

**Politics 214**  
**Social and Political Change in Eastern Europe**

Spring 2003  
Stephen Crowley  
MWF 11-11:50  
King 239

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This course focuses on Eastern Europe as the first “relatively backward” region in the world capitalist system. We will begin with a historical introduction to the region that raises questions about the causes and consequences of this relative backwardness. Next, we will turn to communist revolutions, Stalinism, reform communism, the rise of dissent, and the revolutions of 1989. Finally, we will discuss the problems of the post-communist era, including attempts to build democracy and capitalism, the rise of nationalism, and social problems such as increasing inequalities and the shifting politics of gender and labor.

It is our hope that in studying the developmental history of Eastern Europe, students will acquire not only historical knowledge of the region and its problems, but also develop new conceptual tools for studying social change in the non-Western world. As a region which has undergone several cycles of economic and political transformation and tried out a variety of different developmental models, but which still faces the challenge of catching up to the West, Eastern Europe provides a good starting point for analyzing the problems of social change and political transformation generally.

**Plan of the Course**

The course is roughly divided into three parts.

In part one we will explore how Eastern Europe became the “other Europe.” Specifically, we will examine some of the main factors that impeded the growth of capitalism and liberal institutions in Eastern Europe, relegating its peoples to a “semi-peripheral” status in the world capitalist system. What were the reasons for the “relative backwardness” of Eastern Europe vis-à-vis the Western countries and what were the political consequences of its economic lag? We will also take a look at the developmental problems faced by the predominantly peasant societies of inter-war Eastern Europe.

In Part Two we will explore the rise of Communism as a developmental alternative to Western capitalism, beginning with an examination of the social base of communist movements and the sources of its attraction for intellectual elites. We will then move on to the reasons of

discontent with the Stalinist model which led to the Polish and Hungarian revolts of 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968. Why did so many intellectuals become disillusioned with “real, existing socialism” and why did they become dissidents? How was it that a multi-million working-class movement (*Solidarity*) arose in a socialist country ruled in the name of the interests of that very working class? Finally, how did communism collapse so quickly throughout Eastern Europe?

In Part Three, we explore the dilemmas posed by the demise of communism as an alternative to Western capitalism and liberal democracy. In particular, we focus on three distinct challenges that post-communist Eastern Europe faces: building democracy, creating capitalism, and constructing viable nation-states. More specifically, we try to show that these goals are not always compatible and are sometimes contradictory, with the consequence of exacerbating national and social tensions in the region. One tragic example we will examine is the tragic war in former Yugoslavia. We then move on to a consideration of post-communist social problems, especially those relating to gender relations and the politics of labor.

Finally, we conclude with some theoretically and historically grounded speculation on the future of this troubled and fascinating region of the world.

### **Course Requirements**

The course will involve lectures, discussion, and the screening of three feature-length films outside of class. In order to facilitate class discussion, and to insure that students stay on pace with the reading, you will be asked to post regular comments on the reading to the Blackboard on-line discussion forum. Comments will be posted once or twice a week during the semester (and students will be graded on the quality of their comments, but simply on the regularity of their postings). There will be two shorter essays (5-6 pages, along with a short-answer quiz) during the semester (due March 7 and April 11) and a longer final exam. Grades will be determined as follows:

Class participation, including attendance in class and film screenings – 15%

Blackboard discussion postings – 15%

2 short exams/analytical essays @20%= 40%

Final exam – 30%

### **Books**

Andrew Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*

Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel*

Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*

Readings marked with a “E” will be available on E-Res, Oberlin’s electronic reserve system. Copies of the other reading are available at the reserve room in Mudd.

## **Part One: Theories of Social Change and Eastern Europe**

### **Week One: What is Eastern Europe?**

Andrew Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*, 1-10, 29-53.

Stanislaw Baranczak, “E.E.: The Extraterritorial,” *Breathing Under Water and Other East European Essays*, 9-15. **E**

### **Week Two: The Structural Causes of East European Backwardness**

Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*, 10-28; 54-99.

Immanuel Wallerstein, “Three Paths of National Development: Sixteenth Century Europe,” 37-48, in *The Capitalist World Economy*. **E**

Gale Stokes, “Dependency and the Rise of Nationalism in Southeastern Europe,” *Three Eras of Political Change in Eastern Europe*, 23-36. **E**

Gale Stokes, “The Social Origin of East European Politics,” in *Three Eras*, 36-66. **E**

Jaroslav Hasek, *The Good Soldier Schweik*, 3-48. **E**

### **Week Three: Eastern Europe Between the Wars**

Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*, 99-217.

Jan T. Gross, “Neighbors,” *The New Yorker*, March 12, 2001. [regular reserve]

Josef Skvorecky, *The Bass Saxophone*, 3-28. **E**

Film screening: Sunshine

## **Part Two: The Triumph, Development and Demise of Communism in Eastern Europe**

### **Week Four: The Rise of Communism in Eastern Europe: World War Two, Communist Revolutions and Stalinism**

Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*, 218-256.

Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics*, 1-54.

Stokes, *From Stalinism to Pluralism*, 44-50; 57-77. **E**

Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 1-81. **E**

### **Week Five: Reform Communism and Its Dilemmas: From 1956 to the Prague Spring and Beyond**

Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*, 257-288.

Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics*, 54-117, 133-174.

Stokes, *From Stalinism to Pluralism*, 123-136; 163-166. **E**

*First essay and exam due Friday, March 7.*

### **Week Six: The Rise of Civil Society and Social Protest in Late Communism**

Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*, 288-328.

Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics*, 117-133.

Jack Bielasiak, "The Party: Permanent Crisis,"

Wlodimierz Brus, "Economics and Politics: The Fatal Link,"

Aleksandar Smolar, "The Rich and the Powerful,"

Leszek Kolakowski, "The Intelligentsia," and

Alex Pravda, "The Workers," all in

Abraham Brumberg, ed., *Genesis of a Revolution*, pp.10-93. **E**

Vaclav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless" in *Cross Currents*, 1983, 3-23. **E**

Stokes, *From Stalinism to Pluralism*, 108-115; 193-215; 224-231. **E**

Film screening: Man of Marble

### **Week Seven: The Collapse of Communism and the Revolutions of 1989**

Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*, 329-344.

Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics*, 175-239.

Katherine Verdery, "What Was Socialism, and Why Did It Fall?," in Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?*, 19-38. **E**

Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern*, 78-157. **E**

Andrei Codrescu, "The Death of a Dictator," in Codrescu, *The Hole in the Flag*, 25-51. **E**

### **Part Three. Post-Communism and Its Challenges**

#### **Week Eight: The Challenge of Democratic Transformation**

Vaclav Havel and Vaclav Klaus, "Rival Visions of Civil Society," *Journal of Democracy*, January 1996. **E**

J. F. Brown, *The Grooves of Change*, 73-143. **E**

Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*, 361-398.

Bela Greskowitz, "Crisis-Proof, Poor Democracies," *The Political Economy of Protest and Patience*, 177-187. **E**

Adam Michnik, "The Clean Conscience Trap," *East European Constitutional Review*, Spring 1998. **E**

Cohen, "The Accommodations of Adam Michnik," and "The Dissidents: A Decade Later," *The New York Times Magazine*, November 7, 1999. **E**

#### **Week Nine: The Challenge of Capitalist Transformation**

Jeffrey Sachs, "What Is To Be Done," *Economist*, January 13, 1990. **E**

Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*, 344-360.

J. F. Brown, *The Grooves of Change*, 60-72. **E**

R.Frydman, K.Murphy, A Rapasczynski, *Capitalism with a Comrade's Face*, 1-54. **E**

Kazimierz Poznanski, "Building Capitalism with Communist Tools: Eastern Europe's Defective Transition," *East European Politics and Societies* Spring, 2001. **E**

Akos Rona-Tas and Jozsef Borocz, "Presocialist and Socialist Legacies among Business Elites," in John Hingley and Gyorgy Lengyel, eds., *Elites After State Socialism* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000). **E**

***Second exam and essay due April 11.***

### **Week Ten: Post-Communist Gender, Labor, and Social Politics.**

Branko Milanovic, "Income, Inequality, and Poverty during the Transition from Planned to Market Economy," 23-39. **E**

K. Verdery, "Faith, Hope, and Caritas in the Land of the Pyramids, Romania, 1990-1994" in Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next*, 168-204. **E**

Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Gender After Socialism*, 1-62. **E**

Stephen Crowley, "Explaining Labor Quiescence in Post-Communist Europe," *Center for European Studies Working Paper*, Minda De Gunzburg Center, Harvard University. **E**

### **Week Eleven: The Challenge of Nationalism: Yugoslavia**

Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*

Film screening: *Pretty Villages, Pretty Flame*

### **Week Twelve: Small States, Big World**

"Avoiding the Dependency Trap: The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe," *UN Regional Human Development Report*. **E**

J. F. Brown, *The Grooves of Change*, 200-240 **E**

"Limping Towards Normality: A Survey of Poland," *The Economist*, Oct. 27, 2001. **E**

Michael Baun, *A Wider Europe*, pp.1-24. **E**

### **Week Thirteen. Eastern Europe: West or South?**

Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*, 398-418.

Ivan Berend, "The 'Crisis Zone' Revisited: Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990's," *East European Politics and Societies* Spring, 2001. **E**

Anna Khakee, "Democracy and Marketization in Central and Eastern Europe: Case Closed?," *East European Politics and Societies*, Spring 2002. **E**

Gregorz Ekiert, "Ten Years After: An Optimistic View," *East European Politics and Societies*, Spring 1999. **E**

J. F. Brown, *The Grooves of Change*, 241-244. **E**

***Final exam due May 13, end of reading period.***