

Professor Vladimir Tismaneanu  
Government and Politics 459 C  
Tu, Th. 11-12:15  
Fall 2009

### **East European Politics: From Communism to Democracy**

*The course is organized along five major themes. The first theme, Communism in Eastern Europe, is primarily historical and deals with the major crises in post-World War II Eastern Europe: the communist takeovers and unbound Stalinism, the "New Course," the Hungarian revolution, the Prague Spring, the rise of Solidarity. It discusses the role of Marxist ideology as the principal form of legitimization for the communist regimes. The second theme addresses the decline of the communist power and the rise of civil societies in East and Central Europe. This part will discuss the failure of reforms from above and Mikhail Gorbachev's role as a catalyst for the East European revolutions. Special discussions will be focused on the concept of Central Europe and its political and intellectual significance for the development of oppositional movements in the region. It is impossible for a student of Eastern Europe to understand the direction of the current changes without referring to Vaclav Havel's path-breaking essay "The Power of the Powerless" and to such concepts as "new evolutionism," anti-politics, grassroots movements and "independent life of society." The third theme, the triumph of the powerless, focuses on the 1989 upheaval. The fourth theme deals with the challenges encountered by the new regimes in their efforts to establish pluralist institutions, the difficulties of de-communization, the new political and ideological cleavages between friends and foes of an open society, and the impact of Eastern Europe's accession to NATO and European Union. The fifth theme deals with the future of East and Central Europe and the rise of new political parties, the transition to market economy, and the new forms of nationalism, clericalism, and other authoritarian trends.*

#### Requirements

This class will take place in a seminar-like format. For the first four weeks, lectures presented by the professor will highlight the major themes of the course. Students are highly encouraged to participate in class discussion. Each student is expected to present in class a research paper dealing with course-related topics. Topics will be assigned by the teaching assistant trying to meet students' interests. The presentation should not be longer than 6 pages double-spaced (approx. 10 minutes per person) and should include bibliographic references. This presentation (short research paper) will amount to the mid-term exam (30 percent of final grade). The final in-class exam will count for other 40 percent, two quizzes for 20 percent, and class participation for 10 percent. As events unfold in the former communist countries, students will be required to read either *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* (or both) on a daily base. In addition, students are encouraged to read *The Economist*, *The New York Review of Books* and *The New Republic* (pieces dealing with changes in the former communist bloc).

#### Readings

## (Required)

1. Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel*, Free Press.
2. Slavenka Drakulic, *Café Europa*,
3. Adam Michnik, *Letters from Freedom*
4. Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation*
6. Padraic Kenney, *The Burdens of Freedom: Eastern Europe since 1989*

## (Recommended)

1. Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern*
2. Vaclav Havel, *Summer Meditations*
3. Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind*
4. Gale Stokes, *From Stalinism to Pluralism*

Syllabus

1. Political values, symbols, myths and traditions in East and Central Europe: nationalism and communism, authoritarianism and pluralism, populists and Westernizers, relations with Russia and the West. How many Europes? The legacy of Austria-Hungary and the nostalgia for the rule of law. Extreme left and extreme right movements in pre-communist Central Europe. Ethnocentrism and anti-Semitism. The resurgence of these traditions in contemporary East-Central Europe.

- Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics*, Chapters 1 and 2
- Stokes

2. The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: the role of ideology and the destruction of the elites; conformity, orthodoxy, regimentation. Titoism and Stalinism: the Yugoslav heresy.

- Tismaneanu, Chapter 3
- Stokes

3-4. Indoctrination, fanaticism and self-delusions. Ideological terrorism under mature Stalinism. The myth of salvation through the party. Political purges under Stalin: case studies (Kostov, Rajk, Gomulka, Patrascanu, Slansky). Class discussion on the meaning of “Ketman” in Czeslaw Milosz’s *The Captive Mind*

- Tismaneanu, *Reinventing*, Chapter 3 and 4
- Stokes
- Milosz

5-6. Khrushchev and de-Stalinization. The revolt of the mind: the revisionist search for humanist Marxism, the Hungarian revolution, the "long march against Yalta." Reforms under Soviet-style regimes: the "Prague Spring." The rise of Solidarity, the Martial Law and the collapse of Polish state socialism. Assessing the demise of the USSR (main causes: economic, political, cultural, including the role of ethno-national movements, the Baltic revolution)

- Tismaneanu, *Reinventing*, Chapter 6
- Michnik, *Letters from Freedom*
- Stokes

7. The rediscovery of politics: dissent and opposition in post-totalitarian regimes. The power of the powerless. Legitimization through inertia, obedience, and routine. Civic disobedience and protest in the GDR. Does Central Europe exist? Strategies of political and intellectual resistance. The refusal of Realpolitik and anti-Machiavellianism. Human rights and the rise of the parallel polis: civil society and the erosion of state socialism.

- Tismaneanu, *Reinventing*, Chapter 6 and 7
- Havel

8. The appeals of national Communism (Ceausescu, Tito, and "national paths" to socialism). Communism, post-communism and the resurgence of populist nationalism. Anti-Semitism, nationalism, and myth-making in East-Central Europe.

- Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics* (Romania, Albania)

9. From Kadarism the negotiated transition in Hungary. Post-communist political structures and pluralist developments in Hungary. Comparing de-Stalinization (Yugoslavia, Hungary) and de-Sovietization (Romania, Albania).

- Tismaneanu, Chapter 7

10. Individual and society in totalitarian regimes: irony and moral survival. The critical intellectuals and their role in the self-destruction of communist regimes. Dialectics of disenchantment and the rethinking of the concept of freedom. East European dissent and the struggle for autonomy and dignity.

- Drakulic
- Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics*, Chapter 5
- Michnik

11. The independent life of society and relations between critical intellectuals and social movements from below. The velvet revolution in Czechoslovakia. The velvet divorce. Intellectuals and politics in the Czech republic: Klaus and Havel.

- Tismaneanu

- Garton Ash, *Magic Lantern*

12. Communist bureaucracies and their afterlife. Paradoxes of de-communization in East and Central Europe. The role of religious institutions (especially the Catholic Church in Poland). The legacy of Solidarity and the resurgence of Polish post-communist Left. Solidarity's revival in 1996-97 and the uses of populism: Peronismo as Eastern Europe's future? The Leninist legacies in East-Central Europe: memories of victimhood, persecution, harassment. Why did people collaborate with communist secret police?

FILM PRESENTATION: "The Lives of the Others."

- Tismaneanu, *Reinventing*, Conclusion and Afterword; *Fantasies of Salvation*
- Drakulic, *Café Europa*
- Michnik
- Timothy Garton Ash, *The File*
- Padraic Kenney, *The Burdens of freedom*

12-13. The end of Yugoslavia and the Czecho-Slovak "velvet divorce. East-Central Europe between ethnocracy and democracy. Fantasies of salvation: Post-Communist political mythologies (de-communization, populism, radical nationalism, clericalism, cultural despair). Critical intellectuals and liberalism after communism. Class discussion of post-communist dilemmas: Adam Michnik's essay "Grey is Beautiful." Limits of radicalism, prospects for freedom, and the virtues of moderation.

- Slavenka Drakulic
- Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation*
- Michnik
- Padraic Kenney