

# POLI 331: Politics in East Central Europe

POLI 331  
Winter 2020

Tue/Thu 10:05-11:25  
Arts West 215

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## Course description

30 years after the collapse of communism, the Central European countries, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Romania have completed their “return to Europe” by joining the European Union and NATO. The other Balkan countries (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Kosovo) are heading along the same trajectory, albeit at different paces. In this course, we will explore the unprecedented “triple transition” in national identities, political institutions, and economic systems that resulted from the breakdown of the Communist regimes in the Soviet Bloc. Some of the questions which this course will address include: Why did Communism collapse? What was the most effective way to transition from a command to a market economy? Why did inter-ethnic strife accompany the breakdown of Yugoslavia, but not Czechoslovakia? Have the transition and consolidation of democratic regimes in the region been completed? Did the EU play a decisive role in the consolidation of democracy in East Central Europe and the Balkans? Are Central European democracies backsliding into authoritarianism? The course will combine due attention to the milestones of post-communist trajectories in Eastern Europe and the Balkans and a survey of *theoretical* attempts to explain various facets of the “triple transition.”

## Course requirements

Students will be evaluated on the basis of four measures:

- Discussion participation (15%)
- Map & facts quiz (15%)
- In-class midterm (30%)
- Final (40%)

### *Map and facts quiz*

The quiz will be held in class on **February 6<sup>th</sup>**. It is worth 15% of your grade. Some tips on how to prepare for the quiz:

- 1) Make sure you know which countries the following terms refer to: Soviet Bloc, COMECON, Warsaw Pact, Balkans, East-Central Europe, Visegrad countries, South-Eastern Europe, post-Communist EU members/candidates, post-Communist NATO members/candidates. Also make sure you know the entire list of independent states that emerged from the collapse of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Mistakes on these very easy and predictable questions will be graded harshly!

- 2) You have to be able to recognize the names of important figures that we have discussed. Don't worry, you will not have to learn to spell Leszek Balcerowicz, but you may need to answer who he was or what country's politics/economics he was active in. Of course, the readings mention more figures than one could possibly memorize. As a rule of thumb, focus on those figures who appear both in the readings and in lecture.
- 3) Memorize important dates and events. You may have to come up with the dates of a list of events, or order events according to the year they took place. Again, focus on those that are covered both in lecture and in the readings.

### *Conferences*

Conferences start during the third week of the semester. Participation in conference discussions will be the basis of your participation grade.

### *Midterm*

The midterm will be held in class on **March 12<sup>th</sup>**. The exam will be comprised of term IDs and/or a short essay question. You will be tested on the material covered in lecture and contained in the readings. The midterm is worth 30% of your grade.

### *Final*

The cumulative final will be held on a university selected date during exam period. It will include term IDs and a choice of essay questions. The essay questions will be theoretically-driven, so to best prepare for the exam, go over the major theories we have discussed in lecture and encountered in the readings. Of course, be prepared to back up your theoretical argument with some empirical facts as well. The final is worth 40% of your grade.

### **Grading scale**

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Range</i>
A	4.0	>3.85
A-	3.7	3.51-3.85
B+	3.3	3.16-3.50
B	3.0	2.86-3.15
B-	2.7	2.51-2.85
C+	2.3	2.16-2.50
C	2.0	1.86-2.15
D	1.0	1.0-1.85
F	0.0	<1.0

### **On Academic Integrity**

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity)).

### **Required readings**

All assigned articles are available through McGill Library's online resources. I have also included them in the course pack, which you can purchase from McGill Bookstore.

The following books are available at Paragraph Books, located at 2220 McGill College Avenue (corner of Sherbrooke Street):

1. Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and Destruction of Socialism and the State*, Cambridge UP, 1999 (this book is available as an e-book through the library, i.e. you can access it electronically for free)
2. Sabrina Ramet, ed. *Central and Southeast European Politics Since 1989*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.
3. Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague*.

### **Lecture Schedule**

#### **PART I: What was Communism and why did it collapse?**

##### **What was communism/socialism? (Jan 9, Jan 14):**

- Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next*, Princeton UP, 1996, pp. 19-38
- Andrew Janos, "What was communism: A retrospective in comparative analysis." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 29, no. 1 (1996), pp. 1-24.
- Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and Destruction of Socialism and the State*, Cambridge UP, 1999, 20-55
- Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Eastern Europe" *New York Review of Books*, Volume 31, Number 7, April 26, 1984 (posted on myCourses)

##### **Perestroika, 1989 and the collapse of communism in the Soviet Bloc? (Jan 16, Jan 21, Jan 23):**

- Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and Destruction of Socialism and the State*, Cambridge UP, 1999, 56-164
- Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague*.

#### **PART II: Post-Socialist Transitions**

**The “triple” transition (Jan 28)**

- Sabrina Ramet, pp. 3-25
- Jon Elster, Claus Offe, and Ulrich K. Preuss. *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies: Rebuilding the Ship at Sea*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 1-35
- Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Johns Hopkins UP, 1996, pp. 3-38
- Anna Grzymala-Busse and Pauline Jones Luong. "Reconceptualizing the state: lessons from post-communism." *Political Theory* 30.4 (2002): 529-554.

**Wars in Former Yugoslavia (Jan 30)**

- Sabrina Ramet, pp. 106-132

**Why did the Yugoslavs fight each other? (Feb 4)**

- David Lake and Donald Rothchild, “Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict”, *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Autumn 1996), pp. 41-75
- Fotini Christia, “Following the Money: Muslim vs. Muslim in Bosnia’s Civil War,” *Comparative Politics*, Volume 40, Number 4 (July 2008), pp. 461-480.

**February 6<sup>th</sup>, IN CLASS MAP & FACTS QUIZ**

**Economic reforms (Feb 11)**

- David Lipton and Jeffrey Sachs, “Creating a Market Economy in Eastern Europe: The Case of Poland,” *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 1990. Available [here](#).
- Juliet Johnson. *Priests of Prosperity: How Central Bankers Transformed the Postcommunist World*. Cornell University Press, 2016, pp. TBA

**Why did some countries reform their economies quicker/better than others? (Feb 13)**

- Ramet, pp. 79-105
- Steven Fish, "The determinants of economic reform in the post-communist world." *East European Politics and Societies* 12, no. 1 (1997): 31-78.

**What happened to the Communists? Transitional justice and lustration (Feb 18)**

- Monika Nalepa, *Skeletons in the Closet: Transitional Justice in Post-Communist Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 1-29
- Stephen Holmes, “The End of Decommunization,” *East European Constitutional Review* 31 (Summer/Fall 1994), pp. 33-36.

**What happened to the Communist parties? Party systems and voting (Feb 20)**

- Anna Grzymala-Busse, "The Programmatic Turnaround of Communist Successor Parties in East Central Europe," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Volume 35, Issue 1, March 2002, pp. 51-66
- Herbert Kitschelt, "Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies Theoretical Propositions," *Party Politics* Vol. 1 Issue 4 (1995), pp. 447-472.

**Democratization and legacies (Feb 25)**

- Keith Darden and Anna Grzymala-Busse, "The Great Divide: Precommunist Schooling and Postcommunist Trajectories," *World Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (October 2006), pp. 83-115.
- Grzegorz Ekiert and Daniel Ziblatt, "Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe One Hundred Years On," *East European Politics & Societies*, Vol 27, Iss. 1 (2013), pp. 90-107.

**Democratization and EU conditionality (Feb 27, Mar 10)**

- Milada Vachudova, "The Leverage of International Institutions on Democratizing States: Eastern Europe and the European Union", *EUI Working Paper*, 2001, available at: <http://cadmus.iue.it/dspace/handle/1814/1742>
- Ramet, pp. 539-562
- Anna Grzymala-Busse and Abby Innes, "Great expectations: The EU and domestic political competition in East Central Europe," *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2003), pp. 64-73.

**March 12<sup>th</sup>, IN CLASS MIDTERM**

**PART III: Current challenges**

**Democratic backsliding (Mar 17)**

- Béla Greskovits, "The Hollowing and Backsliding of Democracy in East Central Europe" *Global Policy*, Vol 6, Issue Supplement S1 (June 2015), pp. 28-37
- Nancy Bermeo, "On democratic backsliding." *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 1 (2016): 5-19.

**Attack on Courts (Mar 19)**

- Kim Scheppele, *First, Let's Pick All the Judges*, @Paul Krugman's NYT blog [here](#)
- Wojciech Sadurski, "How democracy dies (in Poland): A case study of anti-constitutional populist backsliding." *Revista Forumul Judecatorilor* (2018): 104.
- Kim Scheppele. 2013. "The Rule of law and the Frankenstate: Why Governance Checklists do not Work." *Governance* 26 (4): 559–562
- Ramet, pp. 135-164 and 221-248

### **Varieties of populism (Mar 24, Mar 26)**

- Vachudova, Milada Anna. "From Competition to Polarization in Central Europe: How Populists Change Party Systems and the European Union." *Polity* 51, no. 4 (2019): 689-706.
- Grzymala-Busse, Anna. "How Populists Rule: The Consequences for Democratic Governance." *Polity* 51, no. 4 (2019): 707-717.
- Mudde, Cas. "Eastern Europe's populists, racists, and extremists." *The Routledge Handbook of East European Politics* (2017).
- Stroschein, Sherrill. "Populism, Nationalism, and Party Politics." *Nationalities Papers* 47, no. 6 (2019): 923-935.
- Buřtíková, L. and Guasti, P., 2019. The State as a Firm: Understanding the Autocratic Roots of Technocratic Populism. *East European Politics and Societies*, 33(2), pp.302-330.
- Ramet, pp. 165-190 and 362-398

### **Anti-corruption (Mar 31, Apr 2)**

- Popova, Maria, and Vincent Post. "Prosecuting high-level corruption in Eastern Europe." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 51, no. 3 (2018): 231-244.
- Mungiu-Pippidi, Alina. "Romania's Italian-Style Anticorruption Populism." *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 3 (2018): 104-116.
- Brett, Daniel. "Romania's protests: a response to a three-pronged assault on anti-corruption measures." *LSE European Politics and Policy (EUROPP) Blog* (2017).
- Ramet, pp. 427-448, and 449-476

### **Civil and Political Rights (Apr 7)**

- Ramet, pp. 59-78
- Connor O'Dwyer, "Does the EU help or hinder gay-rights movements in post-communist Europe? The case of Poland." *East European Politics* 28.4 (2012): 332-352.
- Bajomi-Lázár, Péter. "The party colonisation of the media: The case of Hungary." *East European Politics and Societies* 27, no. 1 (2013): 69-89.
- Vermeersch, Peter. "The Plight of Eastern Europe's Roma." (2017): 225-236.

### **The post-Communist states and the future of the EU (Apr 9)**

- Rachel Epstein and Wade Jacoby, "Eastern Enlargement Ten Years On: Transcending the East–West Divide?" *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 52, no. 1 (2014), pp. 1-16
- Ramet, pp. 477-506 and 539-562

**CUMULATIVE FINAL to be held on a university-selected date.**