

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF POST-SOCIALISM

Ethnographic Accounts and Anthropological Theories in and of East-Central Europe

Spring 2008
Masaryk University in Brno

This course gives an overview of the major themes and paradigms in the cultural anthropological research of late-state-socialist and post-socialist societies. Thus, it explores both the palette of various fields that have been seen as specific to the East-Central European region, as well as the important shifts of attention from one topic to another over the course of the past three decades. Although there will be references to state-socialist experiences on other continents, the main cultural-historical focus will remain on European satellite states of the former Soviet Union.

The format of the course is a combination of brief lectures and a thorough discussion of assigned readings. The students are encouraged to conduct a brief ethnographic research on cultural practices and write down the observations in a field diary, read both classic and innovative ethnographies as well as theoretical syntheses of the relevant literature, and be prepared to give concise yet in-depth presentations on them. Few of the texts are missing as they were unavailable during the making of this reader (these are marked with a bold asterisk and should be delivered or referred in class. Also, some of the texts are marked in bold letters – these are required reading for all students. The other are recommended for selection for the class presentation.

March 27	14.30–15.50	What Is East-Central Europe? Political and Cultural Geographies
March 27	16.05–17.25	What Was Socialism? Historical and Economic Conceptualizations
March 27	17.40–19.00	East-Central Europe as an Area of Anthropological Studies
April 10	14.30–15.50	Political Theories of State Socialism and Their Practical Critique
April 10	16.05–17.25	Economic Reforms, Consumer Socialism, Second Economy
April 10	17.40–19.00	Theories and Histories of the Transition
April 24	14.30–15.50	Wild East: Global Capitalism in East-Central Europe
April 24	16.05–17.25	Privatization and Consumerism: Discourses on Normality
April 24	17.40–19.00	Trajectories of Social Change after 1989
May 15	14.30–15.50	Emergence of Nationalism in the Post-Socialist Context
May 15	16.05–17.25	Memory and Forgetting: Rethinking the Past and the Authentic
May 15	17.40–19.00	Politics of Identity: Discourses Inclusion and Exclusion
June	TBA	<i>Final papers due</i>

The course grades will be based on written work and class participation. The in-class presentation of selected readings and active participation in the classroom discussions will account for 30 percent, completion of the brief research assignment on ethnographic observations for 30 percent, and submitting the final take-home essay for 40 percent of the grade. Specific readings for the successive topics of the course will be distributed separately in a reader that is available either in print or through the IS (Information System).

The course meets four times this spring on March 27, April 10, April 24, and May 15 for three 80-minute sessions each time.

Miklós Vörös
miklos.voros@gmail.com or
38322@mail.muni.cz