Central and Eastern European Politics

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| **Credit level:**4 |
| **Length:** semester 2 |
| **ECTS credit value:** 8 |
| **College and School:** Lazarski University in Warsaw, Faculty of Economics and Management |
| **Module Leader:** prof. Jakub Wódka |
| **Host Course:** BA International Relations |
| **Pre-requisites:**N/A |
| **Co-requisites:**N/A |
| **Special features:**N/A |
| **Access restrictions:**N/A |
| **Summary of module content:** The module aims at exploring the political dynamics of Central and Eastern Europe, covering a wide range of countries with different geopolitical, socio-cultural, and economic characteristics. It seeks to present various definitions and understandings of the distinctiveness of Central and Eastern Europe, by investigating how historical legacy/ies, communism and post-communist transitions have shaped the political terrain of the region vis-à-vis “old” Europe and external players. The module will provide insight into socio-political systems of CEE states, as well as their foreign policies. |

**Assessment Methods**

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| Rank | Assessment type | Assessment name | Weighting | Qualifying set (where the minimum mark required applies across multiple assessments) |
| 1 | Group Coursework | Academic essay and its oral presentation | 60 |  |
| 2 | Closed Book Exam | Final exam | 40 |

**Synoptic assessment**

N/A

**Learning outcomes**

By the end of the module the successful student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a critical understanding of the geographical, historical, economic, and geopolitical dimensions of Central and Eastern Europe, linking these to key debates in International Relations.
2. Investigate the repercussions of World War II, the Cold War, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union on the region, applying historical and structural analysis.
3. Analyze the systemic transformation in post-communist states and such processes as democratization, Europeanization, geopolitical reorientation, marketization of economic system, using theoretical and practical perspectives.
4. Analyze the domestic and foreign policies of Central and Eastern European states, demonstrating information literacy and the ability to assess diverse sources.
5. Critically engage with regional integration processes and their implications for political, economic, and security structures.
6. Assess the geopolitical importance of the region and its dependencies on other global actors including Russia, EU and USA.
7. Take responsibility for independent learning and professional development by engaging with diverse media formats, including writing, public speaking, and visual presentations.

**Course outcomes the module contributes to:**

* L4.4 Appreciation of the value of critical thinking in assessing the diverse range of scholarly traditions within International Relations.
* L4.5 The ability to evaluate the role of historical, structural, cultural and ideational dimensions of domestic and international political processes, in theory and in practice
* L4.6 Awareness of the importance of information literacy and library skills for studying and researching at university.
* L4.7 An ability to take responsibility for their studies and professional development, especially as it relates to personal development planning (PDP) within a digitally networked world.
* L4.9 The ability to develop and sustain well-justified arguments through a range of media including writing, public speaking, and visual presentations.

**Indicative syllabus content**

* Defining Central and Eastern Europe and its place in the world.
* Short history of Central an Eastern Europe since 1945: Communistic legacy and European transition.
* Democratisation in Central and Eastern Europe.
* Marketization of Central and Eastern European states' economies.
* Central and Eastern Europe between the EU and Russia.
* Poland as a Growing European Power.
* Ukraine, Belarus, and their Maneuvering Between East and West.
* Baltic States on Their "Way Back" to Europe.
* Regional integration processes.
* Balkans: From integration to disintegration and back.
* Relations of Central and Eastern European countries with external powers.
* The students will be expected to attend one seminar with a ECC diplomat accredited in Warsaw, such seminars are organized several times during the academic year by the Foreign Affairs Club at Lazarski University.
* Usually the module will also include one field – trip to a chosen EU institution or government agency.

**Teaching and learning methods**

The module is delivered through interactive seminars designed to encourage critical engagement with the key themes of Central and Eastern European politics. Each seminar incorporates a combination of instructor-led discussions, student presentations, case study analyses, and structured debates to facilitate active learning. These methods allow students to critically assess the historical, geopolitical, and economic dimensions of the region, apply theoretical frameworks to post-communist transformations and evaluate regional and international policy developments. To enhance analytical and research skills, students will engage with diverse sources, including academic literature, policy reports, and media content, fostering information literacy and independent learning.

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| Activity type | Category | Student learning and teaching hours\* |
| Lecture | Scheduled |  |
| Seminar | Scheduled | 60 |
| Tutorial | Scheduled |  |
| Project supervisor | Scheduled |  |
| Demonstration | Scheduled |  |
| Practical classes and workshops | Scheduled |  |
| Supervised time in studio/workshop | Scheduled |  |
| Fieldwork | Scheduled |  |
| External visits | Scheduled |  |
| Work based learning | Scheduled |  |
| Scheduled online learning | Scheduled |  |
| Other learning | Scheduled |  |
| Total scheduled |  | 60 |
| Placement | Placement |  |
| Independent study | Independent | 140 |
| Total student learning and teaching hours |  | 200 |

\*hours per activity type are indicative and subject to change.

**Assessment rationale: why has this assessment been used for this module?**

**Academic essay and its presentation**: Students working in pairs or in groups of three (group work) will be allocated a research topic (one which presents a testable hypothesis and methods for its verification), one which they will write an academic essay 1500 words long to present it in class. The presentation will last 20 minutes for pairs and 30 minutes for groups of three, with each student given equal speaking time and assessed individually based on the criteria specified in the next section, each worth 20%.The presentations will be followed by a 15-minute Q&A session, helping students develop skills for real-life public engagement and enhancing their employability in fields such as diplomacy, international organizations, public affairs, lobbying, and related careers.

Students will be informed about the ethical considerations of AI usage in essay and presentation preparation and may use it for preliminary research, literature inquiry, brainstorming ideas, improving language and writing style, fact-checking and cross-referencing sources, and preparing for potential Q&A sessions. This task will contribute 60% of the final grade, with essay worth 30% and the presentation 30% ( LOs 3, 4, 5, 7).

**Final exam:** The final exam (60 minutes) is designed to assess students' knowledge and understanding of key concepts covered in the module. It provides a platform for evaluating their critical thinking, synthesis of information, and ability to apply analytical frameworks within the context of Central and Eastern European political dynamics. The exam will consist of two questions: one will require policy-relevant analysis, focusing on concrete recommendations for policymakers (authentic assessment), while the other will involve a more research-oriented and analytical response(LOs 1, 2 and 6).

**Assessment criteria: what criteria will be used to assess my work on this module?**

**Academic essay and its PP presentation:** The essay and the presentation will be assessed according to the following criteria: (1) clarity of explanation, (2) use of sources, (3) quality of argument and analysis, (4) contextual understanding and factual accuracy, and (5) ability to answer questions.

**Final Exam:** The final exam will be assessed based on: (1) relevance and precision – ability to directly address the exam questions with concise and well-structured responses, (2) analytical depth –quality of analysis, critical thinking, and application of relevant concepts, (3) policy application and practical insight – for the policy-oriented question, the ability to formulate clear, evidence-based, and actionable recommendations, (4) use of theoretical and empirical perspectives – for the research-oriented question, the ability to synthesize information and apply relevant frameworks, (5) clarity and coherence – logical structure, readability, and effectiveness in communicating ideas within the 500-word limit.

The assessment(s) will examine to what extent the student has demonstrated ability to:

* Examine the conceptualization of Central and Eastern Europe, considering its geographical, historical, economic, and geopolitical dimensions within global politics.
* Analyze the historical trajectory of Central and Eastern Europe since 1945, focusing on the communist legacy and the process of European transition and using historical and structural analysis
* Evaluate the systemic transformations in post-communist states, including democratization, Europeanization, geopolitical reorientation, and marketization, using theoretical and empirical perspectives.
* Analyze the geopolitical positioning of Central and Eastern Europe between the European Union and Russia.
* Examine regional integration processes within Central and Eastern Europe, evaluating their political, economic, and security implications.
* Demonstrate independent learning by engaging with a range of media formats, including writing, public speaking, and visual presentations.

**Sources**

Wolchik, S. L., and Curry, J. L. (2018). *Central and East European Politics: From Communism to Democracy.* 4th ed. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc

Csergő, Z., Eglitis D.S, Pickering P.M. (2022), *Central and East European Politics Changes and Challenges*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Fagan, A., Kopecky, P. (2018), *The Routledge Handbook of East European Politics*, Routledge.

Rotschild, J., and Wingfield, N. M. (2000). *Return to diversity: a political history of East Central Europe since World War II.* Oxford University Press

Zieba, R. (2023), *Politics and security of Central and Eastern Europe*, Springer.

An annually updated reading list including a list of other resources such as contemporary journal articles, reports, magazines and blogs will be provided.

In addition, students will be expected to carry out independent research to explore topics within contemporary publications in order to broaden their knowledge and understanding beyond the core content delivered in lectures.