

The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Consequences: From Tyranny to Freedom

459 P

Tyd 114

T-Th 11:00am – 12:15pm

University of Maryland

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The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Consequences: From Tyranny to Freedom

Fifty years after the building of the Berlin Wall and twenty years after the demise of the USSR, this seminar deals with the causes, meanings and consequences of the revolutions of 1989. The seminar will offer students conceptual tools and historical analysis that would help them compare the upheaval in Eastern Europe to the ongoing civil revolts in the Middle East. It is organized along five major themes. The first theme, Communism in Eastern Europe, is primarily historical and examines the major crises in post-World War II Eastern Europe: the Hungarian 1956 revolution, the Prague Spring (1968), and the rise of Solidarity (1980-81). We will discuss the role of Marxist ideology as the principal form of legitimization for the communist regimes. The second theme addresses the decline of the communist power and the rise of civil societies in East and Central Europe. This part will discuss the failure of reforms from above and Mikhail Gorbachev's role as a catalyst for the East European revolutions. Special discussions will be focused on the concept of Central Europe and its political and intellectual significance for the development of oppositional movements in the region. It is impossible for a student of Eastern Europe to understand the direction of the current changes without referring to Vaclav Havel's path-breaking essay "The Power of the Powerless" and to such concepts as anti-politics, grassroots movements and "independent life of society." The third theme, the triumph of the powerless, focuses on the 1989 upheaval and its meanings. Were the revolutions of 89 genuine revolutions? What were their main implications for the individuals experiencing such world-shattering transformations? The fourth theme deals with the challenges encountered by the new regimes in their efforts to establish pluralist institutions, the difficulties of de-communization, and the new political and ideological cleavages between friends and foes of an open society. Lectures will discuss the resurfacing of old ethnic animosities, the regrouping of traditional political and ideological formations, the growing polarization of the political scene between populist and liberal groups. The fifth theme deals with the future of East and Central Europe and

the rise of new political parties, the transition to market economy, and the new forms of nationalism, clericalism, and other authoritarian trends.

The Structure of the Course:

This class will take place in a seminar-like format. Participation in class discussions is strongly encouraged. There will be at least one quiz, a mid-term and a take-home final exam. The final grade reflects the overall class performance. As events unfold in the former communist countries, students will be required to read either *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* (or both) on a daily base. In addition, students are encouraged to read *East European Politics and Societies*, *Problems of Post-Communism*, *The Economist*, *The New York Review of Books* and *The New Republic* (pieces dealing with changes in the former communist bloc).

Required Readings:

1. Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel*, Free Press.
2. Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation*, Princeton
3. Vladimir Tismaneanu, ed., *The Revolutions of 1989*, Routledge.
4. Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern*, Vintage Books
5. Stephen Kotkin, *Uncivil Society*
6. Victor Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989*

Recommended Readings:

1. Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder*.
2. Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison*, University of California Press
3. Adam Michnik, *Letters from Freedom*, UC Press

Course Requirements

The reading assignments are an essential component of this course; it is important that you keep up with the readings to best understand the lectures and engage in class discussion. **IMPORTANT:** Please keep in mind that lectures do not duplicate the readings and students are expected to be familiar with notions and information provided by the professor in his presentations.

One announced quiz: 5%

Midterm: 35%

Final take home exam—45%

Class Participation—15%

Students are encouraged to approach the TA and discuss making an additional class short presentation on a topic. These extra presentations will add to the final grade.

Schedule:

Week 1

Political values, symbols, myths and traditions in East and Central Europe: nationalism and communism, authoritarianism and pluralism, populists and Westernizers, relations with Russia and the West. Extreme left and extreme right movements in pre-communist Central Europe. Nationalism and anti-Semitism. The resurgence of these traditions in contemporary East-Central Europe and the tension between liberal and illiberal traditions.

- Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics*, Chapters 1 and 2

Week 2

The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: the one-party system, the role of ideology and the destruction of the elites; conformity, orthodoxy, regimentation. Titoism and Stalinism: the Yugoslav national communist heresy. The main features of Leninist regimes.

- Tismaneanu, Chapter 3

Week 3

Indoctrination, fanaticism and self-delusions. Ideological terrorism under mature Stalinism. The myth of salvation through the party. Political purges under Stalin: case studies (Kostov, Rajk, Gomulka, Patrascanu, Slansky). Khrushchev and de-Stalinization (de-radicalization of Marxist regimes). Brezhnev's period of stagnation (political corruption, economic decay, militarism, imperialism, rise of dissent). Gorbachev and the politics of glasnost and perestroika: the new onslaught on Stalinism. A comparison between Khrushchevism and Gorbachevism. Why did Gorbachev fail?

- Tismaneanu, *Reinventing*, Chapter 3 and 4
- Tismaneanu, *The Revolutions of 1989*, chapters 1 and 2 (essays by Daniel Chirot and Leszek Kolakowski)

Week 4

The revolt of the mind: the revisionist search for humanist Marxism, the Hungarian revolution, the "long march against Yalta." Reforms under Soviet-style regimes: the "Prague Spring." The rise of Solidarity, the Martial Law and the collapse of Polish state socialism. Assessing the demise of the USSR (main causes: economic, political, cultural, including the role of ethno-national movements, the Baltic revolution), Comparing 1956, 1968, and 1989.

- Tismaneanu, *The Revolutions of 1989* (chapter 4, the essay by S. N. Eisenstadt)
- Tismaneanu, *Reinventing*, Chapter 6
- Michnik, *Letters from Freedom* (especially the dialogue with General Jaruzelski)
- Sebestyen

Week 5

Antipolitical politics: dissent and opposition in post-totalitarian regimes. The power of the powerless. Legitimization through inertia, obedience, and routine. Civic disobedience and protest in the Leninist regimes. Does Central Europe exist? Strategies of political and intellectual resistance. The refusal of Realpolitik and anti-Machiavellianism. Human rights and the rise of the parallel polis: civil society and the erosion of state socialism.

- Tismaneanu, *The Revolutions of 1989*, Chapter 6 (the essay by Jeffrey Isaac)
- Tismaneanu, *Reinventing*, Chapter 6 and 7
- Michnik, *Letters from Freedom* (especially Ken Jowitt's introduction)

Week 6

Causes of the breakdown of Communist regimes in East-Central Europe (economic, political, social, moral-cultural, ideological). Civil society as an explanatory approach compared to other interpretations. External and internal pressures (superpower military rivalry, world economic recession, the role of Catholic Church, impact of international human rights initiatives, Helsinki process, Afghanistan, but also failure of bureaucratic elites to cope with economic and political complexity, societal transformations, rampant malaise and cynicism, ideological exhaustion-Leninist extinction).

- Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics*
- Tismaneanu, *The Revolutions of 1989*, part I (The Causes)
- Sebestyen

Week 7

1989: The Year of Truth. Reassessing the nature of Leninist regimes and the dynamics of their disintegration. The nature of the 1989 revolutionary upheaval compared to other revolutions. 1989 and the end of the ideological century (the “century of extremes”-Eric Hobsbawm). The end of which European era?

- Tismaneanu, *Reinventing*, Chapter 7
- Tismaneanu, *The Revolutions of 1989* (part II, chapters 4, 5, 6, 7)
- Garton Ash
- Sebestyen

Week 8

Dissent, civil society and the ethos of anti-totalitarian opposition. Individual and society in totalitarian regimes: irony and moral survival. The critical intellectuals and their role in the self-destruction of communist regimes.

- Tismaneanu, *The Revolutions of 1989*, part II, chapters 8 and 9
- Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics*, Chapter 5
- Michnik, *Letters from Freedom*

Week 9

Leninist legacies and the future of the liberal revolution. The end of the Cold War and the new world disorder

- Tismaneanu, *The Revolutions of 1989*, part III, chapters 10, 11, 12
- Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation*
- Garton Ash, *Magic Lantern*
- Jowitt

Week 10

Communism, post-communism and the appeals of populist nationalism: assessing the post-1989 role of nationalism and tension between ethnic and civic-oriented parties and movements. Communist bureaucracies and their afterlife. Paradoxes of de-communization in East and Central Europe: is de-communization possible, desirable, morally imperative? Is communism returning? Adam Michnik’s concept of “velvet restoration.” Radical protest politics and the uses of charismatic populism: Peronismo as Eastern Europe's future? Discomforts of victory: The cultural contradictions of post-communism.

- Kotkin, *Uncivil Society* (Class discussion)
- Tismaneanu, *The Revolutions of 1989*, chapters 12, 13, 14, 15.
- Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation* (chapter 2 and 5)
- Michnik, *Letters from Freedom* (especially the dialogue with Vaclav Havel)

Week 11

Preliminary conclusions on the main threats to pluralism: East-Central Europe between ethnocracy and democracy. Fantasies of salvation: Post-Communist political mythologies (de-communization, radical nationalism, clericalism, cultural despair). Critical intellectuals and liberalism after communism.

- Tismaneanu, Reinventing Politics, Epilogue and Afterword
- Tismaneanu, The Revolutions of 1989, Introduction
- Tismaneanu, Fantasies of Salvation
- Michnik, Letters from Freedom