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| University: Comenius University in Bratislava | |
| Faculty: Faculty of Natural Sciences UK in Bratislava | |
| Code: | Title of course: Political Geography |
| Form of Study: lectures+seminars | |
| Number of contact hours: per week: 3 (2 lecture hours + 1 seminar hours) per level/semester: 39 | |
| Method of Study: face-to-face/distance/hybrid mode | |
| Number of credits: 4 | |
| Semester: W | |
| Degree/Level: Master | |
| Prerequisites: - | |
| Grading (Assessment/Evaluation) 1. seminars (20% weight on the overall evaluation): elaboration of two semestral works and their presentation; 2. written exam (80% weight on the overall assessment): test (open questions). The course has a standardized grading system which is identified below: A (91-100%): Outstanding, excellent work (exceptional performance with strong evidence of original thinking and obvious capacity to analyze, synthesize and evaluate); B (81 – 90%): Good, competent work; laudable performance with evidence of some original thinking, good problem solving ability, exhibiting a serious, responsible engagement with the course content; C (73 – 80%): Adequate, reasonably satisfactory work; fair performance but infrequent evidence of original thinking or the capacity to analyze, satisfies the minimum requirements of the course; D (66 – 72%): Less acceptable work; relatively weak performance with little evidence of original thinking or ability to analyze or synthesize course material; E (60 – 65%): Minimally acceptable work; very weak performance with little evidence of original thinking, showing inadequate grasp of some basic elements of the course. Fx (under 60%): Inadequate work; poor performance that indicates a lack of understanding or misunderstanding of essential subject matter. | |
| Objectives and outcomes: The course presents selected, socially relevant and actual problems and approaches of contemporary political geography. It relies on an understanding of key political ideologies influencing contemporary political geography. The student will penetrate into the basic knowledge of the theory of democracy, the processes of spatial spread of democracy and democratization in several spatial dimensions. He will be familiar with the current problems of electoral geography, electoral systems, issues of representation, and procedures for the geographical analysis of election results. From the political geography of the regional and local level, it will focus on the basic principles of the functioning of local and regional self-government, the concept of local autonomy, and relations between levels of government (including crisis situations). The student will be well-oriented in the political-geographical problems of the Slovakia and Central European area. The subject also develops the communication skills of students in the field of presenting complex political-geographical problems. | |
| Brief outline of the course: Political ideologies and geography, the main political ideologies – introduction to the course; the essence, meaning and current understanding of ideologies; political ideologies and geography; political ideologies and democracy; the main ideologies - liberalism, conservatism, socialism, their meaning, development and subdivision; | |

Anarchism, nationalism, fascism and fundamentalism - anarchism, geography of resistance; nationalism – nation, national identity, emergence of peoples, self-determination, types of nationalism; fascism – birth, fascism and Nazism, fascism after World War 2; religious fundamentalism and religious nationalism, fundamentalisms of different religions and their manifestations (terrorism);

Cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, ecologism, feminism - cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan democracy, their criticism; multiculturalism and interculturalism; greening – types of ecologism; feminism, waves of feminism; links to political geography;

Democracy and political geography - democracy as an object of study of political geography; introduction to the theory of democracy, the basic forms of democracy; selected models of democracy - their spatial and socio-economic context; classical Athenian democracy; elitism and democratic elitism, pluralist democracy; the principles of the functioning of contemporary democracy; forms of political participation;

Democratization and differentiation of democracy in the world - democratization or why somewhere democracy has developed and not elsewhere; political, economic and cultural factors of democratisation; fundamental space-time trends in the spread of democracy in the world; the basic categories of democratic regimes; "non-democracies" – authoritarian and hybrid regimes; the state of democracy in the contemporary world; a multicriterial assessment of the state of democracy;

Elections and electoral systems - elections as an interdisciplinary problem; choices and their importance in society; elections in the context of the political and party system, electoral legislation; free elections; the right to vote (active, passive); nominations; electoral systems – definition, basic elements; electoral systems – basic types (majority, proportional, parallel); constituencies – the issue of their delimitation; electoral formula; electronic options;

Voter behavior and voter participation - voter behavior - definition, schools (sociological, psychological, economic), theories of voter behavior (concept of conflict lines/splitting - Lipset and Rokkan, model of primary voter behavior - Newman and Sheth, conceptual framework of voter behavior - Thomassen); voter behaviour in Slovakia (Madleňák), voter turnout (theory of rational selection, theory of cultural modernisation) and influencing factors (social status, political context, election campaign);

Electoral geography and election results - electoral geography – definition, status, formation, key works, topics; spatial differentiation of election results; temporal stability of spatial differentiation; geographical factors influencing the election results (neighbourhood effect, vote on a contentious item, contagion effect); election results in Slovakia – spatial differentiation and explanatory factors;

Political geography of the regional level - regionalism, forms, meaning; meso level of government and regional self-government; legitimacy and regional elections; regional identity; regional self-government in Slovakia – creation, operation, competences, financing, Europeanization;

Political geography of the local level and urban policy - political geography of the local level; ideological influences; local and urban policy - definition, causes of emergence, concepts, development of urban policy, traditional and current dimensions; europeanisation and policy transfer; intergovernmental relations;

Local democracy and local autonomy - local democracy - representative and participatory features, direct democracy at local level; types of power at the local level; the theory of the local state; local autonomy – the concept of autonomy, possible interpretations, spatial and non-spatial autonomy; formation of autonomy; autonomy of local government and decentralisation; partial autonomy at local level, sublocal autonomy;

Exercises – preparation and elaboration of two analytically oriented projects on selected current topics of political geography, presentation and discussion of the first project.

Recommended literature:

Barnett, C., Low, M. 2004. Spaces of Democracy. London: Sage.

Buček, J., Plešivčák, M., Przybyla V. 2017. Politická geografia - politické ideológie, demokracia a voľby. Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského.

Held, D. 2006. Models of Democracy. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ladner, A., et al. 2019. Patterns of Local Autonomy in Europe. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Madleňák, T. 2012. Regionálna diferenciácia volebného správania na Slovensku (1998-2010). Bratislava: Veda.

Millard, F. 2004. Elections, Parties and Representation in Post-Communist Europe. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Painter, J., Jeffrey, A. 2009. Political Geography. London: Sage.

Parker, S. 2011. Cities, Politics and Power. London: Routledge.

van der Eijk, C., Franklin, M. 2009. Elections and Voters (Political Analysis). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Yoder, J. A. 2013. Crafting democracy: Regional politics in post-communist Europe. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Language of instruction:

English/Slovak

Additional information: The course will be conducted in face-to-face or distance (or hybrid) mode according to current conditions.

Course evaluation**Total number of students evaluated:**

| A | B | C | D | E | FX |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| a | b | c | d | e | f |

Lecturers/Instructors: prof. RNDr. Ján Buček, CSc., RNDr. Martin Plešivčák, PhD.

Last updated: 21. apríla 2023

Approved by: prof. RNDr. Ján Buček, CSc.