Course Description

This course provides a survey of the politics of post-communist transition in Russia, Eastern Europe, and China. It begins with an overview of the origin and development of communism in the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe. The second part of the course examines and analyzes the profound political, economic, and social changes in former communist societies during the post-communist transition. Specifically, we will cover regime transition; institution-building; economic reforms; social transformation; as well as nationalism and ethnic conflicts. Finally, we will critically assess the prospects of, rather than merely assume the inevitability of, liberal capitalist democracy taking root in former communist countries.

The primary aims of the course are to familiarize students with the major challenges confronting former communist countries as they move away from socialism, and to provide students with not only the theoretical tools necessary for understanding the collapse of communism, but also the perspectives crucial to making well-grounded evaluations of the emerging political and socio-economic trajectories in these countries.

Course Requirements

This is a writing-intensive course. In-class participation, including class attendance, will count for 10% of the overall grade. There will be four take-home written assignments, each consisting of a 5-7 page paper responding to one pre-given question. The first two assignments will each count for 20% of the overall grade, and the next two will each count for 25%. For all the written assignments, your grades will be based on substance as well as on style. There will be no final exam for this course.

The written assignments are designed to develop your ability of critical thinking and to improve your writing skills. Although they do not require any additional research, they should be taken seriously. To write a good paper, you need a coherent argument supported by evidence provided by lecture notes and relevant readings. It is always a good idea to put together an outline before writing. These written assignments should be based on course materials. You are encouraged to consult with the instructor to improve your writing. Their due dates are marked on the syllabus. Late papers will be marked down. Extensions can only be granted for university-approved reasons.

Students are expected to meet all standards of academic integrity. Violation of academic integrity will not be tolerated. For relevant information, see http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html#integrity
Readings


The above books are available at the University Bookstore. The rest of the readings will be included in a course pack, available at Mary Jane Books on Western Avenue at Quail Street.

PART I: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

January 24: Introduction

- Course syllabus

January 29-31: Marxism and Leninism

- Richard Pipes, *Communism*, 1-51

February 5-7: Leninism in Russia

A. The Leninist-Stalinist Regime
   B. The Post-Stalinist Soviet Regime

- Richard Pipes, *Communism*, 55-87

February 12-14: Leninism in Eastern Europe and China

A. Leninism in Eastern Europe
   B. Leninism in China

- Richard Pipes, *Communism*, 117-144
- Stephen White et al., *Central and East European Politics*, 3-22
PART II: POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

(First assignment due on February 21)
February 21-26: The End of Leninism
A. The Collapse of Leninism in Eastern Europe
   • Stephen White et al., Developments in Central and East European Politics, 21-36

February 28: Discussion: Why did Leninism Collapse?

March 4-6: Building Democratic Institutions
A: Democracy Failure in Russia
B: Democracy-Building in Eastern Europe
   • Dale Herspring, Putin’s Russia, 13-73
   • Stephen White et al., Central and East European Politics, 127-192

PART III: ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

(Second assignment due on March 13)
March 11-13: Economic Reforms in Russia and Eastern Europe
A: Economic Reforms in Russia
B: Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe
   • Dale Herspring, Putin’s Russia, 127-169
   • Stephen White et al., Central and East European Politics, 245-263

March 18-20: Economic Reforms in Comparative Perspective
A: Economic Reforms in China
B: Discussion: Post-Communist Transition in Comparative Perspective I
   • Goldman and MacFarquhar, The Paradox of Post-Mao Reforms, 30-44

PART IV: SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

April 1-3: Post-Communist Social Transformation
A: Social Condition in Russia and Eastern Europe
B: Social Conditions in China
PART V: TRANSFORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

(Third assignment due on April 10)
April 8-10: National Identity in Russia and Eastern Europe
A: National Identity in Russia
B: National Identity in Eastern Europe


April 15-17: Post-Communist National Identity and Democratization
A: National Identity in China
B: National Identity and Democracy

• Cheng Chen, *Liberal Nationalism*, 95-133, 203-218

April 22-24: The International Dimension of Post-Communist Transition
A: The International Dimension of Political and Economic Transformation
B: Discussion: Post-Communist Transition in Comparative Perspective II

• Dale Herspring, *Putin’s Russia*, 195-217
• Stephen White et al., *Central and East European Politics*, 56-71, 110-126

PART VI: CONCLUSIONS: FROM THE PAST TO THE FUTURE

(Fourth assignment due on May 1)
April 29-May 1: Making Sense of Post-Communist Transition
A: Lessons of Post-Communist Transition
B: Transition and Its Dissenters

• Dale Herspring, *Putin’s Russia*, 219-224
• Stephen White et al., *Central and East European Politics*, 264-275
• Goldman and MacFarquhar, *The Paradox of China’s Post-Mao Reforms*, 333-360

May 6: Writing in Political Science