



POL/SOC 300 Political and Social Transformations in Post-Soviet States (4 Credits)

Instructors: Dr. Olga Guzhva, Dr. Olena Muradyan

Course Description

This course is designed to theoretically and empirically explore the subject of social and political transformations and changes in social structure in post-Soviet countries. It will cover the current state of the field of social and political transformations with reference to academic and policy debates, theories, methods, key research findings, and comparative analyses. In stable societies, changes in the economic and social sphere are evaluated in nature; however, these changes are typically accompanied by initial chaos in societies undergoing major systemic transformation, such as in post-Soviet countries. Post-Soviet societies have been shaped by two large waves of social transformations – 1) the global flow of capital, trade, information and risks, which has had an impact worldwide; and 2) the shift from a monistic to a pluralistic paradigm of institutional, structural and value systems. These societies provide excellent opportunities to study social and political structure of post-Soviet countries under social changes. This course will familiarize students with the answers to various questions, such as: why are the trajectories of post-Soviet societies’ changes and development so different? Which were the social forces that led to the social and political transformations? Who are the key players of the recent reforms? What kind of value systems do populations share? The main question is: what are the political and social outcomes of such changes? We will explore these subjects within comparative, historical, and current events frameworks. Case studies will be on transforming societies of Eastern Europe with the main comparative focus on Ukraine. Historical background of socialism will be studied to put the current changes in these societies in perspective.

After successfully completing the course, students will be able to: describe what economic, social and political transformations mean; how social structure in post-Soviet societies (in regional perspective) has changed over the past thirty years; identify theories and mechanisms of political transformations; examine explanations for variations in social changes (individual, cultural and structural levels); examine the transformations of everyday life practices in post-Soviet societies; explain the extent and trends in transformation across countries and regions; evaluate the use of secondary data in the study of different manifestations of social changes in post-Soviet societies.

Methods used: group discussions, role-play and case analyses.

Course Evaluation

Test I	15%
Test II	15%
Class participation	10%
Periodic brief summary and analysis papers	15%
Term paper	15%
Final exam	30%
Total	100%

A+ = 97-100	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79
A = 93-96	B = 83-86	C = 73-76
A- = 90-92	B- = 80-82	C- = 70-72
		C- = 61-64
D = 65-66	D+ = 67-69	F = 0-60

Test I and II: written responses to a set of multiple-choice and open-ended questions.

The questions will cover the main issues discussed in readings and during class.

Summary and Analysis Papers consist of one page responses to the issues raised in readings and in class.

Term paper on social stratification issues and research: specifics of term paper will be discussed in class.

Class participation. Students are expected to discuss all of the assigned readings on the due date and to participate in in-class projects.



Course Outline

	Course calendar
<p>Theme 1: What does social, economic and political transformation mean? Theoretical approaches</p> <p><i>Seminar</i> (Assignment: discussion board)</p>	<p>Week 1 (Lectures: 2 hours, seminars: 2 hours)</p>
<p>Theme 2: Globalization and transition from state socialism</p> <p>2.1. The fall of state socialism in Eastern Europe and the USSR</p> <p><i>Seminar</i> (Assignment: discussion board)</p>	<p>Week 2 (Lectures: 2 hours, seminars: 2 hours)</p>
<p>Theme 3: Political transformation: social indicators.</p> <p>3.1. Key concepts of post-communist political transformations. Approaches and theories of regime change.</p> <p><i>Seminar</i> (Assignment: discussion board)</p> <p>3.2. Political transformation: ways of social conflict resolving (social dialogue and political participation)</p> <p><i>Seminar</i> (Assignment: discussion board)</p> <p>3.3. Social political indexes of democracy changes.</p> <p><i>Seminar</i> (Assignment: short-answer test)</p>	<p>Week 3, 4, 5, 6 (Lectures: 6 hours, seminars: 6 hours, test: 2 hours)</p>
<p>Theme 4: Social changes in the countries of Eastern Europe and the CIS: comparative analyses</p> <p>4.1. The politics of post-Soviet changes: “color revolutions” and their political and social consequences</p> <p><i>Seminar</i> (Assignment: discussion board)</p> <p>4.2. Political culture, mass participation and voting behavior in post-Soviet countries</p> <p><i>Seminar</i> (Assignment: discussion board)</p> <p>4.3. Values, social relations and human behavior in Soviet and post-Soviet society.</p> <p><i>Seminar</i> (Assignment: discussion board)</p>	<p>Week 7, 8, 9, 10 (Lectures: 8 hours, seminars: 6 hours)</p>
<p>Theme 5. Inequality and poverty during the transition from planned to market economy</p> <p><i>Seminar</i> (Assignment: discussion board)</p> <p>5.1. Changing lives in changing socio-cultural post-Soviet contexts</p> <p>5.2. Migration and mobility processes in early 1990’s in post-Soviet societies.</p> <p><i>Seminar</i> (Assignment: discussion board)</p>	<p>Week 11, 12, 13 (Lectures: 6 hours, seminars: 6 hours)</p>
<p>Theme 6: Post-Soviet Ukraine: a case study on socio-economic and political transformation</p> <p>6.1. Ukraine’s post-Soviet economic transformation</p> <p><i>Seminar</i> (Assignment: short paper)</p> <p>6.2. Post-Soviet business-political networks</p> <p><i>Seminar</i> (Assignment: discussion board)</p>	<p>Week 14, 15 (Lectures: 6 hours, seminars: 6 hours)</p>
<p>Term paper presentation. Final exam.</p>	<p>Week 16 (4 hours)</p>

The information contained in the course syllabus may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.