

## ***Politics and Constitutionalism in East Central Europe***

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Mondays, 11:00-13:00

Badia Fiesolana & Villa Salviati

### **Description**

This seminar studies the post-1989 political and constitutional transformations in East Central Europe (ECE). It pursues the three main objectives. First, the seminar aims to understand and assess the transformations' outcomes. Through the lenses of the aspirations from the early 1990s, what have been the successes of the transformations, and which are the failures? What factors have contributed to the different paths taken within the region? What has been the role of historical legacies? The seminar's second objective is to identify the potential specificities and idiosyncrasies of political processes in ECE. Is party competition structured by the same conflicts as in the West? What explains the high levels of party volatility? Do ECE citizens stand out in terms of their political participation? Finally, the seminar seeks to investigate the causes of the democratic erosion that ECE has experienced in recent years. Why is the liberal democratic constitutional order increasingly being challenged in the region? Do citizens in ECE value democracy less than their Western counterparts? Is there a way back to the original ideals of the constitutional transformation? And what could be the role of the internal and external supporters of a liberal democratic order?

### **Requirements**

For each session, we ask doctoral researchers 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, doctoral researchers must submit questions for four sessions (they may choose the sessions for which they post questions, except for the first session). In addition, they will be asked to chair (either individually or in a team) 30 minutes of each session (except for the first one). They will be responsible for choosing

a topic in relation with the main theme of the session, and a corresponding reading (to be circulated one week in advance). For the first session, all doctoral researchers are also required to write a 1-2-page-long essay on how, according to them, politics and/or constitutionalism in East Central Europe differ (or not) from those in Western Europe. Doctoral researchers 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.

## **Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the seminar, doctoral researchers will:

1. Be able to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the on-going political and constitutional transformations in East Central Europe.
2. Be able to formulate analytical questions, and develop cogent, fact-based arguments in relation to the study of major political and constitutional developments in the region.
3. Be familiar with different approaches, analytical concepts, and cutting-edge research methods used in the study of the region.
4. Be able to design course materials and moderate an academic discussion, and engage other attendees in a fruitful exchange of ideas.

## **Sessions**

1. Pre-1989 history and its legacies (10/01, Badia Fiesolana)
2. Post-1989 transformations (24/01, Villa Salviati)
3. Rules of the game (31/01, Villa Salviati)
4. Parties & party systems (07/02, Badia Fiesolana)
5. Trends in political participation (21/02, Badia Fiesolana)
6. Political challenges: corruption, inequality, and polarisation (07/03, Badia Fiesolana)
7. Democratic erosion (14/03, Villa Salviati)
8. East Central Europe & the European Union (21/03, Villa Salviati)