

The Politics of Postcommunist Eastern Europe

Professor: Conor O'Dwyer

Email: PLEASE EMAIL ME WITHIN THE CANVAS SYSTEM!

CPO 3614 / EUS 3930

MWF 10:40-11:30 in Turlington 1101

Office Hours in 332 Anderson: W 2:30-3:30pm; F 1:30-2:30pm; and by appointment

Description

This class will provide a survey of the politics of postcommunist Eastern Europe, from the emergence of national states in the interwar period through their accession to the European Union, and the specter of democratic backsliding since. Just as the collapse of the region's communist regimes took social scientists by surprise in 1989, so too has the divergence of political and economic trajectories since. In some countries, democratic institutions were swiftly consolidated. In others, free elections produced "illiberal democracies." Likewise in the economic sphere, outcomes have varied widely: while some governments quickly managed difficult reforms and laid the conditions for growth, others faced extended economic stagnation. Finally, a number of the region's states have joined the European Union and NATO, a process that, arguably, has deepened democracy and cemented economic reforms even as it adds new complexity to the postcommunist transition. In short, the range of outcomes in postcommunist Europe makes the region an ideal laboratory for testing the explanatory power of major theories of comparative politics. Our survey of political and economic developments in this region will cover democratization and political participation; privatization and macroeconomic reform; nationalism and ethnic conflict; as well as regional integration. Though we will cover the whole region, the countries that will receive primary consideration are Poland, the former Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the former Yugoslavia, and Romania.

Requirements

• **Attendance (5% of grade):** One unexcused absence over the course of the semester is allowed; after that, unexcused absences count against your attendance grade. Excused absences do not count against your grade, but these require students to promptly submit documentation explaining absence. According to the Office of the University Registrar, "acceptable reasons for absence from class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, and professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused." For further information about the University of Florida's attendance policy, please see the current Undergraduate Catalogue (<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationattendance.html>).

- **Participation in class discussion and activities/assignments (5% of grade):** Student participation is a very important component of this course. I assume full and active engagement with the readings, lectures, and discussions in the class. In-class assignments will be collected and counted toward the participation grade; they cannot be

made up. In the interests of fairness and given the size of the course, there will be no extra credit assignments.

- **Three Response papers (30% of grade):** 1 page single-spaced each. There will be three assigned topics (see below). Papers are due in **hard-copy** (no emails) in class on the assigned due date. Points will be deducted for late submission. A grading rubric will be made available before the first paper is due.
- **Midterm test (30% of grade):** Feb. 28, in class
- **Final exam (30% of grade):** April 29, 3:00-5:00 PM

Policy on Exam Make-Ups

I will only schedule exam make-ups for students who contact me by email before the exam and who can provide official documentation why they were physically unable to take the exam. Make-ups for exam absences falling outside of these criteria will be scheduled at the instructor's discretion. They may take different form (essays) and may be assessed a late penalty.

Grading Scale

		B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-
69	E	Below 60					
A	93-100	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62

Texts

There are two required books, which are available for purchase at the university text book store:

- Gale Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down: Collapse and Rebirth in Eastern Europe*, 2nd edition (New York & London: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- Witold Szablowski, *Dancing Bears: True Stories of People Nostalgic for Life Under Tyranny*(Penguin Books, 2018).

The rest of the readings will be available on-line through E-RESERVES at the university library (<http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/> -- click on the link labeled "Course Reserves"). Accessing E-RESERVES from off campus is *much* easier using UF's virtual private network, which is easy to install on your computer, using these instructions for [OSX](#) and [Windows](#). In some cases, the readings will also be available on CANVAS.

I expect you to have completed the relevant assigned readings prior to class and to be ready to discuss them. As you will notice below, the readings are grouped by week. In each class period, I will announce which readings I will expect you to have completed for the next period. The reading schedule below is subject to change depending on the pace of progress and unforeseen scheduling changes. In each class period, I will announce which readings I will expect you to have completed for the next period. Please refer to the online syllabus for the latest version.

Part I: Historical Background

Week 1 (Jan 6-10): Starting Points

- Situating the Region; the Interwar Period
- Democratic Breakdown
- WWII and Its Aftermath

Readings:

- *Developments in Central and East European Politics 3*: Ch. 1 J. Blatt, "Defining Central and Eastern Europe": 1-19. (E-RESERVES)
- Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, pp. 1-14.

Week 2 (Jan 13-17): Behind the Iron Curtain (I)

- The Leninist State and the Command Economy
- Stalinism
- De-Stalinization

Readings:

- Jan Gross, "Social Consequences of War: Preliminaries to the Study of Imposition of Communist Regimes in East Central Europe," *East European Politics and Societies* 3(1989): 198-214. (E-RESERVES)
- Joseph Rothschild, *Return to Diversity*, 2nd edition (Oxford UP: 1993), "Ch. 3: The Communists Come to Power," pp. 75-123 (E-RESERVES).
- Paul Gregory, "Stalinist Command Economy", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*(January 1990): 18-25. (E-RESERVES)

Jan 20: MLK Day (NO CLASS)

Week 3 (Jan 22-24): Behind the Iron Curtain (II)

- De-Stalinization

Readings:

- Andrew Janos, "What Was Communism: A Retrospective in Comparative Analysis," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*" 29(1): 10-15. (E-RESERVES)

Part II: Democratization

Week 4 (Jan 27-31): The Return of Civil Society

- Czechoslovakia's Prague Spring
- First Response Paper: Havel's "Power of the Powerless" (Due Sep 13 in class)

Readings:

•Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*:

- Czechoslovakia: 15-19, 57-59, 75-78
- Václav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless" in Brinton and Rinzler, eds., *Without Force or Lies* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1990): 43-73. (E-RESERVES)

Additional Materials for the Curious:

- [Kenneth Jowitt as part of UC Berkeley's "Conversations with History" Series](http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people/Jowitt/jowitt-con0.html) (<http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people/Jowitt/jowitt-con0.html>)-- focus on following sections (6:21-7:45 min. & 12:19-25:00 min.)

Week 5 (Feb 3-7): The Roots of Regime Breakdown

- Poland's Solidarity Movement
- The International Context: Gorbachev, Perestroika, and Glasnost

Readings:

•Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*

- Poland: pp. 15-46.

- Gorbachev: 79-86, 157-158

- Andrew Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World: The Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Postcommunism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000): 329-360. (E-RESERVES)
- Adam Michnik, "Letter from Gdańsk Prison (1985)" (E-RESERVES)

Week 6 (Feb 10-14): The 1989 Revolutions (I)

- Varieties of Democratization: An Overview of the 1989 Revolutions
- Negotiated Transition: Poland & Hungary
- **Readings:**
- Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*

- Poland: 123-150

- Hungary: 95-117, 158-162

Week 7 (Feb 17-21): The 1989 Revolutions (II)

- Regime Collapse: East Germany & Czechoslovakia

Readings:

- Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*

- East Germany: 69-75, 162-168
 - Czechoslovakia: 174-183

- T.G. Ash, *The Magic Lantern*, Ch. 5 "Prague: Inside the Magic Lantern" (Vintage: 1993), pp. 78-94. (E-RESERVES)

Week 8 (Feb 24-28): The 1989 Revolutions (III) /Midterm Week

•Elite Reshuffling in Bulgaria and Romania

•Review for Midterm (Feb. 26)

•Midterm (Feb. 28)

• Readings:

- Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*

- Bulgaria: 59-62, 168-174
 - Romania: 62-69, 183-193
 - Albania: 78-79

- V. Tismaneanu, "The Revival of Politics in Romania," In *The New Europe: Revolution in East-West Relations* ed. N.H. Wessel, Proceedings, vol. 38, no. 1 The Academy of Political Science: pp. 85-100. (E-RESERVES)

Spring Break (Mar 2-6)

Part III: Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict

Week 9 (Mar 9-13): Democratization, Nationalism, and Ethnic War

- A Comparison of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia
- Yugoslavia: Roots of the Conflict
- The Course of the Conflict

Readings:

- Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, pp. 203-235, 278-282, 317-336.

- Andrew Janos, "Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia: Ethnic Conflict and the Dissolution of Multinational States," Exploratory Essays No. 3, International and Area Studies, University of California at Berkeley (1997) [AVAILABLE ON CANVAS]
- On Yugoslavia, 1-45.
- On Violence, 46-56.

Week 10 (Mar 16-20): Ethnic Cleansing

- Ethnic cleansing
- FILM: "The Death of Yugoslavia"

Readings:

- Samantha Power, *A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, (Harper Perennial 2002), pp. 247-251 & 391-421. (E-RESERVES)
- Szabrowski, *Dancing Bears*, pp. 179-206.

Part IV: The Transition to Capitalism

Week 11 (Mar 23-27): Models of Economic Reform

- Starting Points: The Centrally Planned Economy
- Gradualism vs. Shock-Therapy
- Democracy and Economic Reform: Complementary or Conflicting?

Readings:

- Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*:
 - The Reform Leaders, 269-278, 282-287.
 - The Reform Laggards, 306-317-278, 282-287.
- Jeffrey Sachs, *Poland's Jump to the Market Economy*(MIT Press, 1993), pp. 35-78 (E-RESERVES)
- Joel Hellman, "Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Postcommunist Transitions" *World Politics*50(1998): 203-234. (E-RESERVES)
- ***Additional Materials for the Curious:***
Documentary on economic reform in Russia and Poland "The Commanding Heights" (Episode 2, Chapters 12-21); available at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/commandingheights/lo/story/ch_menu_02.html

Week 12 (Mar 30-April 3): Results of Economic Reform

- A balance sheet of the economic transition
- The lived experience of economic transition
- Second Response Paper due on April 1st in class: on Szabłowski, *Dancing Bears* reading (see below)

Readings:

• Branko Milanovic, "For Whom the Wall Fell? A balance-sheet of transition to capitalism" globalinequality blog: Nov. 3, 2014 (<http://glineq.blogspot.ru/2014/11/for-whom-wall-fell-balance-sheet-of.html>)

• Further reading on economic transition TBA

• Szabłowski, *Dancing Bears*, pp. 3-99.

Part V: Return to Europe?

Week 13 (April 6-10): EU Accession

- The EU Accession Process: Two Views

Readings:

- Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, pp. 287-298.
- Grzegorz Ekiert, Jan Kubik and Milada Anna Vachudova (2007) "Democracy in the Postcommunist World," *East European Politics and Societies* 21, 1 (Winter): 7-30. (Available on Canvas)
- Andrew Janos, "From Eastern Empire to Western Hegemony: East Central Europe under Two International Regimes" *East European Politics and Societies* 15(2001): 221-250. (Available on Canvas)

Week 14 (April 13-17): After Accession

- Euroskepticism and Political Populism
- Film "Czech Dream"

Readings:

• Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, pp. 343-349.

• Bojan Pancevski, "The Iron Curtain Is Gone, but Europe's East and West Are Again Divided," *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 10, 2019. (Available on Canvas)

• Further readings on populism TBA

Week 15 (April 20-22):

- Third Response Paper, "Czech Dream" (Due *April 20* in class)
- Review for Final (April 22)

Final Notes

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Honor Code: Academic dishonesty, including cheating on exams and plagiarism, will not be tolerated. Any student engaging in such activities will be dealt with in accordance with University policy. It is your responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism, and what the university policies are.

If you have doubts, we please discuss with the professor immediately. Please refer to the current Undergraduate Catalogue for more information on the Student Honor code (<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html>). Students who have questions about these policies, should contact the undergraduate advisement center for additional information.

Course Evaluations: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.