Political Science 949: Post-Communist Politics
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Spring 2016
Wednesdays, 1:20 pm - 3:15 pm, WHITE 7121
See Learn@UW for more course information

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Course Description
This course is an overview of the politics of post-communist states, primarily focusing on Eurasia. More than 25 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite regimes in Eastern Europe, the post-communist states have evolved into vastly different polities. Some are market-oriented democracies and have joined the European Union and NATO, while others still oscillate between semi-authoritarian and semi-democratic governance, and some are fully authoritarian. In this course, we will explore the political, social, and economic institutions and outcomes in this region with an eye towards understanding what makes post-communist states different from those that have not experienced communism. We will also consider to a lesser extent some of the states in East Asia that remain communist.

This course will be based on student-centered discussion. Reading is essential for full participation in discussions and students will be asked to explain concepts from the readings in class. In addition, students will research and write an original research paper, with shorter proposal assignments to structure the work of the final paper. Finally, students will make a formal presentation of their papers at the end of the semester.

Essential learning outcomes:
This course will address several “essential learning outcomes” of the LEAP initiative (http://www.aacu.org/leap/vision.cfm). Students’ knowledge of human cultures will be enhanced by their exploration of politics and society in post-communist countries. The course assignments are aimed at developing intellectual and practical skills, including analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication.

Summary of course requirements and grading (see details on pp. 8-10)
1. Reading, preparation, and participation in class (7.5% x 4 grades throughout semester): 30%
2. Initial research paper proposal 5%
3. Revised research paper proposal 10%
4. Final research paper 50%
5. Final research presentation 5%
Total: 100%
Class Schedule:

Week 1, January 20: Introduction to the course

Week 2, January 27: Communism and its Collapse
  o Chp. 1, "The Subject and Method," pp. 3-17.

Week 3, February 3: Historical Legacies and Historical Context of Transitions
Week 4, February 10: Remaking the State


Week 5, February 17: Institutions, Rules, and Corruption


Initial Research Proposal due, Feb. 17
Week 6, February 24: Authoritarianism


Week 7, March 2: Political Parties and Elections

**Week 8, March 9: Regime Stability and Revolutions**


**Week 9, March 16: Civil Society**


**March 23: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS**
Week 10, Mar. 30: Social Identities and Nationalism


Revised Research Proposal due, Mar. 30

Week 11, April 6: Law: Judicial Politics, Courts, and Transitional Justice

Week 12, April 13: Political Economy and Economic Reform


Week 13, April 20: Inequality and Social Welfare

Week 14, April 27: International Relations

Week 15, May 4: Discussion of Student Papers
• No assigned readings

Final Paper due Wednesday, May 11, 2016, at 12:00 pm, as a .pdf to Learn@UW

Course Requirement Details

1. Reading, Preparation, and Participation:
• This is a discussion-based class and active participation is essential. Mere attendance is not full participation. Active participation means being prepared by doing the reading and thinking about the material so that you can ask and answer questions related to the course material. All students are expected to do all readings for each class and to bring the readings to class in order to aid in discussion.
• I will call on a few students during each class meeting; you should be prepared to answer questions about each of the assigned readings.
• Students are expected to attend for the full class period; arriving late or leaving the room during class will result in a lowered participation grade.
• It is fine to use a tablet or laptop in class to take notes, but doing other work or online activity unrelated to the course during class will result in a lowered participation grade.
• Participation grades will be given 4 times during the semester, taking into account the previous 3-4 weeks of participation. The grading scheme for reading and discussion participation is:
  A = Attended and actively participated, seemed in command of readings and material; able to explain concepts to the class
  B = Attended and spoke, demonstrating adequate engagement with the readings, but infrequently or without full understanding of the course material
  C = Attended but did not speak, did not show evidence of having done the readings, was engaged in non-course-related activities online, arrived late, or left during class
  F = Did not attend
Final Research Paper
The research paper should be related to post-communist politics on a substantive topic of your choosing and should contain a research question with a causal argument and evidence. The paper must use some of the course readings, and be related to post-communist politics, but is otherwise open in terms of substantive topics.

• Due dates for parts of the research paper:
  • February 17th, 10:00 am, Initial Research Proposal, as a PDF on Learn@UW
  • March 30th, 10:00 am, Revised Research Proposal, as a PDF on Learn@UW
  • May 11th, 12:00 pm, Final Research Paper, as a PDF on Learn@UW

2. Initial research proposal (Feb 17th)
• Include a title that describes the paper, your name, and the following three numbered sections:
  1. Paragraph describing the research question (a question in the form of “what explains why X occurred”).
  2. Paragraph describing the kind or type of data or evidence you think you will be able to use to answer the question.
  3. Short discussion of methodology to be used in the paper.
  4. Short list of course readings to be used in the paper.
This proposal should be no longer than one single-spaced page, 12 pt. font, 1-inch margins.

3. Revised research proposal (March 30th)
• Include a title that describes the paper, your name, and the following four numbered sections:
  1. Revised version of the research question.
  2. Summary of the literature review motivating this question (i.e. how does this question fit into existing work and how will your answer contribute); include here the summary discussion of course readings that you are using.
  3. Description of the data sources or evidence that you are using to answer the question.
  4. Discussion of preliminary findings.
This proposal should be no longer than three single-spaced pages, 12 pt. font, 1-inch margins.

4. Final research paper
• The final paper is due May 11, 2016, at 12:00 pm as a .pdf to Learn@UW.
• Include the following sections:
  1. Title page with your name, date, and title
  2. Introduction, introducing the topic, research question, and a brief summary of findings (2-3 pp.)
  3. Theoretical section, situating the research question in existing literature (3-4 pp.)
  4. Empirical data section (12-14 pp.)
  5. Conclusion (3-4 pp.)
• The paper should be no longer than 10,000 words total (20-25 double-spaced pages), not including references or tables; please double-space, use at least 1-inch margins, and font not smaller than 12 points.
• Cite all your sources fully and properly; and proofread before turning in. Plagiarism or failure to cite sources properly will result in an F on the paper and in the course.
• Any paper extensions must be approved in advance; late papers will be marked down.
5. Final research presentation:
This is an opportunity for you to share your work from the semester with your fellow students.
• Presentations will be in class on May 4th.
• Presentation should consist of 5-10 slides including:
  1. Title slide
  2. Description of the topic and research question
  3. Description of engagement/review of existing literature.
  4. Empirical/data slide
  5. Conclusion slide
The total number of slides should not exceed 10. You may add to the 5 slides listed above, such as including images or other relevant visual design elements.

Other Course Information and Policies

Disability accommodations:
Students with disabilities will be fully included in this course. Please inform me if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments of this course to enable you to participate fully. Confidentiality of the shared information will be strictly maintained. Certain accommodations may require the assistance of the McBurney Disability Office on campus. The McBurney Disability Resource Center can be reached at (608) 263-2741 or via email at mcburney@odos.wisc.edu.

Readings:
• All readings that are not from the required textbook will be available on a course website.

Absence, Make-up and Final Grade Policy
1. Absences will be excused due to religious conflicts, medical issues, or university-related business. Contact me as soon as possible if you anticipate missing class.
2. Make-up policy for excused absences: Missed classes can be made up by writing a response paper on the readings. The response paper should be three single-spaced pages and discuss the readings, and is due one week after the missed class.
3. Missing more than 2 classes will result in a one-half reduction of the final grade if make-up assignments are completed. If they are not completed, it will be a full grade reduction.
4. Failure in any of the five course components on the first page will result in failure in the course overall.