Eastern Europe under Communism: From the Iron Curtain to the Velvet Revolution

This course explores the political, intellectual, social, and cultural history of Eastern Europe from 1939 to the present. We begin by examining World War II and the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, moving on to explore the early period of brutal takeover and Stalinization, the purges, and the post-Stalin “Thaw.” We then explore the emergence of revisionist Marxism, the period of normalization, the rise of dissent movements, and the revolutions of 1989. Finally we will focus on the wars in the former Yugoslavia, the challenges faced by East European countries in transitioning to democracy and attaining EU membership, and the complex issue of communist nostalgia. A central aim of this course is to examine how socialist states sought to transform conceptions of civic and national (ethnic) identity, gender and class roles, and relations within the family. As a corollary to this, we will consider how women and men responded to, negotiated, and in some cases resisted communist policies and ideologies through their participation in broader political events and social movements and in their everyday lives.

Required Texts:
Additional articles available on e-reserve.

Class Participation and Attendance (10%)
You are expected to participate actively in class discussion; therefore it is essential that readings are completed prior to each class meeting. The evening prior to each class meeting students are required to post 1-2 questions about the readings on blackboard
(these questions must be posted by 8 pm so that your colleagues will have ample time to read and reflect on them). You are exempt from three posts over the course of the semester.

**Midterm Exam (30%)** This will be an in-class exam covering key figures, terms, events, and ideas examined in class and in the readings up to this point.

**Take Home Final (40%)** 2-3 essay questions due the day of the final.

**Book Reflections (10% each; 20% total)**
You are expected to write a 3-4 page book reflections on TWO of the following books: *Under and Cruel Star, The Joke, Land of the Green Plums*. Rather than a simple summary, you should write a critical analysis of the book in which you place it in its specific historical context and consider its relevance to broader themes and issues of socialist Eastern Europe. The reflections will serve as springboards for class discussion. Due dates for the reflection papers are marked on the syllabus. You are exempt from posting reading questions when you turn in a reading reflection.

**Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>66-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% and below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Late assignments will be marked down 1/3 of a grade per day (B to B-). Extensions will be granted in cases of documented personal illness and family emergency.

**Honor Code** All work is governed by the Honor Code. Any student found cheating, plagiarizing, turning in another’s work as his/her own or otherwise violating the instructor’s explicit or implicit instructions will be subject to a hearing before the Student Honor Committee. To learn more about the code, please go to: http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/rules-reg07-08/honorcode.pdf

**Services for Students with Disabilities**
If you are a student with a documented disability who will require accommodations in this course please contact Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities in G27 Peters Hall, ext. 58467.

**Course Calendar**

**Week I: Course Introduction/What is Eastern Europe?/ What is Socialism?**

**February 4: Course Introduction/What is Eastern Europe?**
February 6: What is Socialism?/ Eastern Europe during the interwar period
Rothschild and Wingfield, chapter 1
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) at:
V.I. Lenin, “What is to be Done? (1902) at:
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1902lenin.html

Week II: World War II and the Communist Takeovers

February 11: World War II and the “Liberation” of Eastern Europe
Rothschild and Wingfield, chapter 2

February 13: The Communist Takeovers and the Stalinization of Eastern Europe
Stokes: Jakub Berman “The Case for Stalinism”
Rothschild and Wingfield, chapter 3

Week III: Mobilizing the New Socialist Man and Woman/The Purge Trials

February 18: Mobilizing the New Socialist Man and Woman

February 20: The Tito-Stalin Split/The Purge Trials
Stokes: “The Tito-Stalin Correspondence,” “The Trial of László Rajk” and “The Slánský Trial”
Rothschild and Wingfield, chapter 4

Week IV: The Purge Trials in Czechoslovakia/ Coming of Age in post-Stalinist Yugoslavia

February 25: The Purge Trials in Czechoslovakia
Kovaly, *Under a Cruel Star*
Film: *A Trial in Prague* (selections)
Book Reflection 1 Due
February 27: Coming of Age in post-Stalinist Yugoslavia
Film: Tito and Me (Goran Marković, 1992)
(I’ll be at a conference, but make sure to attend class as we’ll discuss the film on March 3)

Week V: From Freeze to Thaw: the de-Stalinization of Eastern Europe

March 3: Thaws, Revolts, and Rebellions
Rothschild and Wingfield, pp. 118-129

March 5: Gender, Culture, and Consumption under Socialism

Week VI: Socialism and Disillusionment in Czechoslovakia

March 10: Socialism and Disillusionment in Czechoslovakia
Begin Kundera, The Joke

March 12: Socialism in Czechoslovakia
Finish Kundera, The Joke
Screening of The Joke pt. 2
Book Reflection 2 Due

Week VII: Springtime of Nations: Marxist Revisionism in Poland, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia

March 17: Springtime of Nations: Marxist Revisionism in Poland, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia
Rothschild and Wingfield, pp. 133-139; 144-152

March 19: Midterm Exam
Week VIII: Spring Break

Week IX: Repression and Normalization

March 31: Normalization and “Living as if”
Rothschild and Wingfield, pp. 165-168

April 2: Stalinism for all Seasons: Romania
Rothschild and Wingfield, pp. 129-133
Begin Müller, The Land of the Green Plums

Week X: Stalinism for all Seasons: Romania

April 7: The Survival of Stalinism: Romania
Finish Müller, The Land of the Green Plums
Katherine Verdery, "The 'Etatisation' of Time in Ceausescu's Romania"
Book Reflection 3 Due

April 9: What’s Happening in Bulgaria and Albania?

Week XI The Rise of Anti-Politics and Dissent

April 14: Solidarity and Martial Law in Poland
Shana Penn, Solidarity's Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland (selections) e-reserve
Rothschild and Wingfield, pp. 153-165

April 16: Youth and Dissent
Stokes: Sabine Rosenbladt, “Environmental Concerns in Poland”
Week XII: The Velvet Revolution/The Disintegration of Yugoslavia

April 21: The Velvet (and not so velvet) Revolutions
Stokes: “The Opening of the Berlin Wall” and Havel “New Year’s Day Speech, 1990”
Rothschild and Wingfield, chapter 7

April 23: Yugoslavia from Unity to Disintegration
Begin Michael Sells, The Bridge Betrayed

Week XIII: The War in Yugoslavia

April 28: The War in Yugoslavia
Finish Sells, The Bridge Betrayed
Film: Vukovar (dir. Boro Drašković, 1996)

April 30: Justice and Post-war Yugoslavia
Slavenka Drakulić, They Would Never Hurt a Fly: War Criminals on Trial in The Hague
(Viking Adult, 2004) (selections, e reserve)
check out the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at:
http://www.un.org/icty/

WEEK XIV: The Transition to Democracy and EU Integration

May 5: The Transition to Democracy and EU integration
Rothschild and Wingfield, pp. 211-234

May 7: Remembering Communism
Richard S. Esbenshade, “Remembering to Forget: Memory, History, National Identity, in
Post-war East Central Europe” in Representations (Winter, 1999) e-reserve
Jill Massino “Identities in Transition: Gender, Nostalgia, and Everyday Life in
Post-Communist Romania”