POLAND AND ITS NEIGHBORS, 1945 TO THE PRESENT

Meetings: online, asynchronous
Instructor: Professor Neal Pease
Office Hours: Virtual: contact by email, as and when needed
E-mail: pease@uwm.edu
Final Exam: F May 21, deadline for turn in 5:30 pm
E-mail Classlist: hist348-poland@uwm.edu

Theme of Course

To survey the history of east central Europe from the Second World War to present. The course will focus on Poland, the key country in the area, and a crucial factor in 20th century history, but will also give attention to Hungary, the former Czechoslovakia, and the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany), as well as the former Soviet Union. Students will gain familiarity with a region of the world, traditionally regarded as obscure, but that in fact has exerted an immense impact on modern times. Students will consider such important matters as the origin, course, and consequences of World War II, the Cold War, and the rise, evolution, and collapse of Communism in Europe. Prereq: jr st; satisfaction of GER English Composition competency req.

Requirements

1. Attentive study of weekly annotated PowerPoint lecture presentations posted on course Canvas site and completion of reading/viewing assignments.

2. Two essays, each 7 -10 pages long, on one of the suggested essay topics handed out two weeks before the due date, or a review of any book listed as “recommended reading” in the syllabus (not required course readings, or reference works). Papers are due F Feb 26 and F Apr 9. Papers turned in late will be penalized in grading unless the student asks for, and expressly receives, an extension in advance of the due date. Extensions will be granted only for good reason, such as medical or other emergency.

3. A cumulative, take-home, open book final examination composed of essay questions, to be turned in no later than F May 21, 5:30 pm.
For purposes of grading, the final examination will count roughly 1/3 of the total, with the two papers counting for 1/3 apiece.

All coursework must be turned in to receive a passing grade for the course.

If they wish, students may submit one extra credit paper, at least 5 pages in length, written on a topic approved by the instructor. Papers deemed worthy of extra credit will raise a student’s course grade one half step, for instance, from B to B+. Extra credit papers must be turned in no later than the last day of class, F May 13. No more than one extra credit paper per student. Extra credit papers will not be accepted as substitutes for paper assignments not completed or the final exam.

**Graduate Credit Requirements**

Graduate students wishing to receive graduate credit for the course must complete one longer paper (25-30 pp., roughly), on a topic approved by the instructor. The longer paper takes the place of the two shorter papers required of undergraduates. Each student shall confer individually with the instructor in a meeting in which expectations for the paper appropriate to the topic will be defined. Graduate papers should employ as many secondary sources as needed to serve the requirements of the project, and primary sources when available. The use of non-English language materials, where appropriate, is encouraged but not required. All papers should be prepared in conformity with the University of Chicago guidelines, the official style of the Department of History. It is expected that graduate students will consult regularly with the instructor on the progress of their paper. For purposes of grading graduate students, the paper will count roughly 75% of the total with the final exam counting for 25%.

**E-mail Classlist**

The classlist allows you to send an e-mail message to all members of the class at once, or to receive one from any member of the class, including the instructor. The instructor will use the classlist to post announcements and messages concerning the course. Students should pay close attention to such posts, and it will be their responsibility to monitor these posts and carry out any instructions they might include. Failure to notice such messages will not be accepted as an excuse. The address is: hist348-poland@uwm.edu. Any message intended only for the instructor should be sent to his e-mail: pease@uwm.edu.

**Disabled Students**

Should you have a disability, please do not hesitate to consult with me so that any necessary accommodations can be arranged.
Academic Advising in History

All L&S students have to declare and complete an academic major to graduate. If you have not yet declared a major, you are encouraged to do so, even if you are at an early stage in your college education. If you are interested in declaring a major (or minor) in History, or if you need academic advising in History, please visit the Department of History undergraduate program web page at https://uwm.edu/history/undergraduate/ for information on how to proceed.

Academic integrity at UWM

UWM and I expect each student to be honest in academic performance. Failure to do so may result in discipline under rules published by the Board of Regents (UWS 14). The penalties for academic misconduct such as cheating or plagiarism can include a grade of "F" for the course and expulsion from the University.

UWM policies on course-related matters: See the website of the Secretary of the University, at: http://uwm.edu/secu/wp-content/uploads/sites/122/2016/12/Syllabus-Links.pdf

UWM and Covid-19

UWM has issued the following statement about its policies for attempting to maintain health and safety of students, faculty, staff, and the wider university community. Since this course is conducted online, it is not directly relevant to course procedures, but you are encouraged to read and familiarize yourself with it: https://uwm.edu/cetl/covid-19-syllabus-statements/

Readings

There are no textbooks assigned for this course that you are expected to purchase or acquire. You will be assigned to read selected chapters from the two books below as we progress through the semester. The assignments are accessible through the UWM Library site, via the links in the syllabus below:


In addition, students will find at various points within the syllabus several video documentaries and short readings, which are also required.

Course Outline

What follows is an outline of lectures, exams, due dates, and reading assignments. In most cases, reading assignments are only approximately coordinated with lecture topics.

Jan 25-29  Introduction  
Reading: Porter-Szücs, Introduction

Feb 1-5   Second World War  
Topics for first paper sent out

Feb 8-12  WW2: Poland between Hitler and Stalin

Feb 15-19  The Communist Takeover in Poland and East central Europe  

Feb 22-26  The Cold War and the Stalin Era/First paper due F Feb 26

Mar 1-5   1956: First Cracks in the Soviet Bloc  
Video: “The 1956 Hungarian Revolution (BBC)”  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihS_D0Btaz8

Mar 8-12  “Normal” Communism in Central Europe  
Reading: Porter-Szücs, ch. 10, “Communism and Consumerism”  
Topics for second paper sent out

Video: “The Cold War: The Prague Spring 1968 and the Crisis in Czechoslovakia”  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNYVJjyoqWQ

Mar 21-28   SPRING BREAK!
Mar 29-Apr 2  Communist Central Europe in the 1970s
Reading: Vaclav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless” (1978)
https://hac.bard.edu/amor-mundi/the-power-of-the-powerless-vaclav-havel-2011-
Porter-Szűcs, ch. 11, “The End of the PRL, 1976-1989”

Apr 5-9  The Polish Pope, John Paul II/Second paper due F Apr 9
Video: “Pope John Paul II, in memoriam—Communism”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJDKINa11rs

Apr 12-16  Solidarity and Martial Law in Poland
Video: “Lech Wałęsa: The Shipyard”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_kVbLubBxM

Apr 19-23  Gorbachev and the Breakdown of Communism
Questions for final exam sent out

Apr 26-30  From Communism to Democracy

May 3-7  Poland and Central Europe after Communism
Reading: Porter-Szűcs, ch. 12, “Shock Therapy”, and ch. 13, “Politics in the Third
Republic”

May 21  FINAL EXAM, FINAL EXAM, deadline for turning in, 5:30 pm

Recommended Reading

A selected list of books on important aspects of Polish and east central European history, politics,
and international affairs from World War II to the present. Any of these would be suitable as
subjects of a book report, or for use as a resource for research papers. All titles are held in the Golda
Meir Library collections.

B. F. Abrams, The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism
(2004)
D. Ackerman, The Zookeeper’s Wife—A War Story (2007). Gripping, readable account of Warsaw
zookeepers hiding Jews during WW2—much better than the later film version
interviews the former East German subjects who informed on him to the Communist government
after being granted access to his secret police files Less angry than a sensitive exploration of what
motivated people to collaborate with their dictatorial government.
N. Bethell, *Gomulka, His Poland and His Communism* (1972). Biography of one of the more significant Polish Communist leaders.
N. Bethell, *1939, The War Hitler Won* (1972)
D. Childs, *Fall of the GDR, Germany’s Road to Unity* (2001)
M. Gorbachev and Z. Mlynar, *Conversations with Gorbachev* (2002)
E. Hoffman, *Shtetl, the Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews* (1997)
C. S. Maier, *Dissolution, the Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany* (1997)
M. Meng, *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland* (2011)
A. Michnik et al., *In Search of Lost Meaning, the New Eastern Europe* (2011). The first of three volumes of essays on Polish issues by a onetime leading opposition activist during the Communist era who remained a most influential figure in the era of democratic Poland.


C. Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (1953). The greatest modern Polish poet analyzes the appeal of Communism to intellectuals; a classic of its kind.


E. Ringelbaum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto* (1958)


M. C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (1997)


W. Szpilman, *The Pianist, the Extraordinary True Story of One Man’s Survival in Warsaw, 1939-1945* (2003). The basis for the well known film of the same name.


J. K. Zawodny, *Death in the Forest, the Story of the Katyn Forest Massacre* (1988)


**Useful Websites**

http://www.ecs.gda.pl/title,Jezyk,pid,2,lang,2.html. Site, in English, of European Solidarity Centre, a museum and library in in Gdańsk, Poland, devoted to the history of Solidarity, the Polish trade union and civil resistance movement, and other opposition movements of Communist Eastern Europe.
https://www.jhi.pl/. Site of Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw, in English.

**Handbooks and Stylebooks**

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago Manual of Style is the preferred guide to preparation of papers and theses of the UWM Department of History. Print versions are available in Golda Meir Library. The most recent edition can be accessed online at: