SYLLABUS
Postcommunist Politics (POS 6736)

Description
This seminar will use the diverse political trajectories across the postcommunist space of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to probe core debates in both comparative politics and international relations. These include democratization and democratic consolidation, the politics of economic reform, the international diffusion of political reform (e.g. the phenomenon of the "colored revolutions"), the impact of international institutions on domestic politics (particularly as seen in European Union enlargement), ethnic conflict and state breakup, and finally the problem of building state capacity.

While the title of the seminar is "Postcommunist Politics," its perspective and thematic content should make it of interest to students of comparative politics and international relations, regardless of area specialty. Graduate students in related social science fields such as history, sociology, anthropology, and communications are welcome to enroll. No prior coursework on the region is required.

Requirements
• Research paper -- 8,000 words on a topic of the student's choosing in consultation with me. Students will provide a 2-3 page prospectus by February 21st. Further expectations for the paper and the prospectus will be presented in class (50% of grade, submit one hard copy and one electronic copy to turnitin.com by April 24th),
• In-class presentation of your research paper in the last three weeks of the semester -- approximately 20-30 minutes plus discussion (20% of grade),
  • The goal here is to gain experience in how to condense and prepare written research for a live audience, such as you might find at a professional conference or in a job talk. This will also be an opportunity to gather feedback on your research from the rest of the class.
• Leading discussion -- Each student will be expected to present one week's readings over the course of the semester. This will consist of summarizing and critiquing that reading's research question, argument, empirical evidence, and methodology. Each presenter will also be asked to choose and present an additional reading (journal article or book chapter) from his or her geographic or thematic subfield that complements the theme of that week. The presenter will be asked to consider the broader theoretical connections and insights that can be drawn from postcommunist politics in light of the chosen reading. In order to give the rest of the seminar the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the chosen reading, we will schedule the list of presentations in the first class. The online syllabus will be updated to reflect the chosen readings. (I will ask the presenters to send me their reading choice at least a week before their presentation, so I can update the syllabus) This presentation will serve as a jumping-off point for the class discussion. A list of the presentation schedule can be found here. (20% of grade)
• Attendance and participation in the class discussion. (10% of grade) --
  • Attendance and participation in class discussion is a very important component of this course. Because this is a seminar, I assume full and active engagement in the discussion and completion of the assigned readings before class.

Texts
We will be reading the following books:

• M. Steven Fish, Democracy Derailed in Russia: The Failure of Open Politics (Cambridge UP, 2005).
• Levitsky & Way, Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War (Cambridge UP, 2010).
• Gerald Easter, Capital, Coercion, and Postcommunist States (Cornell UP, 2013).
• Katherine Verdery, The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania (Cornell UP, 2003).
• Dorothee Bohle and Béla Greskovits, Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery (Cornell UP, 2013).

The rest of the readings will be available on-line as journal articles through the university's library site. Book chapters and selected other readings are labeled below as E-RESERVES; they are available at the university library (http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/ -- click on the link labeled "Course Reserves").
Week 1 (Jan. 9): Attend Workshop "Whither Eastern Europe?"

Week 2 (Jan. 16): Introduction to the Course / What Was Communism?

Recommended:
- Kenneth Jowitt as part of UC Berkeley's "Conversations with History" Series

Week 3 (Jan. 23): The Weight of Legacy / The Social Bases of Postcommunism
- Grzegorz Ekiert & Jan Kubik, "Contentious Politics in New Democracies: Hungary, the former East Germany, Poland and Slovakia," World Politics (July 1998) 50, 4, pp. 547-581

Recommended:

Week 4 (Jan. 30): Regime Change and Democratization

Recommended:

Week 5 (Feb. 6): Problems of Democratization & Democratic Breakdown
- M. Steven Fish, Democracy Derailed in Russia: The Failure of Open Politics (Cambridge UP, 2005).

Recommended:
• Andrew Wilson, "'Virtual Politics in the ex-Soviet Bloc,” openDemocracy.net (17 July, 2007).
(http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/democracy_power/ukraine_orange/soviet_political_technology)

Week 6 (Feb. 13): Transnational Influences on Democratization and Democratic Breakdown

• Levitsky & Way, Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War (Cambridge UP, 2010).

Recommended:
• Andrew Wilson, "'Virtual Politics in the ex-Soviet Bloc,” openDemocracy.net (17 July, 2007).
(http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/democracy_power/ukraine_orange/soviet_political_technology)

Week 7 (Feb 21): Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict // Prospectus for Final Paper Due in Class

• Kieran Williams, "The break-up of Czechoslovakia and Scottish independence," History & Policy Blog.

Recommended:
• Samantha Power, A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide, Ch. 11, "Srebrenica: Getting Creamed," (Harper Perennial 2002), pp. 391-442.

Week 8 (Feb. 28): Paper Research Day

March 6: Spring Break

Week 9 (March13): The "Return to Europe"? / EU Enlargement and Norm Diffusion


Recommended:
• Conor O'Dwyer and Katrina Z.S. Schwartz, "Minority Rights After EU Enlargement: A Comparison of Antigay Politics in Poland and Latvia," Comparative European Politics.

Week 10 (March 20): States and Markets
• Gerald Easter, Capital, Coercion, and Postcommunist States (Cornell UP, 2013).

Recommended:
• Timothy Frye, Building States and Markets After Communism: The Perils of Polarized Democracy (Cambridge UP, 2010)
• Jeffrey Sachs, Poland's Jump to the Market Economy, Ch. 2 "Poland's Big Bang" (MIT Press, 1993), pp. 35-78

Week 11 (March 27): States and Markets, part 2
• Dorothee Bohle and Béla Greskovits, Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery (Cornell UP, 2013).
• Conor O'Dwyer, "And the Last Shall Be First" Studies in Comparative International Development
• John Earle and Scott Gehlbach, "Did Postcommunist Privatization Increase Mortality?" Paper presented at the 2009 Annual Conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS). (E-RESERVES)

Recommended:

Week 12 (April 3): Final presentations part 1

Week 13 (April 10): Final presentations part 2

Week 14 (April 17): Reflections on Fieldwork and Methodology
• Katherine Verdery, The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania (Cornell UP, 2003).

Recommended:


**April 24th -- FINAL PAPER DUE. Submit one hard copy and one electronic copy to turnitin.com.**