

Peoples, Cultures and Politics of the Balkans

Spring 2008

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PNE 347, extension 3199

Office Hours: Mondays 1:00-2:30

Or by appointment

Course Description

The Balkans encompasses a variety of landscapes, peoples, and cultures. The area has been described both as the “cradle” of Western Civilization, and as the “backwater” of Europe. It has been, however, a major trade and cultural crossroads for millennia. An amazing array of different cultures developed along its shores and its overland trade routes. This course will familiarize students with the “ethnographic islands” of this diverse region within the European and global “currents of history.” Primarily, the course will be dedicated to the anthropological analysis of a number of different genres that describe and represent the region. We will read authoritative historical studies, ethnographies, as well as short stories, poetry, books of travel and fiction. Films will also be recommended for viewing and discussion. Our intention is to consider the various qualities and possibilities offered by each genre to our understanding of the societies situated at the southeast corner of Europe. The cultural diversity of the area will be therefore examined both as a historical and as contemporary phenomenon. The classic survey of Fernand Braudel will serve as the starting point for the historical and cultural landscape of the area. We will consider the legacy of the classical world, the impact of Islam, the emergence of European commercial empires, the impact of the European Enlightenment in national movements, the emergence of modernization, and the socialist experiments in the hinterlands. Ethnographic analyses of such phenomena as the construction of the backward Balkan peasant, the notions of honor and shame, the urban-rural divide and the depopulation of the agricultural areas during modern times will follow. In addition, the course offers a critical overview of the politics of historical continuity and the resurgence of Balkan nationalisms during the last decade of the twentieth century.

Course requirements

The subject matter of the course, the chosen topics, and the national controversies of the region require a great deal of discussion and students need to read the assigned required readings before class and make presentations. Students are also required to take a mid-term examination and write a final research paper (12-15 pages).

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Class participation 30%

Mid-term exam 30%

Final paper 40%

The following books have been ordered at the bookstore and are also on reserve at the library. The rest of the readings will be on e-reserve in the course's conference.

Bringa, Tone Being Bosnian the Muslim way
Brown, Keith The past in question
Cowan, Jane Dance and the Body Politic in Northern Greece
Creed, Gerald Domesticating Revolution
Friedl, Ernestine Vasilika: A village in Modern Greece
Inalcik, Halil The Ottoman Empire
Mazower, Mark The Balkans: A short history

Course sections and readings

Wednesday, January 30
Introduction to the course

Wednesday, February 6
Landscapes: mountains, plains, coasts, and islands

Read:

Braudel, Fernand The Mediterranean Volume 1, Part I, Chapter 4 (e-reserve)
Mazower, Mark The Balkans, Chapter 1
Mellaart J. "A Neolithic city in Turkey" (e-reserve)
Runnels C. and T. Van Andel "Trade and the origins of agriculture in the Eastern Mediterranean" (e-reserve)

Wednesday, February 13
Invasions and empires: Culture areas and trading diasporas

Read:

Topping, Peter "The Southern Argolid from Byzantine to Ottoman times" (e-reserve)
Laiou-Thomadakis, Angeliki Peasant Society in the late Byzantine Empire (Chapter 5) (e-reserve)
Braudel, Fernand The Mediterranean Volume II, Part II, Chapter IV (e-reserve)
Mazower, Mark The Balkans Chapter 2

Wednesday, February 20

Ottoman imperial times

Read:

IINALCIK, Halil The Ottoman Empire (Chapters 1,2,4,5,14,15,16)

KARAKASIDOU, Anastasia Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood, Chapter 2 (e-reserve)

MOLHO, Anthony "The Jewish community of Salonika" (e-reserve)

Wednesday, February 27

For independence and Freedom: New nations-states and population exchanges

Read:

MAZOWER, Mark The Balkans Chapter 3

BYRON, Lord (selected poems and readings) (e-reserve)

MAKRIYIANNIS, Ioannis Memoirs (Chapters 1,2,3) (e-reserve)

LAYOUN, Mary Wedded to the land Chapter 1 (e-reserve)

Wednesday, March 5

Constructing backwardness: Honorable peasants and familial structures

Read:

CAMBELL, John "Honor and the devil" (e-reserve)

FRIEDL, Ernestine Vasilika (Chapters 1,2,4,6)

HAMMEL, E.A. "The Balkan peasant: A view from Serbia" (e-reserve)

HAMMEL E.A. "The zadruga in process" (e-reserve)

Wednesday, March 12

Socialist experiments and the delaying of modernity

Read:

CREED, Gerald Domesticating Revolution

Wednesday, March 19

Mid-term examination

Wednesday, March 26

No class, spring break

Wednesday, April 2

The politics of gender

Read:

COWAN, Jane Dance and the Body politic in Northern Greece

Wednesday, April 9

Religious faiths and social co-existence and the recent awakening of Balkan nationalisms

Read:

Bringa, Tone Being Muslim the Bosnian Way (Introduction, Chapters 1,2,4,6)

Mazower, Mark The Balkans Chapter 4 and Epilogue

Denich, Bette “Dismembering Yugoslavia” (e-reserve)

Wednesday, April 16

The politics of historical continuity

Read:

Brown, Keith The Past in Question (Chapters 1,2,4,6)

Wednesday, April 23

Balkanism revisited

Read:

Todorova, Maria Imagining the Balkans (Introduction, Chapters 3 and 5) (e-reserve)

Karakasidou, Anastasia “The Burden of the Balkans” (e-reserve)

Kaplan, Robert Balkans Ghosts (Prologue, chapters 3, 15, 16)

Wednesday April 30

No class, Ruhlman conference

Wednesday, May 7

Student presentations

Papers due May 21 by 4:30 pm

Have a nice summer