University of Florida

Postsocialist Realities: 
Eastern Europe and Russia after the Cold War

Spring 2018 EUS 3930 / ANT 3930

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Meets:  T 11:45 – 1:40 @ MAT 13
        R 12:50 – 1:40 @ MAT 13

Office hours @ 3345 TUR

Course Description

This course looks at the societies of Eastern Europe and Russia amid swift and
momentous social change. It has been over 20 years now since the “transition” from
socialism to capitalism begun yet the outcomes of the transformations unpacking in this
region are far from clear or complete. The course gives us an opportunity to revisit some
of the major political and social developments in the world during and after the Cold
War, and raise principal questions about capitalism, development, modernity and our
“common global future”.

We will address the field of *postsocialist studies* from an anthropological perspective. It means we concentrate on exploring the daily lives of people, and how they have struggled to redefine their experiences since the 1990s in light of the new democratic institutions and the new logic of economic and social life shaped under capitalist realities. We will focus on the contradictions, paradoxes and ambiguities of *postsocialism* by looking closely at emerging forms of *nationalism, gender relations, language use, production and consumption, identification with place, and new assumptions about identity, memory, personhood and nation*.

We ask, why so many Eastern Europeans today are increasingly distrustful of politics, capitalism and globalization more broadly? Why are they feeling increasingly nostalgic for a period that has been described as one the worst “totalitarian experiments” in Europe? Is the attempt of bringing Eastern Europe within the orbit of *democracy* and *market economy* a unique “post-socialist” experience; or is it part of a broader reorganization of the world in which developments in Eastern Europe relate to experiences elsewhere?

The materials for this course draw on recent ethnographic writing on the topic, historical accounts, as well film and fiction writing. These interdisciplinary sources aim to provide a more balanced picture of the various responses – academic, journalistic as well as artistic – to postsocialism.

**At the end of the course, students should be acquainted with**

- academic and public debates about the postsocialist/transitioning states in Europe
- nuanced knowledge (historical and socio-political) of some particular countries in the region
- theoretical and ethical perspectives on social change, globalization, human rights concerns, social movements, and the ethics and analytics of everyday life

**Course Format**

The course will consist of lectures, discussions and in-class activities, including student presentations and screenings of films and documentaries. The instructor will deliver lectures geared toward providing (historically, politically, and theoretically) contextualizing information that supplements readings. The purpose of lectures will be to review the major conceptual points of each new topic and to integrate the material students are reading or viewing.

You are expected to attend each class and to have completed assigned readings – ahead of the meeting, so that we can use class meetings to discuss points of particular interest or difficulty and to move beyond the information presented in the texts. There also will be screenings of films and some documentaries, aimed at “visualizing” some of the main debates and representations of Eastern Europe today. Screenings are announced in advance and will be shown during the 2-hour time slots of the class. The visual material is an essential part of course and students are required to attend screenings.
Course Requirements and Grading
Materials for this class will be generally available in electronic format via E-learning.

Articles from academic journals are accessible through the UF electronic database on the UF library web page. Students are expected to retrieve these articles themselves. Should you need help using the web page, please consult a librarian.

Some of the pieces might be also available through a general google search on the internet.

Your final grade has three components: a discussion participation grade (10 %); an in-class presentation (30 %); 4 short quizzes (20 %); one reaction paper (40%).

Alternatively, you may choose to write a research paper on topic of your choice (60%).

The course is designed so as to help students to formulate and express their own ideas on the themes taken up.

Therefore, discussion is an integral component of the course, and 10% of the grade will be based on participation in class discussions.

Students will also be expected to give in-class presentations, which fulfills another 30% of their final grade. The in-class presentation is a summary of an assigned article from the weekly class readings (about. 10-15 min). To facilitate a discussion on the reading the student presenting + 3 other students will be responsible to frame questions on the presented material.

There will be 4 unannounced quizzes (5 questions each), based on course readings and class discussion and lectures. The format will be a combination of short answer, multiple choice or fill in the blank questions. These will not be difficult, but they are intended to test whether you have done the readings, paid attention, and are prepared for class. Together these will constitute 30% of your grade.

The remaining 40% of the class grade will be based on the preparation of one short reaction papers (3-4 pages, font 12, double-spaced) responding to class material, typed up and turned in, as scheduled in the syllabus. The reaction paper address at least 3 readings (articles or chapters from books as listed in the syllabus).

Alternatively, students may also choose to work on a research project of their own. Please consult the topic with the instructor prior to the deadline for the first assignment, when you will have to submit a preliminary outline and a short bibliography.

Grading scale: A (90-100), A- (87-89), B+ (84-86), B (80- 83), B- (77-79), C+ (74-76), C (70-73), C- (67-69), D+ (64-66), D (60-63), D- (57-59), E (<57).
Academic Integrity
Academic honesty is not only an ethical issue but also the foundation of scholarship. Cheating and plagiarism are therefore serious breaches of academic integrity. Documented plagiarism of a paper will be given a “D” in instances of one or two sentences, and an “F” in more severe cases, and no revision will be allowed in either instance.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities
Please refer to the Disability Resource Center @ http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/: 0020 Reid Hall Phone: (352) 392-8565

Getting help with writing
The UF Writing Studio is committed to helping University of Florida students and faculty meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers @ http://writing.ufl.edu/programs/first-year-writing/

UF Counseling Services
Resources are available on-campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career and academic goals that interfere with their academic performance. These resources include:
• University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling
• Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling
• Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual counseling
• Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

Syllabus Change Policy
This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

It is students’ responsibility to be aware of changes in the schedule of readings, which will be announced in class as well as on E-Learning.
READING ASSIGNMENTS AND COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 / Introduction: Postsocialist present

“Only love can save those who are infected with anger”. Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich speaks to director Staffan Julén about love, reality and writing @ http://www.eurozine.com/only-love-can-save-those-who-are-infected-with-anger/

Rupnik, Jacques 2017 Evolving or Revolving: central Europe since 1989 @http://www.eurozine.com/evolving-or-revolving-central-europe-since-1989/

Winder in Russia @ http://www.eurozine.com/winter-in-russia/

Week 2 / Ordering the Post-WWII World

The legacies of 1917 @ http://www.eurozine.com/the-legacies-of-1917/


Week 3 / What Was Socialism?


Film: “Goodbye Lenin”

Week 4 / Life During Socialism


Slavenka Draculić, 2015. “How we survived post-socialism and did not laugh”. In: Eurozine, 06–05

Yurchak, Alexei 2006. “Late Socialism” (chapter 1) in Everything was forever, Until it Was No More


**Week 5 / Socialism’s Collapse: Dreams of a Once and Future Nation**


**Week 6 / A “Transition” to What?**


**Week 7 / New and Old Elites, Subjects and Objects of Capitalism**


Wedel Janine CORRUPTION AND ORGANIZED CRIME IN POST-COMMUNIST STATES: NEW WAYS OF MANIFESTING OLD PATTERNS (e-learning)

Gessen M, 2008. Dead Soul In: *Fanity Fair*

**Week 8 / Reforming within and without – economics and social life**


Adrian Smith and Alison Stenning, 2006 “Beyond Household Economies: Articulations and Spaces of Economic Practice in Post-Socialism” In: *Progress in Human Geography*, Aprl
Week 9 / What happened to democracy?

Grzegorz Ekiert and Daniel Ziblatt, 2013 “Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe One Hundred Years On” In: East European Politics and Societies and Cultures Volume 27 Number 1


Week 10 / The Eros of Identities – the Balkans

Todorova M. 2010 Balkanism and Postcolonialism, or On the Beauty of the Airplane View From: “In Marx’s Shadow”

Ditchev, I “The Eros of Identity”

Kurtovic´ and Hromadzic 2017 “Cannibal states, empty bellies: Protest, history and political imagination in post-Dayton Bosnia”. In: Critique of Anthropology 0(0) 1–35

Week 11 / Material Life and Shifting Identities


Jennifer Patico 2009 “Spinning the Market The Moral Alchemy of Everyday Talk in Postsocialist Russia” In: Critique of Anthropology Vol 29(2) 205–224


O’NEILL 2014. “CAST ASIDE: Boredom, Downward Mobility, and Homelessness in Post-Communist Bucharest” In: Cultural Anthropoly

Week 12 / The Gender of Postsocialism


SARAH ASHWIN and TATYANA LYTKINA, 2004 “MEN IN CRISIS IN RUSSIA The Role of Domestic Marginalization” In: GENDER & SOCIETY, Vol. 18 No. 2, April 2004

**Week 13 / Ethnic Micropolitics: The Roma**

Anikó Imre1, 2015. “Love to Hate: National Celebrity and Racial Intimacy on Reality TV in the New Europe”. In: Television & New Media Vol. 16(2) 103–130


Michel WieviorkaA “The Development of Racism in Europe”. From: Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies, David Theo Goldberg and John Solomos (Eds) p. 460

**Week 14 / On Nostalgia, Populism and the new digitalized reality**

Todorova, Maria 2010 Introduction. From: From Utopia to Propaganda and Back. Berghalm Books


Krastev, 2017 “They the People” From: “After Europe” ch 2

Shekhovtsov 2017 “Conventional bedfellows: The Russian propaganda machine and the western far right” @ http://www.eurozine.com/conventional-bedfellows-the-russian-propaganda-machine-and-the-western-far-right/

**Reaction paper due!!!! (week 15)**

**Week 15 / The Coloniality of Reason**


Recommended Further Readings:


Dace Dzenovska, 2010. “Notes on Emptiness and the Importance of Maintaining Life” In Anthropology of East Europe Review

Serguei Alex. Oushakine, 2016 “Postcolonial Estrangements: Claiming a Space Between Stalin and Hitler”


The globalization of gender: Ally McBeal in post-socialist Slovenia European Journal of Cultural Studies May 2005 8: 239-255,


Bechev D, 2006 Constructing South-East Europe


See documentary on *Turbofolk* at https://vimeo.com/95907707
http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/bosnian-war-refugees/10116.html


Tulbure N, 2009 “Global Socialisms and Postsocialisms – Anthropology of East Europe Review. 27(2): pages 1-9