

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF POST-SOCIALISM

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

Autumn 2009
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 the European satellite states of the former Soviet Union.

The format of the course is a combination of lectures and thorough seminar discussions of the assigned readings. 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. The course meets four times this autumn on October 1, October 15, October 29, and November 12 for three 80-minute sessions each time.

October 1	15.00–16.20	What Is East-Central Europe? Political and Cultural Geographies
October 1	16.35–17.55	What Was Socialism? Historical and Economic Conceptualizations
October 1	18.10–19.30	East-Central Europe as an Area of Anthropological Studies
October 15	15.00–16.20	Political and Economic Theories of State Socialism
October 15	16.35–17.55	Economic Reforms, Consumer Socialism, Second Economy
October 15	18.10–19.30	Theories and Histories of the Transition
October 29	15.00–16.20	Wild East: Global Capitalism in East-Central Europe
October 29	16.35–17.55	Privatization, Consumerism, and the Discourse on Normality
October 29	18.10–19.30	Trajectories of Social and Cultural Change after 1989
November 12	15.00–16.20	History and Identity in the Post-Socialist Context
November 12	16.35–17.55	Forms of Nationalism in East-Central Europe
November 12	18.10–19.30	Gender and Generation: Enduring Traditions of Exclusion
November 30		<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. It is not allowed to miss more than one seminar session – sign up for the course only if you are able to be present during all classes. The assigned ethnographic observations will be conducted before November 5 and their results discussed during the class of November 12. Final essays are to be submitted by November 30 and the course grades will be in the Information System (IS) during the first week of December. Specific readings for the successive topics of the course will be distributed separately in a reader that is available either in print or in an electronic form through the IS.

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