Eastern Europe since 1989: political and constitutional challenges

Seminar, Second term 2019-2020

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Mondays, 11-13

Badia Fiesolana / Villa Salviati

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Description

30 years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, there is widespread disillusionment with the outcomes of the transformation in the East. Public distrust in democratic institutions and political leaders, perception of widespread corruption, limited economic and social convergence with the West, and recurrent East-West conflicts attest to this. Consequently, political liberalism and European integration are being contested; economic nationalism has re-emerged, and historical memories are being re-written to idealize Europe’s dark 1920s and 1930s. However, disillusionment has varied across countries and over time. The seminar seeks to reevaluate the record of accomplishment of East European transformations. It will cover questions such as:

- What have been successes of the transformation, and which are the failures?
- How have early policy decisions contributed to success and failure?
- Was the introduction of the liberal democratic institutional system without prior political democratic and constitutional culture premature?
- Why is the liberal order increasingly being challenged in the region?
- Why are the almost forgotten early debates on populism, third way, economic nationalism, dependency, peripheral development, which seem to have been closed by the time of EU accession, being re-opened within the region?
- Is there a way back to the original ideals of the democratic transformation, and what could be the role of the internal and external supporters of a liberal democratic order?

The seminar will approach these questions from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Requirements

For each session, we ask students to post 2-3 questions about readings (or the relationship among the readings), with each question accompanied by an expository paragraph explaining the origin and context of the question. Over the course of the seminar, students must submit questions for 5 of the 10 course sessions (students may
choose the sessions for which they post questions, except for the first session). For the first session, all students are required to write a 1-2 page long essay on what 1989 means for them. Students are expected to post questions/the first week paper to the course webpage by noon the day prior to the class, as these guide our discussion in the next day’s class. These brief ‘question papers’ are fundamental for the holding of a good discussion of the materials, as is a thorough reading of the assigned readings.

Schedule

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Topics and Readings

**Session 1: Challenges of the transformation: early debates (January 13)**

  https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Ascds%3AUS%3A5e66e890-0c56-4447-b305-efec4ce179ad

**Session 2: The rise (and demise) of liberal Capitalism (January 20)**


& 2 out of the following texts


Further readings:


**Session 3: Approaches to Constitution Making (January 27)**


Further reading:

Ackerman, Bruce, Three Paths to Constitutionalism – and the Crisis of the European Union, British Journal of Political Science, 45, 2015. 705–714. https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Ascds%3AUS%3A77b94e63-d781-4736-8a1b-2a8fda3282cf

Session 4: Dealing with the past (February 3)


Further reading:


Session 5: Civil and Uncivil Society (February 10)


Session 6: Nationalism, Minorities and Citizenship (February 17)


Further readings:


Session 7: The populist backlash (February 24)


Additional readings


Session 8: The challenges of corruption (March 2)


Popova, Maria, Post, Vincent, “Prosecuting high-level corruption in Eastern Europe” Communist and Post-Communist Studies Volume 51, Issue 3, September 2018: 231-244


Further readings


Session 9: The authoritarian challenge (March 9)


Further reading:

Session 10: The European dimension of Illiberalism (March 16)


Halmai, Gábor, How the EU can and should cope with illiberal Member States, Quaderni costituzionali, 2/2018.


Further reading


Junes, Tom, “Bulgarian Stability the EU’s Preferred Model for Eastern Europe” Balkan Insight, 4 July 2018