Political Science 695: Politics and History
Tuesday 2:25-4:55pm
347 Education

Professor Jason Wittenberg
221 North Hall
Office Hours: Wed 10am-12pm, and by appointment.
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Course Description

According to William Faulkner, the past is never dead, it is not even past. This seminar will investigate how an examination of earlier events can inform our understanding of contemporary politics. Nearly everyone agrees that history somehow matters, but there are many debates concerning just how much and the mechanisms of history’s influence. What role do historical legacies, path dependence, and past critical junctures play in contemporary politics? What are the best methods for illuminating the influence of the past? We explore these and other questions through close examination an eclectic array of materials from history, sociology, and political science.

Course Requirements

As a seminar, this course depends for its success on active student participation. Therefore you are expected to attend class regularly, do the assigned reading, complete any assignments, and participate in class discussions. The grade for this course will depend class participation (25%), short reaction papers due each week (25%), and a major research paper (50%). Your research paper is due on the last day of class, December 14. You must attend class and turn in all papers to get a passing grade in the course. If you need to miss a class, please inform me in advance. I do not grade on a curve, so you are not competing with your classmates for A’s. Everyone who does A-level work will receive an A.

Academic misconduct, also known as cheating and/or plagiarism, will not be tolerated. For information on what constitutes misconduct please see: http://www.wisc.edu/students/amsum.htm

Course Readings

The course readings are available on Electronic Reserve at: http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/College/circreserve/ereserves/dept.htm
Be aware that there is more than one course lumped under PS695, so be sure you print the correct readings!

**Note on Readings:** I am always discovering new and better readings. Therefore I reserve the right to assign different materials than the ones listed here.

**Course Outline**

**September 7: Introduction**

**September 14: How We Know the Past**


**September 21: Pathways to Modern Politics**


**September 28: Introduction to Comparative Historical Analysis**


**October 5: Timing and Sequence**


**October 12: Historical Legacies: An Introduction**
October 19: Communist Legacies in Eastern Europe-3 page paper outlines due


October 26: Class Presentations. NOTE: DATE AND TIME WILL BE RESCHEDULED

November 2: Pre-Communist Legacies in Eastern Europe


November 9: Assessing the Impact of Historical Legacies in Eastern Europe-8 page paper fragment due

$ Grzegorz Ekiert and Stephen Hanson, eds., *Capitalism and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe.* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), Chapters 1 and 2.

**November 16: A Critical Look at Historical Legacies (and History)**


**November 23: Film, title TBA**

**November 30: The Paradox of Persistence**


**December 7: Individual Meetings with Students**

**December 14: Semester Wrap-Up-papers due**