

# **PSC 32-304-01: Politics of East Central Europe**

**T/Th 1-2:15pm CT, Ring Central**

**Spring 2021**

Dr. Katharine Aha

Office hours: Wednesdays, 9-12pm CT (RingCentral, sign up through link on Moodle required);  
and by appointment

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## **Course Description**

This course is designed to present an overview of the politics of East Central Europe from the early 20th century to the present day. First, we will discuss the creation of independent states from large empires, and the impact of World Wars I and II. Second, we will examine the over forty years of communist rule, and its breakdown in 1989. Third, we will discuss the transition to democracy, accession to the European Union, and current challenges to liberal democracy. As we move throughout the course, we will maintain a comparative approach in order to understand and analyze varying political outcomes in the region

## **Aims and Outcomes**

The goals of this course are to both increase your knowledge of the politics of East Central Europe and to practice analyzing political outcomes through a comparative approach. By the end of this course, you will have learned the historical context of the region necessary for understanding past and current events, be able to draw parallels between historical and contemporary political events, and have practiced analyzing actions taken by political actors. In addition, you will have a better understanding of different political ideologies, and will have applied what you have learned to a specific case. While the focus of the course is on one region, you will be able to use the approaches and concepts learned in the class to better understand politics around the world.

## **Course Materials**

**Required books (All books may be purchased through the SU bookstore. *Return to Diversity and Europe Undivided* are available as ebooks through the SU library.)**

Rothschild, Joseph, and Nancy M. Wingfield. 2008. *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War II*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kovaly, Heda Margolius. 1986. *Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague 1941-1968*. New York: Penguin Books.

Stokes, Gale. 1996. *From Stalinism to Pluralism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vachudova, Milada Anna. 2005. *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage and Integration After Communism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Turabian, Kate L. 2018. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, & Dissertations*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

Optional: Simons, Thomas W. 1993. *Eastern Europe in the Postwar World*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: St. Martin's Press.

### **Additional materials**

All other course materials are available through Moodle.

## **Class Format**

This class will be taught online, with synchronous class meetings in RingCentral. For each unit, a detailed plan is posted on Moodle.

At the beginning of the semester, each student will be assigned one of the countries that we will be focusing on. At times, you will focus on readings and other materials that pertain to your specific country. Additionally, your blog post/presentation and papers will focus on your country, as will some of your discussion board posts. Through this structure, we will have a set of “experts” on each country, allowing for a more collaborative learning environment as you share what you have learned with your classmates.

## **Course Grade Components**

### **Discussion board posts: 25%**

Throughout the course of the semester, you will be required to respond to discussion board questions that ask you to reflect on course materials/topics. Your responses are due by the start of class on the day that they are due. Late posts will not be accepted. In all, there are 20 discussion questions throughout the semester.

### **Blog post and presentation: 15%**

During the first half of the semester, we will create a class blog that analyzes the politics of the region during the communist period. For each unit, a different group will be responsible for writing about and presenting country-specific material to the class. Each group will be comprised of students covering a different country (one student covering Poland, one covering Hungary, etc). During the course of the semester, you will write one post and give one presentation.

When it is your group's assigned unit, you will be responsible for writing a blog post (at least 500 words) on how the material for the week applies to your country. Blog posts are due by 11:59pm the night before class. Specific prompts will be provided. During class, each member of the group will individually present what they discussed in their blog post to the class. Each presentation is capped at 8 minutes.

Blog post/presentation due dates:

- Group 1: Feb 1(blog), Feb 2 (presentation)
- Group 2: Feb 8 (blog), Feb 9 (presentation)
- Group 3: Feb 22 (blog), Feb 23 (presentation)
- Group 4: March 1 (blog), March 2 (presentation)
- Group 5: March 8 (blog), March 9 (presentation)

Late blog posts/presentations will not be accepted.

### **Paper 1: 15%**

This paper will be due by the start of class on March 16<sup>th</sup>. The paper should be four to five pages, plus a works cited page. In the paper, you will discuss a challenge that you think your country will face in establishing liberal democracy after the fall of communism.

A late paper will receive a half letter grade deduction for each day it is submitted after the deadline.

### **Paper 2: 20%**

This paper will be due by the start of class on April 27<sup>th</sup>. The paper should be eight to ten pages, plus a works cited page. In the paper, you will assess how well your assigned country has established a component of liberal democracy. More information about the paper will be distributed later in the semester.

A late paper will receive a half letter grade deduction for each day it is submitted after the deadline.

### **Attendance and Participation: 25%**

I expect you to come to our class meetings prepared by having completed the assigned readings, videos, and any assignments. One of the goals of this class is to give you a safe environment in which to speak so that you can practice analyze political events and applying the theories we've learned to real-world events. In order to improve your verbal communication and analytical skills, I expect you to participate in all of our class activities and discussions. If you are uncomfortable with participating, please reach out to me at the beginning of the semester so that

we can discuss the best approach for successful completion of this course component. At the beginning of the semester, we will discuss as a class what we think are important components of a successful classroom environment in an online space.

In order to participate, you need to be in class. However, I understand that there are many uncertainties surrounding this semester. If you anticipate that you will be missing class for a prolonged period due to extenuating circumstances or illness, please communicate this with me as soon as possible.

## **Contribution to Interdisciplinary Programs**

This course contributes to the International Studies (Europe) major/minor and to the Race and Ethnicity Studies minor. For the RES program, the course counts as an allied course towards completion of the minor, and seeks to develop in students the ability to analyze ethnicity as a socially constructed category of difference and an understanding of the relationship of ethnicity to social, political, cultural, and economic processes.

## **Course Policies**

### **Citations**

The Department of Political Science has decided that students in every course will use the Chicago Style of citation. We will be using the author-date style, which is covered in Chapters 18 and 19 in Turabian's Chicago Manual (9<sup>th</sup> ed.) I will not accept blog posts or papers that are not cited, and incorrect citations will be penalized.

### **Cameras in RingCentral**

During our class meetings, your camera should be on. If you are unable to have your camera on for either personal or technical reasons, please email me prior to the start of the class session.

### **Recording Policy**

Advance, written permission is required in order to record class lectures, discussions or presentations. Violations of this policy may constitute copyright infringement in violation of federal or state law and violators may be subject to University disciplinary action. Permission to allow lecture recording is not a transfer of any copyrights rights in the recording or related course materials. Such recordings and materials may be used only for individual or group study with other students enrolled in the same class, and may not be reproduced, transferred, distributed, or displayed in any public or commercial manner. Students must destroy recordings at the end of the semester in which they are enrolled in the class.

### **Honor Code**

It is expected that all work you do in this course will be original work. Please make sure you are familiar with the Honor Code and understand what constitutes a violation, particularly in regards to cheating and plagiarism. You can find more information about the Honor Code [here](#).

Questions about the honor code may be directed to Shelley Story, Dean of Students ([storys@southwestern.edu](mailto:storys@southwestern.edu)). All written work for this course must include the following pledge: "I have acted with honesty and integrity in producing this work and am unaware of anyone who has not."

## Grading

A+	97-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A	93-96	B	84-86	C	74-76	D	64-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-83	C-	70-73	D-	60-63

If you have questions about my comments on your assignments, I am happy to talk with you. If you want me to regrade something, you will need to write a few (at least 3) paragraphs responding specifically to my written comments and explaining why you feel you deserve a higher grade.

## Incompletes

Per the Faculty Handbook: The grade of "Incomplete" shall be given only in the case of a medical emergency or some other emergency situation beyond the student's control. The grade of "Incomplete" may not be given for the sole reason of permitting additional time to complete assigned course work. An Incomplete form, including the student's signature, must be submitted to the Center for Academic Success and Records. If a student is unable to provide a signature (due to a medical emergency, for example), then acknowledgement from the CASAR will suffice. The deadline for posting a final grade following an Incomplete will be 4 weeks from the last day of class. If the Incomplete has not been replaced with a final grade by 5 pm on the last day to resolve the Incomplete, the grade becomes an F. Students may seek an extension to the deadline for posting a final grade, if approved by the instructor and the Director of Records.

## Paideia

Southwestern takes an interdisciplinary approach to education and encourages students to make connections across courses throughout your time at the university. I encourage you to raise connections to other classes in our discussions as we move forward through the semester.

## Accessibility and Accommodations

Southwestern University will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should contact [Services for Students with Disabilities](#) to determine their eligibility to receive accommodations. If you have accommodations, please contact me at the

beginning of the semester so we can set up a time to meet and discuss your accommodations as they pertain to this course.

### **Religious Holidays**

Southwestern University recognizes that it has students from a variety of religious and cultural traditions that have special days of observance or celebration that may take students out of their regular activities on certain days during the school year. Since the academic calendar does not always coincide with these days, the following policy is to be followed in order to facilitate student absences due to cultural and religious observances.

- As far in advance as possible, the student is expected to notify the professor(s) or instructor(s) of the class(es) to be missed.
- The student is expected to learn what assignments or exams are due or will be assigned on those dates and negotiate with the professor(s) or instructor(s) alternate times for fulfilling those requirements. Students should be prepared to fulfill the requirements prior to the class(es) to be missed.

### **Course Credits and Expected Student Workload**

Courses in the curriculum of the University are expressed in terms of credits. For courses that have a minimum class time of 150 minutes per week, students should expect to work outside of class a minimum of 2 and 1/2 hours per credit per week. For courses that have a minimum class time of 200 minutes per week, students should expect to work outside of class a minimum of 2 hours per credit per week. Class time and out-of-class work for courses yielding fewer than four credits will be expressed as some proportion of a four-credit course.

### **Questions**

If you have questions about the course, please schedule a time to meet during office hours. Please do communicate with me early if you have any challenges that impact your performance in this course; I will not be able to help you if you do not ask for help.

## **Course Schedule**

**\*Note: This schedule provides a general overview of the material for each unit. Please consult Moodle for details.**

### **Unit 1 (Jan 19 & 21): Introduction & The Interwar Period**

#### **Read**

- Thomas W. Simons, *Eastern Europe in the Postwar World*, Chapters 1 & 2

#### **Complete**

- Join class blog (by 1/21)
- Submit country/group preferences (1/21)

## **Unit 2 (Jan 26 & 28 & Feb 2): WWII**

- **Read**
  - Selection from Rothschild and Wingfield, *Return to Diversity*, Chapter 2
  - Selection from Stokes, *From Stalinism to Pluralism*, The Stalinist Moment
  - Selection from Kovaly, *Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague 1941-1968*
- **Watch**
  - CNN Cold War documentary, Episode 1
  - Selection from The Fallen of WWII
- **Complete**
  - Discussion question 1 (by 1/26)
  - Discussion question 2 (by 1/28)
  - Discussion question 3 (by 1/28)
  - Blog post (Group 1 ONLY) (by 2/1)
  - Presentation (Group 1 ONLY) (2/2)

## **Unit 3 (Feb 4 & 9 & 11): The Communists Rise to Power & Stalinism**

- **Read**
  - Selection from Rothschild and Wingfield, *Return to Diversity*, Chapters 3 and 4
  - Selection from Stokes, *From Stalinism to Pluralism*, The Stalinist Moment
  - Selection from Kovaly, *Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague 1941-1968*
- **Watch**
  - Selection from CNN Cold War documentary, episodes 2, 3, and 6
- **Complete**
  - Discussion question 1 (by 2/4)
  - Blog post (Group 2 ONLY) (by 2/8)
  - Presentation (Group 2 ONLY) (2/9)
  - Discussion question 2 (by 2/11)

## **Unit 4 (Feb 18 & 23): The Revenge of the Repressed**

- **Read**
  - Selection from Rothschild and Wingfield, *Return to Diversity*, Chapter 5
  - Selection from Stokes, *From Stalinism to Pluralism*, The Marxist Critique
  - Selection from Kovaly, *Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague 1941-1968*
- **Watch**
  - Selection from CNN Cold War documentary, episodes 7 and 14
- **Complete**
  - Discussion question 1 (by 2/18)
  - Discussion question 2 (by 2/18)
  - Blog post (Group 3 ONLY) (by 2/22)

- Presentation (Group 3 ONLY) (2/23)

## **Unit 5 (Feb 25 & March 2): A Precarious Stalemate**

### **Read**

- Selection from Rothschild and Wingfield, *Return to Diversity*, Chapter 6
- Selection from Stokes, *From Stalinism to Pluralism*, Antipolitics and the Retreat to Ethics, The Return of Politics, and After the Fall
- Anthony Lewis, “As if We Were Free,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 2, 1986.

### **Watch**

- Selection from CNN Cold War documentary, Episode 19 (Freeze)

### **Complete**

- Discussion question 1 (by 2/25)
- Discussion question 2 (by 2/25)
- Blog post (Group 4 ONLY) (by 3/1)
- Presentation (Group 4 ONLY) (3/2)

## **Unit 6 (March 4 & 9): The Revolutions of 1989**

### **Read**

- Selection from Rothschild and Wingfield, *Return to Diversity*, Chapter 7
- Selections from Stokes, *From Stalinism to Pluralism*, The Return to Politics
- Agata Pyzik, “Why Soviet Monuments Should Be Protected,” *The Guardian*, September 29, 2014.

### **Watch**

- Selection from CNN Cold War documentary, Episodes 23 and 24

### **Complete**

- Discussion question 1 (by 3/4)
- Discussion question 2 (by 3/4)
- Blog post (Group 5 ONLY) (by 3/8)
- Presentation (Group 5 ONLY) (3/9)

## **Unit 7 (March 11 & 16 & 18): German Reunification**

### **Complete**

- Paper 1 (by 3/16)

## **Unit 8 (March 23 & 25): Democratic Transition**

### **Read**

- Selection from Vachudova, *Europe Undivided*, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2
- Selection from Rothschild and Wingfield, *Return to Diversity*, Chapter 8



- **Complete**

- Discussion question 1 (by 3/23)
- Discussion question 2 (by 3/25)

## **Unit 9 (March 30 & April 1 & 6): EU Accession**

- **Read**

- Selection from Vachudova. *Europe Undivided*, Chapters 3, 5, 6, and 7
- Selection from the Agenda 2000 - Commission Opinions
- Selection of articles on current EU candidate states
- Selam Gebrekidan, Matt Apuzzo, and Benjamin Novak, “The Money Farmers: How Oligarchs and Populists Milk the E.U. for Millions,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 3, 2019.

- **Watch**

- Carnegie Europe, “Central Europe | Article 7: The Cases of Hungary and Poland” with Stefan Lahne

- **Complete**

- Discussion question 1 (by 4/1)
- Discussion question 2 (by 4/6)
- Discussion question 3 (by 4/6)

## **Unit 10 (April 8 & 13): Political Competition in CEE’s New Democracies**

- **Read**

- Besir Ceka. “The Perils of Political Competition: Explaining Participation and Trust in Political Parties in Europe.” *Comparative Political Studies* (2012).

- **Complete**

- Unit 10 discussion question 1 (by 4/13)
- Unit 10 discussion question 2 (by 4/13)

## **Unit 11 (April 15 & 20): The Political Mobilization of Ethnic Minorities + Revenge of the Radical Right**

- **Read**

- Johanna Kristin Binir, *Ethnicity and Electoral Politics*, Chapter 2 (2007)
- Katharine Aha. “Resilient Incumbents: Ethnic Minority Parties and Voter Accountability.” *Party Politics* (2019).
- Lenka Bustikova. “Revenge of the Radical Right.” *Comparative Political Studies* (2014).
- Volha Charnysh. “Historical Legacies of Interethnic Competition: Anti-Semitism and the EU Referendum in Poland.” *Comparative Political Studies* (2015).

- **Complete**

- Discussion question 1 (by 4/15)
- Discussion question 2 (by 4/20)

**Unit 12 (April 27): The Future of Democracy in East Central Europe**

- **Read**

- Licia Cianetti and Séan Hanley, “We must go beyond the ‘backsliding paradigm’ to understand what’s happening to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe,” *LSE blog*
- Lenka Bustikova and Petra Guasti, “The Illiberal Turn or Swerve in Central Europe?” *Politics and Governance* (2017).

- **Complete**

- Paper 2 (by 4/27)