

Politics and Economy of Central Europe

Course Information

Lecturers:

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Course Description

This course is based on comparative approach towards recent political and economic developments in countries of (primarily, but not exclusively) the Visegrad Four, i.e. in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. Following general discussions of what the notion of Central Europe means and how we can understand it, the course will elaborate historical, economic, and social issues shaping the region identified as Central Europe. After historical considerations are taken into account, the region as a whole is put under scrutiny, beginning with the ways from communism through economic transformation and regional attempts at integration, up to the accession procedures regarding EU and NATO. Finally, economic, political, and social issues in all four countries will be presented, with topics like foreign policies, development of major cleavages in respective societies, development of party systems, institutional arrangements etc. constituting the final segment of the course.

Course Requirements:

As the sessions are generally conceived as composite ones, i.e. including lecture and seminar students are expected to take regular and especially active part in the course. Their ability to enter into discussions is seen as one of the most important prerequisites to gain the credits. Moreover, to earn full credits two oral presentations and two final papers are necessary (one set from the Politics of Central Europe and another one from the Economy of Central Europe). Students are also asked to read assigned readings in advance, so that they can get the necessary background for respective sessions and discussions of important issues. Details of all assignments are to be presented in advance.

Oral presentations: Students are expected to make an oral presentation on an issue related to the topics assigned in advance, the presentation should last at least 20 minutes. A good presentation must give a clear outline of the topic in question, highlight most important points and critiques, and offer issues for further discussion.

Essay - Politics of Central Europe: The essay must have app. 10 pages (i.e. app. 18 000 characters incl. dashes; accepted divergence 15 %), and must be structured and coherent. Choice of the topic must be in accordance with the issues presented in the syllabus and must be consulted with a lecturer before the work on the paper is launched. The paper must follow common citation standards and include the list of referenced literature (the list will be carefully scrutinized by the lecturers if it is correct, and the works listed are really used in the text). Deadline to submit the paper is May 31st, the papers are to be uploaded in IS (Homework Vault).

Essay - Economy of Central Europe:

General instructions for essays:

When writing essays, start by looking at current data from reliable sources like "Our World in Data." Include details about how things are defined, measured, and how good the data is (definitions, measurements, data quality). Also, do some of your own research using sites like Google Scholar and JSTOR. Check information from places like Wikipedia and use AI to spot any wrong answers. Emphasize the economic aspects of your topic. Think about what else you could look into, like making new charts or using different ways to measure things. Finish with a short summary, and list your sources properly at the end. Your essay should be approximately 10 pages long.

Grading

The final grade will be calculated as a composite evaluation consisting of:

25 points from the Politics of Central Europe:

10 points – presentation

10 points – essay

5 points – active participation in the class discussions

25 points from the Economy of Central Europe:

13 points - essay (5) + presentation (5) + reaction to reviews (3)

3 points – attendance in class (0,5/each class)

6 points - feedback to someone else's presentation (1 point/each review)

3 points - other assignments (Quizzes, home assignments)

Final grade:

(A) - 42,5-50 points

(B) - 37,5-42 points

(C)- 33,5-37 points

(D)- 29,5-33 points

(E) - 25,5-29 points

Class Schedule

1. Introduction into the Class + Notion of Central Europe (Feb 12_dr. Pšeja)

Lecture: The term “Central Europe” will be discussed in some depth, especially with regard to different cultural, political and social interpretations of the area. The lecture aims at explaining specific features of Central European culture and identity, thus giving particular background to further discussions in classes. Students will be invited to express their own opinions on the phenomenon and find out what common features are to be found to give the region full-blown characteristics.

Assigned readings:

Batt, Judy (2003), “Introduction: Defining Central and Eastern Europe”, in Batt, Judy, Lewis, Paul G., White, Stephen (eds.), *Developments in Central and East European Politics 3*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp. 3-22

Johnson, Lonnie R. (2002): *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 3-12.

Wandycz, Piotr S. (2001): *The Price of Freedom: A history of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the present*, 2nd edition, Routledge, London, pp. 1-11.

2. Introduction to Economy of Central Europe, Case study: Decision-Making Powers of CE Countries Within the EU (Feb 19_dr. Krásnická)

General introduction – basic information about the logic, structure, and objectives of the economic part of the course, and formal features of the course will be presented. Moreover, we will discuss the assignments, in what way they should be handled, and how they will be distributed among the students.

Introduction to Central Europe, Case study: Decision-Making Powers of CE Countries Within the EU.

Central European countries play a crucial role within the European Union, with their decision-making powers reflecting their diverse interests and priorities. This case study delves into how Central European nations influence EU decision-making processes, considering factors such as economic development and/or rule of law. By examining the dynamics of decision-making within the EU framework, insights emerge into the complexities of Central Europe's relationship with the broader European Union.

Understanding these dynamics is essential for comprehending the evolving role and influence of Central European countries in shaping EU policies and initiatives.

No assigned readings.

3. Central Europe: Global and European Trade Relations and Economic Partnerships (Feb 26_dr. Krásnická)

Immediately after democratic changes taking place in 1989, and in some cases even before that date, Central Europe witnessed a rising trend to organize a regional co-operation based on common political and social experience, and focused on enhancing economic and security position of respective countries, as well as on promoting their interests in relation to the European Union. The major attempts at such a co-operation, like Quadragonale, Visegrad Group and CEFTA present most comprehensive and successful examples of Central European co-operation that helped to shape politics (and policies) of respective countries. Nowadays Central Europe participates actively in global and European trade relations, engaging in various partnerships and agreements.

Assigned readings:

In MS Teams

4. Economic Transformations in Central Europe: From Planned to Market Economies (Mar 5_dr. Krásnická)

This topic covers the economic transformations in Central Europe, tracing the shift from planned to market economies. Students will explore the historical context and factors driving this transition, including economic reforms. The syllabus delves into the challenges and opportunities faced by Central European countries during this transformation process. Key topics include privatization, deregulation, and the role of international institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. Through case studies and analysis, students will gain insights into the complexities of economic transition and its impact on Central Europe's socio-economic landscape.

Assigned readings:

In MS Teams

5. History of Central Europe and the Ends of Communism: Political Aspects of the Regime Changes (March 12_dr. Pšeja)

Lecture and seminar: Although the major focus will be on the 20th century, histories of Central European

nations can be traced back through many centuries. In this session, drawing upon the fact contemporary Central European politics can only be in many cases understood if seen through lenses of both ancient and recent historical experience, the most important events and processes from Middle Ages to the 20th century will be discussed, thus setting the ground for more deeply rooted knowledge of Central European states and peoples. In the latter part of the session, we will deal with the period of communism. Even when communism has always presented itself as a coherent ideology, in practice it tended to acquire various forms. In Central European countries we can witness how these differences contributed to finding various ways from communism and towards democratic transition. Specifically, we will focus upon the comparison of developments resulting in democratic changes in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary, thus highlighting bases for future political and social processes in these countries.

Assigned readings:

Johnson, Lonnie R. (2002): *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 223-274.

Wandycz, Piotr S. (2001): *The Price of Freedom: A history of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the present*, 2nd edition, Routledge, London, pp. 201-235.

Rothschild, Joseph, Wingfield, Nancy M. (2000): *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe since World War II*, 3rd edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 227-245.

Staniszki, Jadwiga (1999): *Post-Communism: the Emerging Enigma*, Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, pp. 29-68.

6. Joining the EU and Its Impact On National Economy, Monetary and Economic Policies

(March 19_dr. Krásnická)

The syllabus examines the process of joining the European Union and its repercussions on national economies. Students will analyze the economic, monetary, and policy implications of EU accession for member states. Topics include the adoption of the euro, compliance with EU regulations, and the impact on fiscal policies. Case studies will illuminate the diverse experiences of countries in Central Europe following their accession to the EU. Through critical evaluation, students will assess the benefits and challenges associated with EU membership and its influence on national economic strategies.

Assigned readings:

In MS Teams

7. Economic and Legal Aspects of Specific Policies in Central Europe (Industry, Environment, Energy, Digitalisation) (March 26_dr. Krásnická)

The topic explores the economic and legal dimensions of specific policies in Central Europe, focusing on industry, environment energy sectors etc.. Students will analyze the implementation and impact of these policies on regional economies and ecosystems. Through critical examination, the effectiveness and challenges of these measures will be evaluated.

Assigned readings:

In MS Teams

8. Central European states and their relationships to EU and NATO (April 2_dr.Pšeja)

Lecture and seminar: To a big degree, all Central European countries permanently strived to become members of originally West European structures, notably EU and NATO. However, individual journeys to these aims differed, as the case of Slovakia and NATO makes it clear. In this session, journeys and strategies of Central European countries, while going through the process of accession to EU and NATO, are to be followed.

Assigned readings:

Asmus, Ronald D. (2002): *Opening NATO's Door. How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*. Columbia University Press, New York, pp. 212-305. **Note: Not all the pages are necessary to read, you just can pick up information of the biggest interest.**

Haughton, Tim (2007): "When Does the EU Make a Difference? Conditionality and the Accession Process in Central and Eastern Europe", *Political Studies Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 233-246.

Schmitt, G. J. (2016): *Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic: The Security Record of "New Europe"*. American Enterprise Institute. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep03262>

9. Geoeconomics, Economic Security: Specifics of Central Europe (April 9_dr. Krásnická)

The topic focuses on geoeconomics and economic security, with a focus on Central Europe's unique characteristics. The region's geopolitical position and its implications for economic strategies and security measures will be explored. Key topics include energy dependency, trade routes, and regional alliances shaping Central Europe's economic landscape. Case studies will highlight the interplay between economic interests, security concerns, and foreign policy objectives in the region. Through analysis and discussion, students will gain insights into the complexities of economic security in Central Europe and its impact on global dynamics.

Assigned readings:

In MS Teams

10. Czechoslovakia and Czech Republic (April 16_dr. Pšeja)

Lecture and seminar: Czechoslovakia did not last long after the regime change but at the same time it does constitute a unique example of peaceful dissolution of a country. In this session, we will first discuss the post-communist transformation of Czechoslovakia and the events leading up to its dissolution, then switching to one of its successors, the Czech Republic. Issues like features and workings of the party system, characteristics of political system, and some major points of political and social controversy will be discussed.

Assigned readings:

Mansfeldova, Zdenka (2006): “The Czech Republic: critical democrats and the persistence of democratic values”, in Klingemann, Hans-Dieter, Fuchs, Dieter, Zielonka, Jan (eds.), *Democracy and Political Culture in Eastern Europe*, Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 101-118.

11. Slovakia and Hungary (Apr 23_dr. Pšeja)

Lecture and seminar: Following the same structure as presented in session 14 (Czech Republic), we will put emphasis on issues specific to the Slovak and, respectively, Hungarian political developments. In the Slovak case, we will also pay attention to national issues (relations to Hungarian minority), while in the case of Hungary we will also discuss recent democratic backsliding.

Assigned readings:

Haerpfer, Christian W. (2006): “Hungary: structure and dynamics of democratic consolidation”, in Klingemann, Hans-Dieter, Fuchs, Dieter, Zielonka, Jan (eds.), *Democracy and Political Culture in Eastern Europe*, Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 148-171.

Mihalikova, Silvia (2006): “Slovakia: pathways to a democratic community”, in Klingemann, Hans-Dieter, Fuchs, Dieter, Zielonka, Jan (eds.), *Democracy and Political Culture in Eastern Europe*, Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 172-202.

12. Poland and cross-regional comparison (Apr 30_dr.Pšeja)

Lecture and seminar: Again, following the same structure as presented in session 14 (Czech Republic), we will put emphasis on issues specific to Polish political developments, namely on peculiar structure of the party system, role of Catholic church, and ambiguous position towards the European integration. Subsequently, we will discuss whether (and if so, then which ones) there are any relevant similarities across four Visegrad countries dealt with in this class, and will try to identify long-term processes shaping politics and society in these countries.

Assigned readings:

Sieminska, Renata (2006): "Poland: citizens and democratic politics", in Klingemann, Hans-Dieter, Fuchs, Dieter, Zielonka, Jan (eds.), *Democracy and Political Culture in Eastern Europe*, Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 203-234.