This seminar will focus on comparative analyses of democracies in Central Europe in a contemporary historical perspective. Special attention will be paid to the past 25 years from 1989 to present. We will analyze different theoretical models of democracy, our discussion will include the so-called different „stages” of democracy (such as minimalist, electoral, substantive, consolidated etc.).

We shall briefly discuss the nature of the previous, non-democratic regime and we’ll discuss the „transitological optimism” concerning the future of democracy, the processes of institution-building and democratic consolidation. Special attention will be paid to the „Visegrád-countries”.

Finally, current empirical problems, the signs of deterioration (deconsolidation, breakdown) and the rise of illiberal democracy, competitive authoritarianism and hybrid regimes will be identified. Besides the discussion of individual cases, we will also focus on intra-regional (and, sometimes, inter-regional) comparisons.

Learning outcome: At the end, students will be safe in understanding, analysing and explaining major features of political dynamics in Central Europe, in the light of the democracy literature, and in comparing and applying these lessons to other parts of the world.

Students are expected to attend classes regularly, to read mandatory readings before classes, to be active there, and to write position paper(s) if asked. Secondly, they need to present and article or a problem, and also their final paper before handing it. Finally, a 2000-word-long (one-and-half spaced, without the references) final essay should be written, to be handed by the last class (February 15).

GRADING:
- Participation in discussions, written assignments: 30%.
- Presentations 30%
- Final essay: 40%.
Topics and Readings


Mandatory reading


Background readings


WEEK 2. January 18. Democracy and Its Conditions in Central Europe

Mandatory readings


Further readings

WEEK 3. January 25. Democratization: The Case of Poland

Mandatory readings


Bálint Magyar & Miklós Mitrovits (2016) „Parallel System Narratives—Polish and Hungarian regime formations compared” (manuscript)

Further readings


WEEK 4. February 1. Democratization: The Case of Hungary

Mandatory readings


Further readings


WEEK 5. February 8. Central European Democracies in the 1990s

Mandatory readings


Further readings


Mary Kaldor & Ivan Vejvoda eds. (1999), Democratization in Central and Eastern Europe. London: Pinter

WEEK 6. February 15. The Visegrád States into the European Union

Mandatory readings

Further readings
Frank Schimmelfennig & Ulrich Sedelmeier eds. (2005), The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe. Ithaca: Cornell University Press
Martin Dangerfield (2008), „The Visegrád Group in the Expanded European Union: From
WEEK 7. February 22. Central European Political Dynamics in the 2000s

Mandatory readings


Further readings


László Bruszt (2015), „Regional Normalization and National Deviations: EU Integration and Transformations in Europe’s Eastern Periphery” Global Policy, 6:1, June, 38-45

WEEK 8. March 1. Poland and Hungary: Democracy in Decline?

Mandatory readings


Further readings


Gerd Meyer ed. (2006), *Formal Institutions, Informal Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine*. Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers


Valerie J. Bunce, Michael McFaul & Kathryn Stoner-Weiss eds. (2010), *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Postcommunist World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University P.


Balázs Trenčsényi (2016). *Strange Bedfellows: Turanism, Eurasianism, and the Hungarian Radical Right* (manuscript)

WEEK 9. March 8. Deconsolidation of democracy

Mandatory readings


Further readings


WEEK 10. March 15. National holiday – no class

WEEK 11. March 22. **Student Presentations**

Students are expected to present their final essay draft and discuss it with others.

WEEK 12. March 29. **Concluding Discussion and Handing the Final Essays**

**Mandatory reading**


**Further reading**