Political Science 552
Communist and Post-Communist Politics
State University of New York at Albany
Spring 2012

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Wednesday 12:00-3:00
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Course Description

This course provides a survey of the politics of post-Leninist transition in Russia, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and China. It begins with an overview of the origin and development of Leninism in the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe, stressing both the similarities and differences between these countries’ experiences under Leninism. The second part of the course examines and analyzes the profound political, economic, and social changes in former Leninist societies during the post-Leninist transition. Specifically, we will cover regime transition; institution-building; economic reforms; social transformation; as well as nationalism and ethnic conflicts. The course will conclude with a broad discussion of the comparative prospects of liberal capitalist democracy taking root in former Leninist countries. The primary aims of the course are to familiarize students with the major challenges confronting former Leninist countries as they move away from socialism, and to provide students with not only the theoretical tools necessary for understanding the collapse of Leninism, but also the perspectives crucial to making well-grounded evaluations of the emerging political and socio-economic trajectories in these countries.

Course Requirements

Your grade in this course will be determined in the following manner:

Seminar participation 20%
Oral presentations 20%
20-30 page research paper 60%

Class attendance and active, informed participation are mandatory. Students must complete the assigned readings prior to the seminar meetings. The oral presentations require each student to analyze and report on a number of assigned readings for a given week. In addition, students are required to write a major research paper on any aspect of transition in post-Leninist countries, but the topic must be finalized in consultation with the instructor. To facilitate the writing process, a 3-page paper proposal (1 page description, 1 page outline, 1 page bibliography) will be due at the beginning of seminar on October 17, 2012. The final draft of the paper will be due in the last class on December 5, 2012. Late papers without university-approved reasons will result in grade reduction.
Readings

Archie Brown, The Rise and Fall of Communism (New York: Ecco, 2009)
Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

These books are available at Amazon.com, which offers much lower prices than regular bookstores. The rest of the readings will be included in a course pack available at Mary Jane. Those marked with “available on-line” can be retrieved by clicking on “Journals - Print and Online” from the Libraries web page and typing in the title of the journal in the search box.

PART I: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

August 29: Introduction

- Course syllabus

September 5: Leninism: Vision and Strategy

- Archie Brown, The Rise and Fall of Communism, 9-55, 101-114

September 12: Leninism in the Soviet Union

- Archie Brown, The Rise and Fall of Communism, 56-77, 194-266, 398-418

September 19: Leninism in China and Eastern Europe
PART II: POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

October 3: The Collapse of Leninism in Eastern Europe and Russia

- Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 481-617

October 10: The Decline of Leninism in Comparative Perspective


October 17: Post-Communist Political Development


PART III: ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

October 24: Economic Reforms in Russia and Eastern Europe


October 31: Economic Reforms in Comparative Perspective


PART IV: SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

November 7: Post-Communist Social Conditions

November 14: Post-Communist Nationalism and National Identity


November 28: The International Dimension of Post-Communist Transition

- Mary E. Gallagher, “‘Reform and Openness’: Why China’s Economic Reforms Have Delayed Democracy,” World Politics 54:3 (April 2002) [available on-line]

PART V: CONCLUSION: FROM THE PAST TO THE FUTURE

December 5: Making Sense of Post-Communist Diversity