extra Credit	5%	week after event

1) Class Participation

Participation means regular attendance and active engagement. Students are expected to read the assigned material *before* the class session in which the readings will be discussed, to critically analyze the assigned readings, and to participate in class discussions.

The civility of the classroom also depends on mobile phones and other communication devices being silenced. Texting, viewing email/social media sites, or attending to phone calls in class will result in a lower participation grade, seizure of the device for the duration of the class, and/or dismissal from that class session.

- ❖ **Attendance** A maximum of two absences are allowed without penalty. An absence is defined as missing class or coming more than five minutes late. Each unexcused absence beyond three (including lateness) will lower one grade the final grade in the course (e.g., from an A to A-, A- to B+).

2) Writing Assignments

Periodic writing assignments will provide opportunity for in-depth analysis of particular ideas and issues.

- ❖ **A) Discussion Question and News Brief:** once during the semester, each student will be required to participate in a team of two or three students to produce and upload on the respective Moodle Forum a one-page text (not more than 300 words, single-spaced) that
 - ❖ Raises one central question (per presenter) that substantially engages with and/or critiques the arguments presented by the assigned readings, and
 - ❖ Links to, offers a concise summary of, and states the significance of one recent news item (per presenter) that directly contributes to the themes and the countries that we discuss in the class session.

The new summaries and discussion questions are due by 8pm before the session when the readings will be considered because they will be part of class discussion. A signup sheet will be distributed during the second week of class. **Missed days cannot be made up.**

- ❖ **B) Comparative Analysis**

The midterm and final exams offer occasions when students need to apply the assigned class materials to two case study countries and synthesize the lessons. In these exercises students

will have to combine elements from their case studies and the assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions into a clear, well-substantiated and referenced analysis.

3) Extra Credit

With the Professor's approval, students can use the opportunity to pursue extra-credit assignments such as a one-page double spaced review of a talk or movie that they attended. The review needs to a) make a concrete link to class materials, and b) explain how the event enhanced the student's understanding of topics covered in the course.

EVALUATION:

Assignments will be evaluated by using the following three categories:

(A) Accuracy of content: conceptualization of problems, clear use of lecture/class discussions, assigned readings, and research materials,

(I) Integration: coherent organization, logical flow, and analytical ability,

(F) Format: adequate and appropriate usage of language and style.

General improvement, creative and positive attitudes that facilitate the learning experience will be considered.

Please note that you are responsible for saving all your graded materials until the semester ends.

Accommodations for students with disability:

In compliance with Lafayette College policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with disability, see <http://attic.lafayette.edu/disability-services/>.

Academic integrity:

Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without citing them or without appropriate authorization and the fabrication of information. Please consult the "Principles of Intellectual Honesty" at <http://www.lafayette.edu/academics/honesty.pdf> and feel free to discuss your concerns with the Professor and reference librarians.

Late assignment policy:

Late assignments are immediately penalized one letter grade (e.g., from an A to A-, A- to B+). This penalty is one full letter grade per day. Assignments will not be accepted four days after the due date.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week 1 INTRODUCTION: PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY

Tuesday, January 27, 2015 Introduction

Thursday, January 29 Defining the Post-Communist Region

- Batt, “Defining Central and East Europe” pp. 1-19 in *Developments*.
- McEvedy, pp.104-5 (on reserve in Kirby Library and on Moodle, in the folder “Syllabus and Guides”)
- Shaw, “Russia: Geographic Preface” In: Bressler, ed., pp. 7-32 (on Moodle)
- Brunn et al., “Geographic Grid, Location, and Regions” (including Caucasus subregion) pp. 8-13 (on reserve in Kirby Library and on Moodle, in the folder “Syllabus and Guides”).

Weeks 2-3 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

T February 3 The Historical Context

Todd Walton from IT (<waltont@lafayette.edu>) pls bring computer

- Marks, “The Historical Context” In: Bressler, ed., pp. 33-50 (on Moodle)
- Beck et al., pp. 1-60 (follow book’s original page numbers, not copy page number)
- Brunn et al. “Early Turkic Empire until the 18th century” pp. 15-25

R February 5 The Historical Context – continued 2

- Cummings, Chs. 1 and 2, pp. 1-33
- *Review* maps in McEvedy, pp. 7-49

Extra credit film (on reserve in Skillman): *Utomlennye solntsem/ Burnt by the Sun* (1994, Russian, 135 min). Review due in class: Feb. 12

T February 10 The Historical Context – continued 3

- Marks “The Historical Context” In: Bressler, ed., pp. 50-83 (on Moodle)
- Review maps in McEvedy, pp. 50-99
- Applebaum “The Worst of the Madness” *New York Review of Books*, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2010/nov/11/worst-madness>
- Beck et al., pp. 61-93

R February 12 Characteristics of Communism

- Beck et al., History of Eastern Europe, Ch. 4, “Nations” pp. 94-117
- Åslund, Ch. 1, pp. 14-27

Week 4: COMMUNISM AND ITS COLLAPSE

T February 17 Revolutions and the Competing Theories of Communism’s Collapse

- Beck et al., History of Eastern Europe, pp. 118-123
- Åslund, pp. 27- 37, 65-77

Extra credit film: *Good Bye Lenin* (2003, German, 121 min) Review is due in class, Feb. 26

R February 19

- **Map Quiz**

- Heleniak “Population Trends” pp. 149-172 in *Return*.

Weeks 5-10: DEMOCRATIZATION AND ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

T February 24 Success Stories, with More Than a Few Problems

- Millard, “The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland” pp. 20-41 in *Developments*.
- Åslund, Ch. 2 “Radical Reform versus Gradualism” pp. 36-64 and pp. 77-79

R February 26 The Western Balkans

- Batt, “Western Balkans” pp. 59-78 in *Developments*.
- McEvedy, p. 102
- Beck, et al., History of Eastern Europe, pp. 149-176

Extra credit film: *Before the Rain* (Macedonian, 1995, 112 min) Review is due in class March 13

T March 3 The Importance of the EU

- Åslund, pp. 301-325
- Haughton, “The Other New Europeans” pp. 42-58 in *Developments*.
- Copsey, “The EU and CEE” pp. 102-118 in *Developments*.

R March 5 “Managed Democracy”

- Wilson, “The East Europeans” pp. 79-101 in *Developments*.
- Mankoff, “Russia’s relations with the EU” pp. 277-296 in *Return*.

Extra credit film: *My Perestroika* (American, 2010, 97 minutes) Review is due in class March 26

T March 10 Leadership

- Taras, “Executive Leadership” pp. 139-155 in *Developments*.
- Wegren “Introduction” pp. 1-14 in *Return*.
- Sakwa “Political Leadership” pp. 25-44 in *Return*.
- Åslund, “The Economic Role of Oligarchs” pp. 201-211

R March 12 Elections

- Birch, “Elections and Voters” pp. 156-170 in *Developments*.
- Lewis, “Political Parties” pp. 186-203 in *Developments*.

Midterm Exam is due: 3pm, Friday, March 13

Spring break, March 16-20

T March 24 Representation and Accountability

- Olson, “The Parliaments” pp. 171-185 in *Developments*.
- Remington “Parliament and the Dominant Party Regime” pp. 45-62 in *Return*.

- Åslund, pp. 108-114, pp. 258-263
- Beck et al., History of Eastern Europe, pp. 124-148
- Johnson and Novitskaya, "The Gender of Russia's Informal Politics" In: *Return*, 2016 (on Moodle)

R March 26 Extreme Politics

- Henley, "Rule of Law" pp. 45-62 in *Return*.
- Shelley, "Crime, Organized Crime and Corruption" pp. 189-208 in *Return*.

T March 31 The Expansion of Democracy: Social Activism

- Jasiewicz, "Citizens and Politics" pp. 204-227 in *Developments*.
- Evans Jr., "Civil Society and Protest" pp. 103-125 in *Return*.
- Brunn et al. "Gender Inequality Index" pp. 30-31

Extra credit film: *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer* (HBO, 2013, 88 minutes)

<http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/pussy-riot-a-punk-prayer>

Review is due in class April 16

R April 2 The Freedom of the Media

- Lipman, "Media and Political Developments" pp. 125-148 in *Return*.
- Sperling, Ch.1 "Culture, Gender and Political Legitimacy" (on Moodle)

T April 7 The Social Systems

- Cox "Social Change and Social Policy" pp. 241-256 in *Developments*.
- Åslund, pp. 215-238

R April 9 Recovering from Transition

- Orenstein "Neoliberal Reform in Retrospect" pp. 228-240 in *Developments*.
- Sutela "Economic Policy" pp. 173-188 in *Return*.
- Åslund, pp. 239-282

Weeks 11-13: "THE GREAT GAME" IN CENTRAL ASIA

T April 14 The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia

- Review (was Feb.5th reading as well) Cummings, Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 1-33
- Gleason, "Russia's relations with Central Asia" pp. 257-276 in *Return*.
- Brunn et al., "Population" pp. 27-35

R April 16 Empires, Soviet Rule and Sovereignty

- Cummings, Chapter 3, pp. 34-56

T April 21 Authoritarian Alternatives

- Cummings, Chapters 4 and 5, pp. 57-120
- Brunn et al., "Political Demonstrations" pp. 106-8

R April 23 Cultural, Economics and Political Transformations

Visit of Super Trio WUH: Franta Uhlíř, Jaromír Helešic, Skip Wilkins

- Cummings, Chapter 6, pp. 121-144
- Brunn et al., “Economy and Oil Fields/Pipelines” pp. 67-75

T April 28 New Regional Contests of a Multipolar World

- Cummings, Chapters 7 and 8, pp. 145-180
- Herspring “Is Military Reform Over” pp. 297-313 in *Return*.

R April 30 Democratization and Foreign Policies

- Tsygankov “Foreign Policy” pp. 235-256 in *Return*.
- Joshua Kucera. 2013. “U.S. Checked in Central Asia” Nov. 4, *The New York Times*

Extra credit film: *Schizo* (2003, Kazakh, 86 min) Review is due: April 24

Week 14: COMPARATIVE TRANSITIONS

T May 5 post-Postcommunism

- Roberts “The Quality of Post-Communist Democracy” pp. 257-275 in *Developments*.
- Sperling, Conclusion: “The First Time, Do It for Love” (on Moodle)

R May 7 CONCLUSION: UNDERSTANDING POST-COMMUNISM

- Åslund, “A World Transformed” pp. 358-365
- Submit your favorite news/video clip of the region on Moodle Forum

Final Exam is due: 3pm, Friday, May 9