

Post-Communist Politics

Instructor Contact Information

Instructor: Eric Hines

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Course Information

Course Number: PSCI 321

Class Location: LA 337

Meeting Time: 1:10PM-2:00PM

CRN (Add/Drop): 34537

Course Description and Prerequisites

The purpose of this course is to analyze the long-term prospects for democratization and democratic consolidation in postcommunist states with a focus on Central and Eastern Europe including Russia. The course presents the case that the remarkable divergence in the political and economic development of the 29 postcommunist states is the result of differences in the social and economic legacy of the communism, pre-communist economic development, how communism ended, and different institutional arrangements and developments. To support this claim, the course will show that:

- Despite efforts to homogenize the theory of Communism in different states, the practice of communism still differed because of numerous theoretical variations.
- The dual political system in communist states where the Communist party and the state held overlapping responsibility affected the capacity of postcommunist states.
- Communist-era social policy and its transformation of the structure of society continue to influence support for the state and democracy in postcommunist states.
- Democratization in postcommunist countries came in two distinct waves, leading to highly divergent outcomes in the success of democratic transitions.
- Transforming the economies of postcommunist states was the most complicated aspect of the transition from communism and the source of the greatest variation.
- Democratization in postcommunist countries came in two distinct waves, leading to highly divergent outcomes in the success of democratic transitions.
- The institutional structures and practices postcommunist countries have converged towards one of two equilibria — a democratic one and an authoritarian one.

- Politics in postcommunist states is visibly different than politics in Western states, especially in the role political parties and civil society play in politics.

Prerequisites and Required Skills

To enroll, students must have junior or senior standing. There are no prerequisite courses or knowledge required, but completion of PSCI 220 and a knowledge of comparative government is recommended.

PSCI 400

This course can be used for the one-credit PSCI 400 upper-division writing class requirement. Students co-enrolled must revise and resubmit their final paper based on suggestions for revision from the instructor.

Required Materials

There are three required books for sale at the UC bookstore or online:

Holmes, Leslie. 2009. *Communism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780199551545.

White, Stephan. Richard Sakwa, and Henry E. Hale. 2014. *Developments in Russian Politics 8*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. ISBN: 9780822358121.

White, Stephen, Judy Batt, and Paul G. Lewis. 2013. *Developments in Central and East European Politics 5*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. ISBN: 9780822354826.

All other required materials are available on [Moodle](#).

Course Learning Outcomes and Assessments

| After completing this course, students will be able to: | | This will be assessed by: |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | Explain the competing values and interests that define the unique boundaries of post-communist politics. | Midterm/Debriefing Paper Classroom Preparation Assignments |
| 2 | Use theory to evaluate the status of postcommunist political institutions and explain institutional development. | Final Paper Classroom Preparation Assignments |
| 3 | Compare and contrast competing ideas about communism, democracy, capitalism, and related concepts. | Final Paper Classroom Preparation Assignments |
| 4 | Assess the role of historical patterns of economic and political development in post-communist states. | Midterm/Debriefing Paper Classroom Preparation Assignments |

Course Philosophy, Class Pedagogy, and learning objectives

Learning is more than memorizing facts and answering questions on a test. It is the process of enhancing your ability to use information to understand of how things work and how to make them better. This course will enhance your ability to:

- Ask the right questions
- Frame good problems.
- Acquire information.
- Evaluate sources of information.
- Critically investigate & solve problems.
- Make choices among alternatives.
- Explain abstract ideas to others.
- Generalize to new situations.

Pedagogy

The structure of this course is influenced by a taxonomy of cognitive skills developed by Benjamin Bloom. He identified six steps to the learning process students must complete to master a subject and organized them into a pyramid (see figure below) to show how more complex skills developed on a foundation of simpler ones. In this course, students will focus on remembering and understanding concepts outside of class, while in-class time will be focused on the application of concepts.

Learning Objectives

Bloom translated his taxonomy into discrete and measurable actions called learning objectives, which are statements that start with an action (verb) associated with the intended cognitive skill and end with an object that describes the knowledge students are expected to acquire or construct. Learning objectives have been developed for each topic based in this course and are the basis for all instruction and assessment.

Student Responsibilities

This learning philosophy imposes upon students the responsibility to:

1. Review the learning objectives for each topic.
2. Complete all assigned readings and exercises before class.
3. Ask the professor for assistance if they difficulty with specific learning objectives.
4. Attend class regularly, but only when they are fully prepared to participate.
5. Complete all course assignments by their deadlines (Late work is not accepted).
6. Review all feedback from the instructor, including feedback posted online.
7. Ask for clarification if instructions or feedback are not fully understood.
8. Finish the class (University policy on incompletes will be strictly enforced).
9. Inform the instructor beforehand if they cannot fulfill these responsibilities.

CLASS POLICIES

Academic Misconduct

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, which is available for review online at:

<http://life.umt.edu/VPSA/name/StudentConductCode>.

Accessibility and Students with Disabilities

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction by supporting collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you have a disability that requires an accommodation, please present the instructor with a letter from [Disability Services for Students](#) (DSS), Lommasson Center 154 (243-2243), indicating the existence of a disability and suggested accommodations.

The instructor has attempted to make all course material accessible. If you find course material that has barriers to accessibility, please notify the instructor as soon as possible so the oversight can be corrected as quickly as possible.

Grading and Course Requirements

The grading system used in this course is distinguished from a traditional point-based grading system by the following principles:

1. Pass/fail grading: For all assignments, students earn either full credit or no credit depending on whether they meet specifications defined for each assignment.
2. Quests for Knowledge: Students select their own path to knowledge from a series of assignments bundled together in “Quests” to determine their final grade.
3. Tokens: Student can earn tokens by completing “side quests” that can be exchanged for a rewrite of the debriefing paper or to excuse a missing CPA.

Quests for Knowledge

There are three quests for knowledge whose completion will determine final grades:

- Class Preparation Assignments.** Most reading assignments are accompanied by an informal writing assignment consisting of 4-8 questions. The CPA questions serve as a guide to the readings and as a basis for class discussion. Students submit their CPAs as a hard copy at the start of class.
- Simulation and Debriefing Paper.** Students will engage in a simulation of the politics of regime change in the fictional country of Ruritania and write a combination debriefing paper and midterm covering communism’s historical legacy and the transition to postcommunism.

- Final Paper.** Using a theoretical framework developed in the course, you will write a 8-10 page paper that compares an aspect of the political system (e.g., executive, legislature, civil society, etc.) in at least four postcommunist states and provides an explanation for any observed variation.

Grading

For a student to get a particular course grade, they must meet or exceed the standard for each quest as outlined in the following table.

| Grade | CPAs | Simulation | Final Paper |
|-------|----------------|------------|-------------|
| A | Pass \geq 90 | Pass | Pass |
| B | Pass \geq 80 | Pass | Pass |
| C | Pass \geq 70 | Pass | No Pass |
| D | Pass \geq 60 | Pass | No Pass |
| F | Pass < 60 | No Pass | No Pass |

Approximate Course Schedule

The subfield of postcommunist politics is very fluid. In order to respond to real world and scholarly developments and student interest, I reserve the right to make changes to this course schedule. Any changes will be posted to Moodle and distributed to students via email. The textbooks are marked by a word from their title. Additional materials marked with an (M) are available on Moodle.

| Date | Topic | Assignment |
|------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1/25 | Introduction; Distribution of Syllabus | |
| 1/27 | Puzzle: The Quality of Post-Communist Democracy | Central, Ch. 14 |
| 1/29 | Framework: Communism | Holmes, Chapter 1 |
| 2/1 | Framework: Postcommunism | Holmes (1997); Clark (2002) - (M) |
| 2/3 | Framework: Democracy | Dahl (1998) - (M) |
| 2/5 | Framework: Democratization | Welzel (2008) - (M) |
| 2/8 | Historical Legacy: A Brief History of Communism | Holmes, Chapter 2 |
| 2/10 | Historical Legacy: The Communist Political System | Holmes, Chapter 3 |
| 2/12 | Historical Legacy: The Communist Economic System | Holmes, Chapter 4 |
| 2/15 | NO CLASS- PRESIDENT'S DAY | |
| 2/17 | Historical Legacy: Communist Social Policy | Holmes, Chapter 5 |
| 2/19 | Historical Legacy: International Communism | Holmes, Chapter 6 |
| 2/22 | Democratic Transition, Part I | Return, Ch. 7, pgs. 181-195 |
| 2/24 | Democratic Transition, Part II | Return, Ch. 7, pgs. 195-209 |
| 2/26 | Special Focus: The End of the Soviet Union | Sakwa, Ch. 2 - (M) |
| 2/29 | Economic Transition | Central, Ch. 12; Russian, Ch. 11 |
| 3/2 | Outcomes: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland | Central, Chapters 1-2 |

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| 3/4 | Outcomes: Western Balkans and the East | Central, Chapters 3-4 |
| 3/7 | Outcomes: Russia | Russian, Chapter 1 |
| 3/9 | Special Focus: The Role of the EU | Central, Ch. 5 |
| 3/11 | Special Focus: Hungary | Readings TBD - (M) |
| 3/14 | <i>Ruritania Simulation</i> | |
| 3/16 | <i>Ruritania Simulation</i> | |
| 3/18 | <i>Ruritania Simulation</i> | |
| 3/21 | Political Culture | Schöpflin (1990) - (M) |
| 3/23 | Postcommunist Public Opinion | Rose (2009), Chs. 2, 11, 16 & 17 - (M) |
| 3/25 | Civil Society: Central and Eastern Europe | Central, Ch. 11 Midterm/Debriefing Paper Due (M) |
| 3/28 | Civil Society: Russia | Russian, Ch. 7 |
| 3/30 | Institutions: Executives I | Central, Ch. 7 |
| 4/1 | Institutions: Executives II | Russian, Ch. 2 |
| No Class — Spring Break | | |
| 4/11 | Institutions: Parliaments | Central, Ch. 9, Russian, Ch. 3 |
| 4/13 | Institutions: Elections | Central, Ch. 8, Russian, Ch. 4 ad 6 |
| 4/15 | Institutions: Political Parties | Central, Ch. 10, Russian, Ch. 5 |
| 4/18 | Institutions: Judiciary | Smithey and Ishiyama (2002) - (M) |
| 4/20 | Institutions: Media | Russian, Ch. 8 |
| 4/22 | Institutions: Federalism | Russian, Ch. 10 |
| 4/25 | Special Focus: Russian Foreign Policy | Russian, Chs. 13-14 |
| 4/27 | Special Focus: Social Policy in Central Europe | Central, Ch. 13 |

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| 4/29 | Special Focus: Russian Social Policy | Russian, Ch. 12 |
| 4/24 | Special Focus: Central Asia | TBD |
| 5/2 | Communism Today | “Marx after communism” “Communism and Capitalism Are Mixing in Laos” “Cuba after Communism” |
| 5/4 | China After Marx | “The Chinese Communist Party” “How long can the Communist party survive in China?” |
| 5/6 | The Rise of the BRICS | “5 Lessons From the Rise of the BRICs” Final Paper Due @ 11:55 pm (M) |
| 5/13 | | Final Exam Due @ 11:55 pm (M) |