

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF POST-SOCIALISM

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

Spring 2009
Masaryk University, 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. The course meets four times this spring on October 2, October 16, October 30, and November 13 for three 80-minute sessions each time.

March 26	15.00–15.50	What Is East-Central Europe? Political and Cultural Geographies
March 26	16.05–17.25	What Was Socialism? Historical and Economic Conceptualizations
March 26	17.40–19.00	East-Central Europe as an Area of Anthropological Studies
April 9	15.00–15.50	Political Theories of State Socialism and Their Practical Critique
April 9	16.05–17.25	Economic Reforms, Consumer Socialism, Second Economy
April 9	17.40–19.00	Theories and Histories of the Transition
April 23	15.00–15.50	Wild East: Global Capitalism in East-Central Europe
April 23	16.05–17.25	Privatization, Consumerism, and the Discourse on Normality
April 23	17.40–19.00	Trajectories of Social and Cultural Change after 1989
May 7	15.00–15.50	History and National Identity in the Post-Socialist Context
May 7	16.05–17.25	Forms of Nationalism in East-Central Europe
May 7	17.40–19.00	Gender and Generation: Enduring Traditions of Exclusion
May	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. 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 October 30 and their results discussed during the class of November 13. 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 (Information System).

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