

STV23XX – Between authoritarianism and democracy in the post-communist region

Teaching language: English

Course description

Course content

The end of communist rule in former Eastern Europe was widely seen as the culmination of the third wave of democratization. However, the 'revolutions' of 1989 were not uniform processes: the starting points were different, the trajectories were different, and so were the outcomes. Some countries never progressed beyond hybrid regimes, while others became liberal democracies and joined the European Union – and some of these are now backsliding on democracy.

This course combines insights into specific cases (Ukraine, Georgia, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, and Slovakia) with a comparative take on some key issues in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe. Some of the questions raised in this course are:

- How do support for democracy, satisfaction with democracy, and political trust vary across the region?
- Why did some countries successfully complete the transition from communism to democracy, while others got stuck in a half-way house?
- What is democratic backsliding in theory and practice, and how can it be reversed?
- How do oligarchs and grand corruption affect politics and democracy in the post-communist region?
- What roles do Russia and the European Union play?
- How does populism in general and radical right populism in particular play out in the region?

Learning outcome

Knowledge

After having completed the course, students will

- be able to distinguish between different starting points, trajectories, and outcomes of the transition from communism
- be familiar with the theory and practice of democratic backsliding

- be able to define populism, distinguish between different types of populism in the region, and recognise its local character
- be familiar with the concepts of kleptocracy and grand corruption and their implications for the quality of government
- be able to recognize differences in the quality of democracy across the region

Skills

Having completed the course, students will:

- be able to understand and synthesize arguments and evidence in a systematic way, and communicate this to different audiences.
- have skills in distinguishing between theoretical models, and actual cases, and be able to use theoretical concepts and insights to understand particular cases.
- have skills in analysing how different research conclusions depend on different data sources and measurement choices.
- have practical skills in reviewing studies and performing literature summaries.

General competences

Students will be able to

- analyse and critically evaluate arguments empirically and theoretically
- distinguish between conclusions that are based on specific cases, and those that are based on more general comparisons.
- separate between analyses that are founded on science and those that are not.
- distinguish between empirical, conceptual, and theoretical statements.

Admission

Students who are admitted to study programmes at UiO must each semester register which courses and exams they wish to sign up for in Studentweb.

If you are not already enrolled as a student at UiO, please see our information about [admission requirements and procedures](#).

This course is not available for single course students.

Prerequisites

Recommended previous knowledge

STV1300 - Introduction to Comparative Politics or other introductory courses in comparative politics.

Teaching

Lectures and seminars.

Compulsory activities

Attend the first seminar.

Participate in minimum 3 of 5 seminar meetings.

Present a short literature review as part of a group.

The seminars are taught in English, and the review must be in English.

See the [rules for reassignment of seminar groups](#) and [the guidelines for compulsory activities](#).

Absence from compulsory activities

If you are ill or have another valid reason for being absent from compulsory activities, your absence may be approved, or the compulsory activity may be postponed.

- [Report absence from or the need for a postponed deadline on a compulsory activity](#)

Access to teaching

A student who has completed compulsory instruction and coursework and has had these approved, is not entitled to repeat that instruction and coursework. A student who has been admitted to a course, but who has not completed compulsory instruction and coursework or had these approved, is entitled to repeat that instruction and coursework, depending on available capacity.

Examination

- four-hour written exam
- you must have passed the compulsory activities in order to sit the exam