

PSC 710.MV:
Central and Eastern Europe: US Assistance and Democratization

Instructor: Sharon Wolchik, Professor of Political Science and International Affairs
CRN: 86427 Behavioral and Social Sciences GCR
In LIBR PRUB, W 1:00 to 3:30
Open to freshmen and sophomores

To what extent has the US contributed to efforts to establish democracy and market economies in Central and Eastern Europe? What lessons, if any, are to be learned from our role in the transition in this region? In the period immediately after the end of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, political leaders proclaimed their desires to create democratic political systems and market economies. They also announced their intention to move “back to Europe,” or become members of European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. The US government undertook numerous programs to support this process. In this course, we will look at how effective these programs have been and what this experience has to tell us about future US assistance programs and foreign policy.

The class will feature meetings with some of the actors involved in this process, including US government officials who have worked with our aid programs; representatives of international organizations, such as the IMF, World Bank, and EU; and embassy officials from some of the recipient countries. We will also hear from critics of US efforts. Students will engage in discussions and small group projects to decide what we need to know about democracy and economic reform, as well as about the politics, history, and societies of the countries involved, to evaluate US policy and make recommendations for the future. Students will present their analyses in class and also make posters to share their findings with others.

The course will emphasize active learning and student involvement. In addition to a core of assigned readings, teams will be responsible for locating materials on the internet and in print.

Sharon Wolchik is Professor of Political Science and International Affairs. For the past five years she has served as a consultant to the East European Constitutionalism Project, which focused on retraining civic education teachers in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary.