This course will use a comparative perspective to examine the evolution and fall of communist systems and current political processes and policies in Central and Eastern Europe. Throughout the course, we will pay attention to the way in which different historical experiences, levels of economic development, and social structures have been reflected in the political experiences of these countries. The course will not include most of the former Soviet Union or Russia.

Most of the course will focus on developments in the post-communist era. We will discuss the different responses political leaders have given to common problems as they have attempted to create or recreate democratic political systems and market economies, and redefine their position in the international arena. Major questions to be considered for each topic are listed with the reading assignments. Students are advised to organize their thinking about the readings around these questions. In addition to standard texts, we will also use film and literature to gain insight into political developments in these societies.

Course requirements include reading all assigned readings before class and active participation in class discussion and exercises in addition to keeping and reporting on a reading journal (15% of grade), a mid-term (40%) and final (45%). Students who wish may write a 10-15-page paper or policy analysis. In that case the mid-term will count for 30% of the grade, the paper 20%, and the final 35%. The paper will be due the last day of class. Students are also expected to follow developments in the region in the New York Times or the Washington Post. Please check the syllabus for dates of in-class exercises and journal reporting. Absences on those dates must be made up with additional assignments.

The following books are available for purchase in the bookstore. They, as well as all other readings, are also on reserve in the library. Readings may be somewhat uneven from session to session, so students are advised to plan ahead for heavier reading days.

Required materials:


Please note that this course is NOT a standard lecture course. I will give some lectures, but students will also be expected to be actively engaged in a variety of in-class exercises, keep a journal of their readings on a country and report on their findings from time to time, and take part in group projects. In the latter case, there will be time during class to plan and coordinate with other group members. But the main point here is that you will not be able to simply take notes and absorb knowledge passively. You will be expected to be an active participant in class activities. Exams will require knowledge of the specific readings assigned as well as of the lectures and in-class presentations.

**Learning Objectives:**
By the end of the course, students will be able to:

a) Identify the major political issues in the domestic politics of the countries studied.
b) Comprehend the common and diverse responses of political leaders and citizens to the challenges of the transition.
c) Analyze the similar and different ways communism and the transition have unfolded in the region as a whole and in particular countries.
d) Evaluate current policy problems and the approaches of various governments to these.

I. INTRODUCTION: COMMUNISM AND POST-COMMUNISM

1/15: 1. Introduction: Discussion of the syllabus and expectations.

II. THE EMERGENCE OF COMMUNISM AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY

1/17: 2. Pre-Communist Society and Politics: Empires and the Interwar Period
What kinds of states became Communist? Are there common elements such as leadership structure, levels of social and economic development, and political stability, which contributed to Communism's appeal?
Assigned Readings:
Rothschild and Wingfield, Chapters 1 and 2.
Wolchik and Curry, Introduction and history section of Chapter that focuses on your assigned country.

1/22: 3. World War II and the Holocaust.
What kinds of issues did WWII raise in the region? How did the countries differ in terms of human loss, material destruction, and the moral and political aftermath of the war?

1/24: 4. The Acquisition of Power
How were the Communist systems established in Central and Eastern Europe? What differences were there in the degree of violence, nature of mass involvement, amount of popular and elite support for Communism, viability of the pre-Communist systems, and role of external factors?

Assigned Readings:
Rothschild and Wingfield, Chapter 3.

1/29: 5. Transformation of Society and the Soviet Model
How did communist elites destroy the old society and build the new? How did they build support for these changes and control those who opposed them? What were the main elements of the Soviet model in Central and Eastern Europe? How did the Yugoslav model diverge from the Soviet model? Assignment of teams for in-class exercises.

Assigned Readings:
Rothschild and Wingfield, Chapter 4.
Stokes, From Stalinism to Pluralism, pp. 43-78; 94-106 (NB: These sections contain individual readings; you should be able to provide a 1-2 sentence summary of the main thesis of each of them.).

FILM: We will view Andrzej Wajda’s Man of Marble together in class.

2/5: 7. In-class debate on the advantages and disadvantages of Stalinism as a strategy of political change, economic organization and development, and social change. Bring your notes and materials to class to support your assigned point of view.

III. REFORM, ADAPTATION, AND COLLAPSE

2/7: 8. De-Stalinization and Reform: Hungary and Poland 1956
What impact did the death of Stalin have in Central and Eastern Europe? Why was
deStalinization more problematic for Poland and Hungary than elsewhere in the region?

Assigned Readings:
Rothschild, pp. 166-173
Stokes, From Stalinism to Pluralism, pp. 81-93, 107-114, 137-149.
Wolchik and Curry, sections of chapters on Poland and Hungary that deal with these events

2/12: 9. Czechoslovakia: Socialism with a Human Face
How did the Prague Spring differ from other efforts to change the Communist system? Why did the Soviets invade Czechoslovakia?

Assigned Readings:
Rothschild and Wingfield, pp. 166-173
Wolchik and Curry, section of chapter on Czech and Slovak Republics that deals with these events

2/14: 10. Poland: Perpetual Crisis
How do we explain the recurrent crises in Poland in the Communist era? What role did the Church play in the formation of Solidarity?

Assigned Readings:
Gale Stokes, The Walls Came Tumbling Down, Chapter 4.
Stokes, From Stalinism to Pluralism, pp. 193-215
Wolchik and Curry, sections on Poland that deal with the communist period

2/19: 11. Other Experiences
What were the main characteristics of Communist rule in Bulgaria, Albania, East Germany, and Romania in the last half of the Communist era? What were the main features of the Kadar compromise in Hungary? What impact did Gorbachev’s rise to power have on the Baltic countries and Ukraine?

Assigned Readings:
Rothschild and Wingfield, pp. 173-190.
Stokes, From Stalinism to Pluralism, pp. 175-187.
Wolchik and Curry, sections of chapters on Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary that deal with the communist period.


2/26: 13. The Collapse of Communism: Causes and Patterns
What impact did Gorbachev's rise to power have in Central and Eastern Europe? How do
we explain the end of Communist rule? What patterns are evident in the way Communism fell?

Assigned Readings:
Rothschild and Wingfield, chapters 6 and 7.
Gale Stokes, The Walls Came Tumbling Down, Chapter 5.
Wolchik and Curry, reread sections of Introduction and chapter for your country that deal with the end of communism

2/28: 14. The Collapse of Communism continued: Film, 50 Hours that Changed the World

3/5: 15. Midterm

3/7: 16. Disintegration and War in Yugoslavia
What factors contributed to the violent break-up of Yugoslavia? Do "ancient hatreds" or elite choices best explain the wars in former Yugoslavia? What role did international actors play?

Assigned Readings
Stokes, From Stalinism to Pluralism, pp. 273-288
Stokes, The Walls Came Tumbling Down, chapter 7.
Wolchik and Curry, chapter on Yugoslavia and its Successors


IV. POST-COMMUNIST POLITICS AND POLICIES

3/21: 18. Transitions to Democracy
How have analysts tried to explain the transition from Communist rule? How applicable are the experiences of other countries in transition from authoritarian rule? What tasks have post-Communist leaders faced? How successful have they been in creating market economies and functioning political democracies? Assignment of teams for in-class exercise on political elites

Assigned Readings:
Rothschild and Wingfield, Chapter 8.
Wolchik and Curry, Bunce Chapter.

3/26: **19. Elections and Civil Society**

To what extent have elections been free and fair? Do free and fair elections guarantee democracy? How important is civil society? To what extent do NGOs and voluntary associations serve as a check on the government? How do we explain the so-called “electoral revolutions” in the post-communist world?

Assigned Readings:

3/28: **20. Electoral Revolutions**: Film: Bringing Down a Dictator

4/2: **21. Political Values and Attitudes**

How do citizens view their political leaders and political institutions? What political roles do they see for themselves? To what extent has a democratic political culture emerged?

Assigned Readings:
Wolchik and Curry, sections of chapter on your country that deal with political values and attitudes

4/4: **22. Political Elites**: *In-class exercise*

What steps did post-Communist leaders take to reestablish the rule of law? Who rules in post-Communist states?

Assigned Readings:
Wolchik and Curry, sections of your country’s chapter that deal with institutions and political elites

**In-class exercise:** You will work in teams to gather information on political leaders in an
assigned country. We will devise a handbook for aspiring political leaders in Central and Eastern Europe after a brief presentation from each team. Bring your materials and 1 page analysis of the elite or part of the elite you are responsible for to class.

What impact has the shift to the market had on social structure? What unintended social consequences have resulted from the end of tight political control, economic change, and the opening of borders? Why have ethnic issues proved to be so salient in the postcommunist era?

Assigned Readings:
Wolchik and Curry, Csergo chapter.

4/11: 24. Journal reporting

4/16: 25. Back to the Market
Who are the winners and who are the losers in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989? What strategies have political leaders used to recreate the market after 1989?

Assigned Readings:
Wolchik and Curry, Fisher chapter

4/18: 26. Gender Issues
How has the transition from Communist rule affected women? How have women responded to the new problems they face?

Assigned Readings
Jane S. Jaquette and Sharon Wolchik, eds., Women and Democracy: Latin American and Central and Eastern Europe, any chapter on Central and Eastern Europe.
Wolchik and Curry, Rueschemeyer chapter.
4/23: 27. The International Context: EU, NATO and the US
How successful have efforts to join Euro-Atlantic institutions been? What role have international actors played in the transition?

Assigned Readings:
Wolchik and Curry, Linden and Simon chapters

4/25: 28: Prospects and Conclusions
To what extent have leaders in Central and East Europe succeeded in creating consolidated democracies? What does the future hold for Central and East European states? To what extent did early predictions about the possibilities for democracy in the region after the end of Communism prove to be correct? To what extent are these states property seen as “Postcommunist” or “normal, boring European countries?”

Assigned Readings:
Wolchik and Curry, Conclusion

TAKE HOME FINAL: DUE LAST DAY OF CLASS