

Post-Soviet and Post-Revolutionary Ukraine: Socio-Economic and Political Transformation or “How did we get here, and why did it happen?”

Course syllabus

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Course Description:

In 2013-2014 Ukraine experienced an unprecedented series of events. After 3 months of peaceful protest, followed by several days of mass violence, the seemingly immovable and blatantly corrupt regime of President Viktor Yanukovich suddenly disintegrated. After Yanukovich’s flight, Russian President Vladimir Putin embarked on an unprecedented violation of international law that resulted in both the annexation of Crimea, and the destruction of the post-Cold War global security order. Whereas the revolutionary events that led to the removal of Yanukovich were largely informed by economic and social demands (e.g. de-regulation, transparency, public safety and personal dignity), Russia’s aggression was rationalized through an appeal to identity issues (language, ethnicity).

The objective of this course is to contextualize the antecedents of 2014 by analyzing the main historical developments in Ukrainian society since independence, focusing on two corollary processes: 1) economic change, including both privatization and new start-up entrepreneurship, and 2) identity shifts, including regional, memory, and linguistic dimensions. The underlying hypothesis of the course is that Ukraine’s 2014 revolution and its aftermath were not without antecedents. During the previous 25 years, Ukrainian society experienced radical change in its economy, in its polity, in its social practices (*habitus*), and analysis of these transformations is key to understanding both the preconditions and aftermath of recent revolutionary events.

During the first class, the instructor will provide a “participant view” of the Revolution of Dignity, and will note certain key events of 2013-2014 that will be contextualized in the course. The second class will provide a historical overview of Ukraine’s two decades of independence, and then in subsequent classes, we will delve deeper into economic changes including the privatization process, and how gradualism resulted in oligarchy. On the flip-side, the phenomenon of post-Soviet entrepreneurship will be examined – focusing on where did new business owners (key to both the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity) come from? In this part of the course, students will be encouraged to answer some key questions: 1) was privatization of Ukraine’s legacy Soviet-era assets really as important to the country’s future socio-economic development as one would gather from the literature?; 2) were “oligarchs” really in control? These questions will lead us to an examination of the structure of Ukraine’s post-Soviet elite, and political change more generally. Students will be encouraged to ask: 1) was the ‘*homo sovieticus*’ characterization of Ukraine’s post-Soviet cultural legacy valid, and if so for how long?; 2) to what extent are Ukrainians European in their values, and when did the values shift occur?; 3) are regional differences (e.g. linguistic, identity, historical) exaggerated or real?

The course will consist of daily class discussions, and reading assignments. A final “field research” assignment will be presented in groups.

Course requirements

This course is conducted in seminar format. Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions based on the assigned readings. Class participation will be graded.

At the start of the course, students will be assigned a group field research task that will involve interviewing (for those with language skills) and/or observing social practices in a typical urban setting (e.g. market, café, restaurant, park) and/or examining literature on a given topic – e.g. politics, economy, identity. On the final day of the course, observed social practices and/or research results will be presented by each group, and analyzed using the frameworks learned during the course.

Grades

Grades will be assigned according to the following breakdown:

Class participation - 60% Group presentation on last day of classes - 40%

Class topics and readings:

Class 1	Ukraine's 2013-2014 Revolution of Dignity: Reflections of a Participant-Observer	M. Wynnyckyj: Facebook Notes
Class 2	Ukraine's post-Soviet economic transformation – what happened, and why?	P. D'Anieri Understanding Ukrainian politics: power, politics, and institutional design NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2007 OR A. Aslund How Ukraine Became a Market Economy and Democracy Washington: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2012
Class 3	Privatization and the rise of oligarchs	- Puglisi R. "Rise of the Ukrainian Oligarchs" Democratization 2003, pp. 99-123 - Puglisi R. "Clashing Agendas? Economic Interests, Elite Coalitions and Prospects for Co-operation between Russia and Ukraine" <i>Europe-Asia Studies</i> Vol. 55, No. 6, 2003, 827-845 - Swain A. "Soft capitalism and a hard industry: virtualism, the "transition industry" and the restructuring of the Ukrainian coal industry" 2006
Class 4	Entrepreneurship in post-Soviet Ukraine	- Codagnone, Cristiano. "New Entrepreneurs: Continuity or Change in Russian Economy and Society?" Reprinted from: Grancelli, Bruno (ed.) Social Change and Modernization: Lessons from Eastern Europe. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995 - Korzhov, G. "Entrepreneurs and the Perspectives of the Emergence of the Middle Classes in Post-Communist Ukraine" <i>International Journal of Sociology</i> vol. 29, no. 4 Winter 1999-2000. pp. 33-53 - McMillan J. & Woodruff, C. "The Central Role of Entrepreneurs in Transition Economies" <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> , vol. 16, no. 3. Summer 2002, pp. 153-170. - Williams, C., Round, J., Rodgers, P. "Evaluating the Motives of Informal Entrepreneurs: some lessons from Ukraine" in <i>Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship</i> vol. 14, no. 1, 2009 pp. 59-71 - Wynnyckyj, M. "Institutions and Entrepreneurs: cultural evolution in the 'de novo' market sphere in post-Soviet Ukraine" PhD Dissertation, 2003 http://www.ekmair.ukma.kiev.ua/handle/123456789/1228

Class 5	New/old Ukrainian political elites, the Orange Revolution, and the antecedents of the Revolution of Dignity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Way L. "The Sources and Dynamics of Competitive Authoritarianism in Ukraine" <u>Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics</u>, Vol. 20, No. 1, March 2004, pp. 143–161 - Kudelia S. "Revolutionary Bargain: The Unmaking of Ukraine's Autocracy through Pacting" <u>Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics</u> , vol. 23, no. 1, (2007), 77–100 - Lane D. "The Orange Revolution: 'People's Revolution' or Revolutionary Coup?" <u>The British Journal of Politics & International Relations</u> November 2008, pp. 525–549 - Wilson, A. <u>Ukraine's Orange Revolution</u> New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005
Class 6	National identity and language politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wilson A. <u>Ukraine: unexpected nation</u> - Shulman S. "Cultural foundations of Ukrainian national identity" <u>Ethnic and Racial Studies</u> 1999 pp. 1011-1036 - Osipian A. "Why Donbass Votes for Yanukovich: Confronting the Ukrainian Orange Revolution" <u>Demokratyzatsia</u> 2006 pp. 495-517 - Mykhnenko V., Swain A. "Ukraine's diverging space-economy: The Orange Revolution, post-Soviet developmental models and regional trajectories" in <u>European Urban & Regional Studies</u> vol. 17, no. 2, April 2010, pp. 141-165. - Wynnyckyj, M. "The 1996 Constitution of Ukraine: a reflection of the values of the political elite"http://www.ekmair.ukma.kiev.ua/handle/123456789/1229
Class 7	Student presentations	Course wrap-up