IR 280: Communism and Democracy in Eastern Europe
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:25-4:40PM
Gavet Hall, 208
Instructor: Olesya Tkacheva
Office: Harkness Hall 101
Office Hours: Thursdays @ 1:00-2:00PM and by appointment
Phone: (585) 273-5847
E-mail: otkachev@umich.edu

Course Description:

Why did democratic consolidation succeed in some Eastern European countries while fail in others? How did initial conditions, political institutions, and international actors affect post-communist political development? How can we classify political systems that emerged in Eastern and Central Europe? Who were the winners and losers of this political and economic transformation? This course answers these question by comparing trajectories of Poland, considered by the West as a poster child of transition and potential leader of the EU reforms, and Russia that evolved from the Communist into an authoritarian regime. The course readings juxtapose theoretical arguments about democratic consolidation with the post-soviet development of these two countries.

Evaluation:

- Mid-term exam (October 12, 2010): 25%
- Final exam (December 19, 2010 @ 8:30AM): 30%
- A case-study paper and in-class presentation: 25%
  Students will be required to write and present a case-study paper (8-10 pages double-spaced). The paper should pick one of Eastern European countries and focus on either important political or economic challenges, by contrasting and comparing it to Russia and Poland. The goal of the paper is to develop policy recommendation based on relevant course readings. The preliminary version of the paper should be presented in class on one of the suggested below dates. A one page description of the country and the policy issue is due on September 24). An outline of the paper is due two weeks before the presentation. The paper is on the last of class, December 10, 2010.
- Motivated Questions and Attendance: 20%
  Students are expected to attend all classes. Missing more than two weeks of classes without a documented and valid reason will result in the failure to receive the grade. Students must submit weekly 2 discussion questions based about assigned readings of their choice. Discussion questions are due at least 5 hours before the class via e-mail.

A student cannot receive a grade for the course unless he/she completes all writing assignments.

Recommended Book(s):

All other readings are available through the Blackboard under “Course Materials.”

**Part I: Introduction**

**Week 1 (September 2): The Puzzle**

Suggested:


**Week 2 (September 7-9): Classifying Post-Soviet Regimes**


Suggested:


**Part II: Explaining Successes and Failures of Democratic Consolidation**

**Weeks 3-4: (September 14-24): Elites, Masses and Legacies**
A paper proposal is due on September 24

Juan Lintz and Alfred Stephan, Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, Southern America and Post-Communist Europe, Chapters 4, 16, 19.


**Weeks 5-(September 28-30) International Actors and Post-Communist Democratization**


**Week 6: (October 5-7) Case Studies**


Suggested:

“Poland’s way to UE” at http://www.poland.gov.pl/?document=458


Week 7: (October 12) Midterm Exam

Part III: Political Institutions and Democratic Consolidation

Weeks 7-8 (October 14-21): Presidential System and Democratic Consolidation


Suggested:


Week 9: (October 26-28): Electoral Systems and Representation

Arend Lijphart, Patterns of Democracy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), Chapter 1.


Week 10: (November 2-4): Institutionalization of Party Systems


Anna Grzymala-Busse, “Political Competition and the Politicization of the State,” *Comparative Political Studies* (December 2003).

Terry D. Clark and Jill N. Wittrock, Presidentialism and the Effect of Electoral Law in Post-Communist Systems Regime Type Matters, Comparative Political Studies 38 no. 2 March 2005 171-188.

Case Studies:


Suggested:

*Student Presentations*

**Part IV: Political Economy of Reforms**

Week 11 (November 9-11): Challenges to Economic Reforms


Case Studies:


OECD, Economic Survey of Poland 2010 (skim).

Weeks 12-13: (November 16-13) Privatization


Russia


Andrei Shleifer, Daniel Treisman, Without a Map: Political Tactics and Economic Reform in Russia (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), Chapter 1.


Poland

John Jackson et al., Political Economy of Poland’s Transition; New Firms and Reform Governments (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Chapters 2 and 6.


Student Presentations

November 25: No Class. Happy Thanksgiving!
**Week 14 (November 30-December 2): Liberalizing Markets**


**Student Presentations**

**Week 15 (December 7-10): Into the Future**

*Papers are due on December 10, 2010 in class.*

Steven Fish, *Democracy Derailed in Russia*, Chapter 8.


**Student Presentations**

**Final Exam: Sunday, December 19 @ 8:30AM**
Eurocommunism, also referred to as democratic communism or neocommunism, was a revisionist trend in the 1970s and 1980s within various Western European communist parties which said they had developed a theory and practice of social transformation more relevant for Western Europe. During the Cold War, they sought to undermine the influence of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It was especially prominent in Italy, Spain, and France. Life in many former-Communist countries is worse than 25 years ago, especially countries in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. They have many social problems, including huge corruption, nepotism, and fake democracy. We put this question to Tomáš Kostelecký, Director of the Institute of Sociology at the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. How would he respond to Hrvoje? So, most people prioritise free markets and democracy, but some other people believe that employment and social security are more important. Which is more important? That is an opinion, not a fact, and so it can be debated. Borislav Valkov February 3rd, 2015. It depends who you ask. The Communist government in Russia disintegrated due to economic pressures, the war in Afghanistan and revolt in Eastern Europe. Both Gorbachev and Reagan played major roles in ending the Cold War. Part of History. Opposition to Soviet policies was growing in other associated states of Eastern Europe. The majority of people were against Soviet interference and the presence of the Red Army in the Eastern Bloc. Poland. Solidarity leader Lech Walesa. Widespread anger and unrest hit Poland in the early 1980s. There were protests over food shortages and the price of consumer products. A trade union called Solidarity was established. 30 years after collapse of communism, Eastern Europe is losing its faith in Liberal Democracy. Robert Bridge. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the former Warsaw Pact countries hitched themselves to the star of liberal democracy in the hope of reaping all the freedoms and liberties that communism could not afford them. And make no mistake, many people did profit handsomely from the new political arrangements. Liberal Democracy and its discontents. Consider the public perception of democratic institutions. While the majority said they favored a liberal democratic system complete with elections and a multiparty system, just 40 percent said they were satisfied with how democracy works in their individual countries.