

Recent Political History of East-Central Europe

The aim of the course is to provide students with a general overview of the basic issues and threads in history of the countries of the Soviet bloc. The course will focus on East-Central Europe since the Second World War until the collapse of Communist regimes in 1989. The starting point will be the analysis to what extent the wartime experience of this region differed from Western Europe and how it reshaped the political and social structures, facilitating the subsequent Communist takeover and profound transformation it brought about. The bulk of the course will concentrate on the post-war period, encompassing the most pivotal political and social trends throughout the region, grasping both their common, supranational features and the specific traits of particular countries. The course will analyze the processes of taking over power by the Communists in the 1940s., creating of the Stalinist system and its subsequent decomposition after Stalin's death. It will include the reflection on origins and analytical utility of the concept of totalitarianism. An important part will be the analysis of revolts, social movements and opposition groups that defied the political status quo. The Soviet bloc will be looked upon as well in terms of its growing internal diversity and tensions, and its role in the Cold War.