



FAKULTA FILOZOFICKÁ  
ZÁPADOČESKÉ UNIVERZITY  
V PLZNI

## EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT OF THE SUBJECT

### **Politics in Contemporary Central Europe (KAP/1PCCE)**

Department of Politics and International Relations

Lecturer: Petr Krčál

E-mail: [pkrcal@ff.zcu.cz](mailto:pkrcal@ff.zcu.cz)

## 1PCCE: Politics in Contemporary Central Europe

### Basic outline of the course:

The course is taught in English and is intended for international students pursuing their study program at the Faculty of Arts, University of West Bohemia. The course focuses on the politics in the Czech Republic and countries of Central and Southeastern Europe in the present day and in the past and its main goal is to provide students with a basic insight into the issues of politics and political practice within this context. The course also aims to introduce students to a series of theoretical and methodological frameworks that can be applied in areas of research that are close to their interests.

### Main structure of the course:

To provide a broader context and convey a wide range of information, whether from the field of theory, comparative politics, or case studies related to the Central-European context, the teaching of the course is divided among three lecturers.

The coordinator and main lecturer is Petr Krčál ([pkrcal@ff.zcu.cz](mailto:pkrcal@ff.zcu.cz)). In case of any questions related to this course do not hesitate to contact him via email or during his [office hours](#)<sup>1</sup>. During the course, he will be assisted by two other lecturers from the Department of Politics and International Relations who are experts in Central European politics. The staffing of complementary lecturers may vary, and for that reason the students will receive information about them (and their lectures) from the course coordinator at the very beginning of the semester.

The Politics in Contemporary Central Europe course consists of two main parts. The first part is taught by the main coordinator, Petr Krčál, and focuses on introducing selected methodological and theoretical approaches that can be, and often are, used as interpretative tools for contemporary politics.

The second part will commence in the middle of the semester and will be instructed by secondary lecturers. The primary goal of this segment is to furnish students with

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<sup>1</sup> In case of a non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
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information pertaining to the specific context of Central European politics, the political landscape, and its implications from the perspective of political science or international relations.

**To successfully accomplish the course, students are obliged to fulfill following duties:**

The course requirements primarily expect active student engagement in discussions related to the content of lectures, mandatory seminar readings, and discussion topics provided in advance. Consequently, it is assumed that students possess a sufficient level of English proficiency to actively participate in these discussions.

To successfully complete the course, students are required to meet two basic requirements:

**Active participation in seminars:**

According to the course schedule, students must read the mandatory articles and be prepared to discuss them. Students are also expected to be ready for discussions following the lectures. To fulfill this requirement, students are obligated to participate in at least 6 lessons/seminars.

**Presentation:**

Students are required to deliver a final 10-minute presentation during the semester. The presentation should focus on contemporary Central European issues from a political science perspective. The specific topic is at the discretion of the students and depends on their choice. The presentation meeting will be held at the end of the semester, and students will be notified of the specific date. It is advisable to consult the topics with the coordinator beforehand.

The final grade is determined by the combination of fulfilling all requirements. There will be no final exam at the end of the semester.

## The premises where the lessons take place:

The lectures will take place in the premises of the Department of Politics and International Relations that are located in close proximity of the city centre.

The department address is: Jungmannova 1, Pilsen, third floor.



## **The detailed course structure:**

This is a basic introduction to the structure and topics that will be covered during the semester. Specific dates and lessons will be communicated to students at the beginning of the semester.

### **Week 1:**

#### **Title of the lesson:**

Introductory Meeting

#### **Structure of the meeting and its main goal:**

The initial meeting will focus on discussing the course's characteristics and its requirements. The primary goal of this meeting is to introduce the basic course structure and outline the requirements for successful completion. Additionally, the first lesson will serve as an opportunity for all students and the main lecturer to engage in a roundtable discussion and get to know each other.

#### **The required preparation for students:**

All participants should prepare a brief introduction about themselves, their home university, and their country of origin. Additionally, they should be able to discuss their area of interest and field of study. It would be appreciated if all participants could also clarify their motivations and expectations for studying abroad and explain why they have chosen the Faculty of Arts at the University of West Bohemia.

#### **Study materials related to the topic:**

According to the lesson structure, there are no study materials available for this topic.

#### **Knowledge and skills obtained by the lesson:**

- 1/ Orientation in the course structure and schedule.
- 2/ Awareness of the main requirements of successful course accomplishment.

## Week 2:

### **Title of the lesson:**

“Creation of History” as an Instrument of Political Actors

### **Structure of the meeting and its main goal:**

This lesson aims to explain how the social construction of history can be used as a tool for legitimizing and justifying political goals. The lesson is divided into two main parts. In the first part, students will be introduced to the fundamental concepts and theories related to the artificial 'construction of history.' The second part focuses on the practical application of these theories. Students will be provided with examples from the Central European region illustrating how history is employed and instrumentalized by political actors.

### **The required preparation for students:**

There are no compulsory readings for this lecture. However, students should be prepared for a discussion related to the instrumental politicization of history. At a general level, they should be capable of providing elaborate and sophisticated answers to the following questions:

1. Why is the creation of a national mythology important for current political regimes?
2. Can you provide some examples of the instrumentalization of history from your own country?"

### **Study materials related to the topic:**

As a starting point to this topic, students can utilize a following schematic overview of selected points that will be presented in detail during the lecture:

#### 1/ The role of “the past” for “the present”

- A convenient past can be used to justify various political actions and decisions, with politicians often shielding their efforts behind references to glorious histories.

- Historical events can be interpreted in various ways and can be used to legitimize sometimes contradictory political demands.
- All national histories, although seemingly rooted in the past, primarily deal with the present and interpret the past through the lens of contemporary needs.
- The commemoration of significant historical events is a standard tool for creating and sustaining national mythology and shaping collective identity.
- Collective remembrance and collective forgetting play a role in anchoring a specific society in particular values and norms.
- The processes of collective remembrance and forgetting are strongly influenced by political considerations.

## 2/ Political calendar of usable past

- National holidays, which commemorate significant historical events and are celebrated publicly, provide a crucial field of study for understanding contemporary political processes.
- Holidays and their celebrations serve not only as a remembrance of the past, whether glorious or otherwise, but also as a fundamental mechanism for preserving the dominant political and normative order.
- The desired perceptions of past events play a crucial role in national mythology as they help create and perpetuate specific cultural ideals, thus reinforcing the political order.
- This is because the political order relies on references to a well-structured past, which every ideology (and, in turn, the foundation of political order) requires to appear natural.

## 3/ The political and national mythology

The role of myth and mythology in shaping national identity:

- National myths are popular narratives that connect members of a nation through a shared fate, often serving as a tool for national education.
- While national history provides a comprehensive narrative, individual national myths represent episodes within this historical synthesis.
- National myths are frequently associated with military campaigns (both successful and unsuccessful), pivotal historical moments, or influential figures.
- In addition to various smaller myths, the study of national histories also involves complex myths like the "Golden Age" (depicting renowned periods of human existence) and the "National Catastrophe" or "National Trauma" myth, which marks the end of this Golden Age.
- Following a catastrophe, there emerges a period of darkness known as the "Dark Age" myth, contrasting the Golden Age.
- The Dark Age, as an unfavorable phase in a nation's development, can be overcome by a national revival, linked to the myth of national regeneration.

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As an introduction to the topic of the instrumentalization of history, students can also watch a video discussing the concept known as the 'Invention of Tradition,' which is a



conceptual argument put forth and popularized by the collective monograph edited by historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger.



Watching this short video, which provides a schematic explanation of how national identities are constructed, can be also quite useful.





**Knowledge and skills obtained by the lesson:**

- 1/ Orientation in the theoretical framework of political instrumentalization of history.
- 2/ Knowledge about how political actors utilize history in the Central-European region.
- 3/ Familiarity with the Central-European political context.
- 4/ Ability to use main theoretical framework on the context of the country of student's origin.

## Week 3:

### **Title of the lesson:**

Current Forms of Political Populism Illustrated on Cases of Contemporary Czech and Central-European Political Context

### **Structure of the meeting and its main goal:**

The main aim of this lesson is to discuss one of the contemporary highlights of political science research – the topic related to political populism. The lesson will be divided into two main parts. In the first part, students will be introduced to the academic discussion regarding political populism. The main concepts of populism (as an ideology, discourse, and specific logic of communication) will be explained. The primary goal of this part of the lecture is to provide students with a basic theoretical framework that can be (and often is) utilized for the study of political populism.

The second part will focus on empirical case studies of actors who can be labeled as populists. We will discuss two different cases and approaches. This part aims to help students understand how political populism can be studied and analyzed. At a general level, this analytical segment of the lesson should assist students in learning how to create a proper analytical approach, generate data, and interpret them, among other things.

We will select case studies from the Central European region.

### **The required preparation for students:**

There are no compulsory readings related to this lesson. However, students should prepare materials that will help them answer a series of questions to be discussed during the lecture's discussion part:

1. Can you define and discuss the strategies used by populist politicians?
2. Can we talk about the specificity of populism in the Central European region?
3. Are there any notable political populists in this area?

4. Can you analyze the situation in your home country through the lens of the theory of political populism?

### **Study materials related to the topic:**

As a starting point to this topic, students can utilize a following schematic overview of selected points that will be presented in detail during the lecture:

#### **1/ Basic attributes of political populism:**

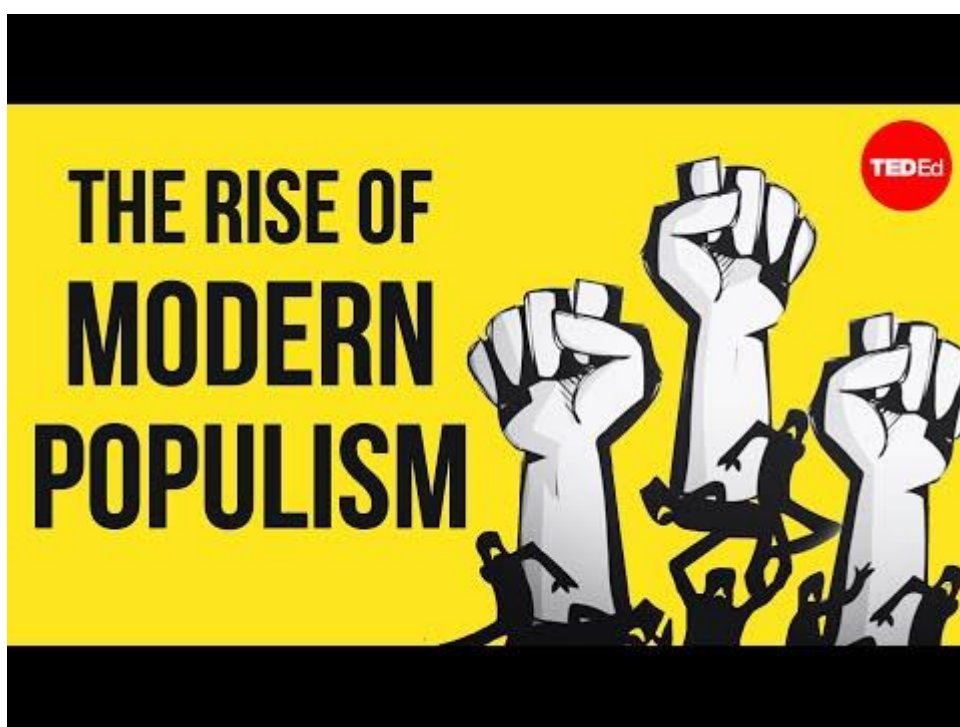
- Creation of a binary discourse: '(pure) people vs. corrupt (political) elites'
- Emphasis on the 'common will'
- Focus on emotions over rationality
- Emphasis on 'force,' 'power,' and 'immediate' solutions (sometimes outside the political framework)
- Clear definition, labeling, stigmatizing, and blaming of political opponents
- Use of specific language (e.g., 'volk,' vulgar, etc.)

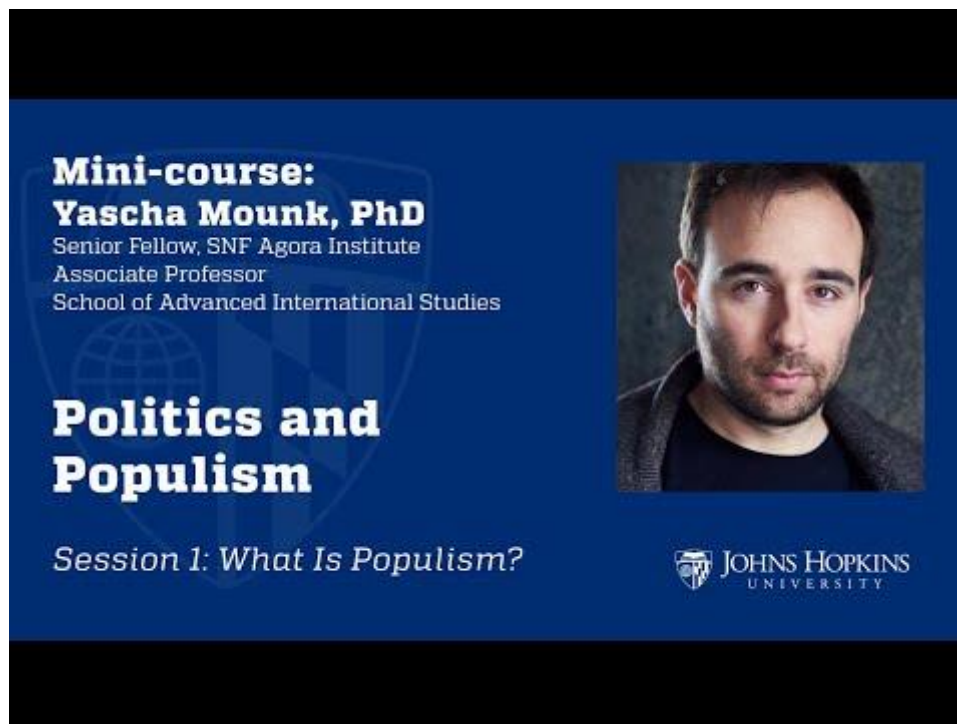
#### **2/ Basic principles of political populism:**

- Creation of a dichotomy between 'US' and 'THEM' - 'US' primarily represents 'the people,' while 'THEM' is a broader and more variable category
- Portraying 'the people' as an exclusive and morally pure category
- Depicting 'THEM' as a constant threat, in some sense, to 'the people'
- Utilizing 'folk language' filled with vulgarisms, clichés, folk wisdom, and falsehoods
- Appealing to emotions rather than reason.

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Students can also make use of a series of short videos, which can serve as a fundamental introduction to a better understanding of political populism.





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If students have a keen interest and a demand for a deeper understanding of political populism, they can also make use of a series of scientific articles that offer a more complex insight into the topic.

[Populist attitudes towards politics and science: how do they differ?](#)<sup>2</sup>

[Power without Responsibility: Populism, Narcisism and the Contradictions of Contemporary Capitalism](#)<sup>3</sup>

[How Populists Construct Public Selves during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of the Czech Prime Minister](#)<sup>4</sup>

[Technocratic Populism and Political Illiberalism in Central Europe](#)<sup>5</sup>

All the texts mentioned above should be accessible to students using a VPN or an internet connection provided by the University of West Bohemia.

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<sup>2</sup> In case of a non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2474736X.2022.2159847>

<sup>3</sup> In case of a non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21598282.2020.1846584>

<sup>4</sup> In case of a non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10720537.2022.2082607>

<sup>5</sup> In case of a non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10758216.2019.1580590>

**Knowledge and skills obtained by the lesson:**

- 1/ Orientation in basic theoretical framework related to political populism.
- 2/ Key features and specificity of populist political actors in the Central-European region.
- 3/ Capabilities of application of the theoretical framework to the political actors from the student's country of origin.
- 4/ Abilities to conduct own research related to the political populism.

## Week 4:

### **Title of the lesson:**

The Role and Function of Political propaganda in the Un/Democratic Political Regimes:  
Illustrative Cases from the Central-European Context

### **Structure of the meeting and its main goal:**

This lesson is focused on introducing the main theories related to political propaganda. Students will be introduced to the analytical approach to propaganda. From this point of view, propaganda is seen as a specific form of communication and is often mixed up and juxtaposed with concepts such as "hybrid warfare" and "disinformation" in the present times. There is an important socio-political discussion in the Central-European context regarding the mutual relationship between propaganda and the right to free speech.

Students will also be provided with deeper insights into Central-European regimes and the strategies used as tools to counter propagandistic influence. The key topics of political propaganda in this geographical context will also be discussed.

### **The required preparation for students:**

There are no compulsory readings following up on the topic of the lecture. Students should prepare materials to be capable of discussing a series of questions related to political propaganda in the Central-European area:

1. Can you find some examples of political propaganda (or propagandistic influence) in your country of origin?
2. Can you briefly discuss the specificity of Central-European region through the optics of theories of political propaganda?
3. Can we find some narratives and discourses that are in accordance to the propagandistic influence?
4. Who is the strongest creator of propagandistic narratives in the Central-European region?
- 5.



## Study materials related to the topic:

As a basic starting point, students can utilize following schematics of the basic concepts that will be further and in detail discussed during the lesson:

### 1/ Actors of propaganda:

Historical experience and collective memory related to the propaganda leads to the creation of following dichotomy:

Mass society that can be manipulated Vs. Entity that depends on the mass support and is capable of manipulating the mass society

Mass should have capacities to receive propagandist information:

- a) is literate (in some cases)
- b) can understand the language of propaganda
- c) can understand the framework of propaganda
- d) has technological capacities to receive propaganda

Propagandist entity can be political, religious, economic etc. elite and its character is variable

### 2/ Propaganda as a specific form of political communication:

Propaganda as a series of communication schemes:

Form of communication that tries to influence/change the form how its recipients think and act

1. tries to create persons that will obey/believe
2. goals of propaganda can be explicit or hidden
3. wide form of means of on/direct communication (posters, billboards, TV, internet, radio broadcasts, instrumentalization of history etc.)

Propaganda is thus based on intentional reinterpretation of fact, using on fakes and lies (and their labelling as an „alternative information“; „alternative truths“)

Main goal: To manipulate

Main tool: Artificially modified/constructed reality that is presented as a „objective truth“

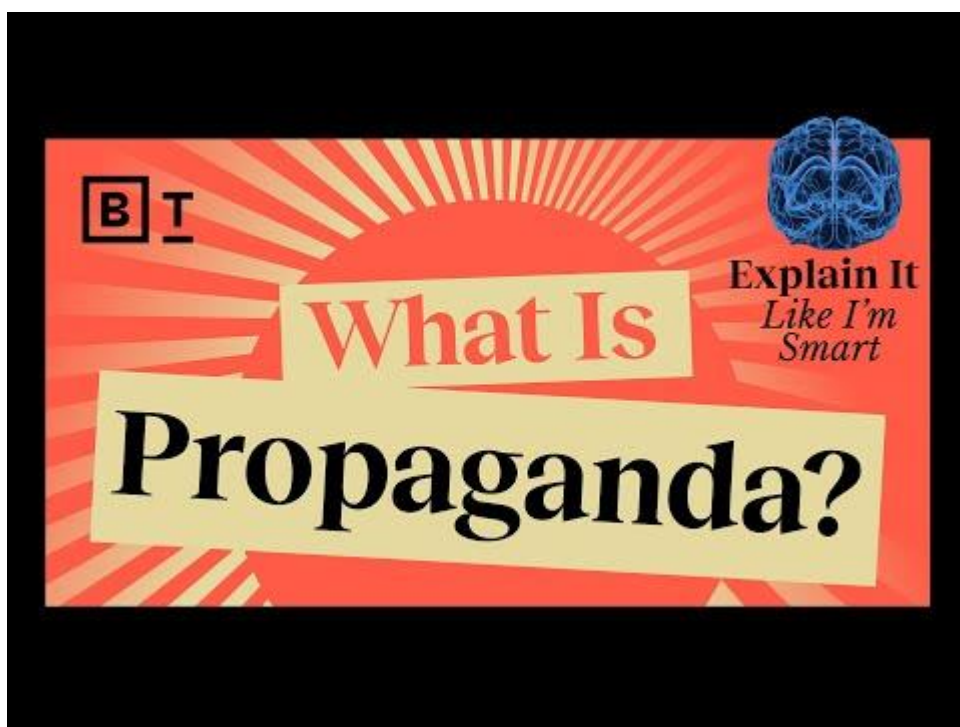
1. propaganda construct picture of self as a objective reality
2. subjects of propaganda should not know that they are manipulated
3. successful propaganda has to establish trustworthy and believable communication channels.

### 3/ Goals of propaganda:

1. To mobilize against enemy
2. To gain allies
3. To create collaboration with neutral actors
4. To demoralize enemy

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A series of short introductory videos could also be useful for a basic understanding of the concept of political propaganda.





Series of scientific articles that are focused on the concept of political propaganda and its implications can also be utilized.

[Why It Matters What Autocrats Say: Assessing Competing Theories of Propaganda](#)<sup>6</sup>

[Fending off Fake News: Identifying and Analyzing Propaganda in Imagery](#)<sup>7</sup>

[The “Ideological Offensive” in Education: the Portrayal of the United States in Secondary Curricula and Textbooks in Poland during the Stalinist Period \(1948–1956\)](#)<sup>8</sup>

[How Demagoguery Works: Reflections on Aggression in Politically Fraught Times](#)<sup>9</sup>

All the texts mentioned above should be accessible to students using a VPN or an internet connection provided by the University of West Bohemia.

### **Knowledge and skills obtained by the lesson:**

- 1/ Knowledge of the basic theoretical framework related to political propaganda.
- 2/ Skill to interpret political propaganda as a specific way of political communication.
- 3/ Highlights of political propagandist influence in the Central-European region.
- 4/ Ability to apply theoretical framework to student’s country of origin.

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<sup>6</sup> In case of a non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10758216.2021.2012199>

<sup>7</sup> In case of a non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00377996.2021.1921680>

<sup>8</sup> In case of a non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14682745.2017.1284202>

<sup>9</sup> In case of a non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07351690.2020.1742537>

## Week 5:

### **Title of the lesson:**

Political Culture: Theory and Main Determinants of Czech and Central-European Political Culture

### **Structure of the meeting and its main goal:**

The lesson will be divided into two main parts. The first one will be focused on the introduction of the concept of political culture. Students will be familiarized with the development of the theory and with its main arguments.

Second part of the lesson will consist of the introduction and explanation of the main determinants and factors, that have strong influence on the current form of the political culture in the Czech Republic and Central-European region.

### **The required preparation for students:**

Attendees should be prepared to discuss the following questions:

1. Try to define political culture.
2. Discuss the main characteristics of political culture in your country.
3. Try to discuss the relevance of political culture in policy-making processes.

To do so, students are required to be familiar with two compulsory articles.

[Somers, M. \(1995\): What's Political or Cultural about Political Cultural and the Public Sphere? Toward Historical sociology of Concept Formation In: Sociological Theory, vol. 13. No. 2. Pp. 113 – 144.](#)<sup>10</sup>

[Mamadouh, V. D. \(1997\): Political Culture: A Typology Grounded on Cultural Theory In: GeoJournal, vol. 43. No. 1. Pp. 17 – 25](#)<sup>11</sup>

All the texts mentioned above should be accessible to students using a VPN or an internet connection provided by the University of West Bohemia.

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<sup>10</sup> In case of a non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/202157>

<sup>11</sup> In case of a non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41147116>

## Study materials related to the topic:

The compulsory readings mentioned above should provide a basic introduction to the topic. For extension and deeper understanding, students can utilize the following articles.

[Introduction: Political Culture and Cultural Policy](#)<sup>12</sup>

[Civic activities in Eastern Europe: links with democratic political culture](#)<sup>13</sup>

[Poland's new political culture: the relevance of the irrelevant](#)<sup>14</sup>

All the texts mentioned above should be accessible to students using a VPN or an internet connection provided by the University of West Bohemia.

As a tool of understanding of basic delineation of the concept of political culture, students can utilize following schematics.

### 1/ Basic introduction

- Political culture is a system of values, ideas, rules, and expectations within a particular society. These values shape public opinion and the expectations of society from political actors.
- Political culture, in turn, shapes the institutions in a specific country. It's a two-way relationship where political culture is both shaped by and shapes political institutions, and it's influenced by the role of ideology.
- For example, after the Velvet Revolution in the Czech Republic in 1989, the ideology shifted from socialism to a specific form of liberalism. This change had an impact on the form of political institutions and the political culture and behavior as well.
- Political culture is a broad concept that encompasses both individual and the entire political system levels. Each country, region, or society has its own unique form of political culture.

### 2/ Two main levels of political culture

- a) Thick (or deep) political culture:
  - -Values, ideals and rules which are DEEPLY anchored in society. This level of culture is very stable and resistant to change. Basic structure of society
- b) Thin (or shallow) political culture:
  - -Opposite of thick culture. This level of culture contains variable values, ideas and norms. This level reflects current events (crisis, political scandal etc.)

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<sup>12</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10632921.1996.9942960>

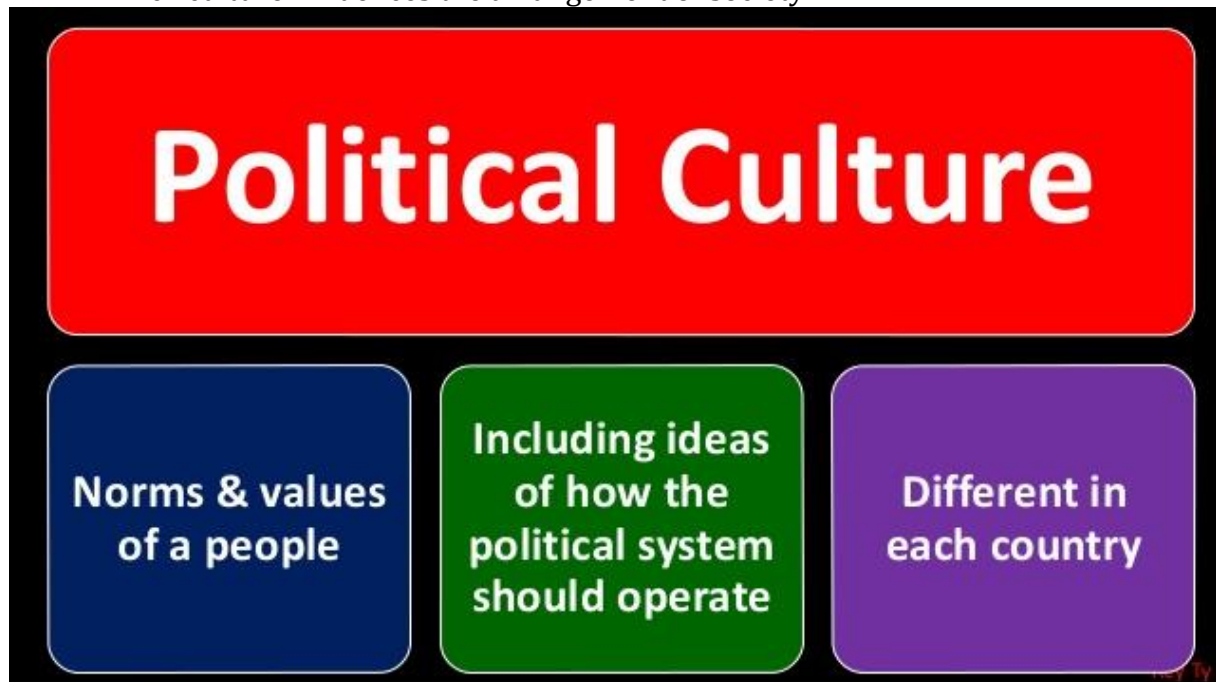
<sup>13</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21599165.2015.1130698>

<sup>14</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03085149300000013>

- Thick culture influences the arrangement of society



**Knowledge and skills obtained by the lesson:**

- 1/ Ability to define the concept of political culture.
- 2/ Knowledge related to the importance of the cultural turn in political science.
- 3/ Specificity of the political culture of Central-European countries.
- 4/ Capability of application on the context of the student's country of origin.

## **Week 6:**

### **Title of the lesson:**

Discussion regarding the students' planned final theses

### **Structure of the meeting and its main goal:**

This lesson is the final one in the first part of the course. It is focused on the students' final theses (or any other academic work relevant to their home university). Its primary goal is to provide potential feedback from the student collective and the lecturer on the academic work that is relevant and important for the presenting student.

### **The required preparation for students:**

Students should prepare a brief introduction to their relevant academic work, preferably their final thesis. They should present the topic of their work, the main theoretical and methodological framework. Attendees should also be capable of discussing potential weaknesses and problems that are relevant to their academic work.

Other attendees and the lecturer will then discuss the presented thesis and try to provide meaningful feedback and some advice.

### **Knowledge and skills obtained by the lesson:**

Feedback related to the academic work that is important for the presenting students.



## Week 7:

### **Title of the lesson:**

National Identities and Othering in Contemporary Central Europe

### **Structure of the meeting and its main goal:**

This lesson starts the second thematical part of the course and is focused on the problematics of creation and sustaining of national identities in the Central-European region. Students will be also introduced to the problematics of “othering” which is closely related to the topic of right-wing political populism and stands as one of the instruments that is utilized by political actors in this geographical context.

This lesson will also ignite the discussion related to the problem of democratic backsliding of some Central-European context, that can be explained by the theoretical framework mentioned above.

### **The required preparation for students:**

Students are obliged to be familiar with compulsory reading and be capable of discussion related to the problematics of national identities and othering in Central-European region.

Compulsory article: [The return of economic nationalism to East Central Europe: Right-wing intellectual milieus and anti-liberal resentment](#)<sup>15</sup>

The text mentioned above should be accessible to students using a VPN or an internet connection provided by the University of West Bohemia.

### **Study materials related to the topic:**

For deeper understanding of the lecture’s subject, students can utilize following literature.

[Brexit, Europe and othering](#)<sup>16</sup>

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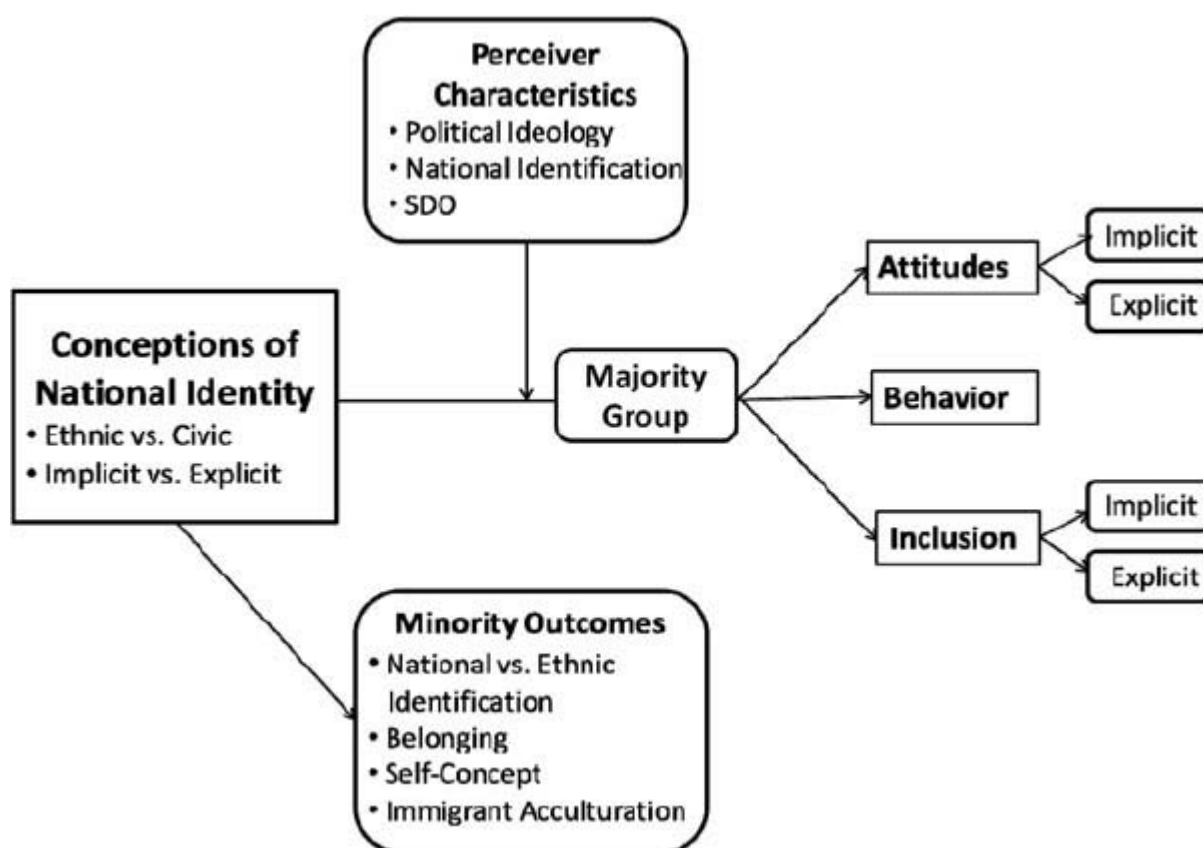
<sup>15</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/nana.12660>

<sup>16</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21582041.2020.1851393>

[Overcoming 'Otherness': Central and Eastern European Nations and the Idea of 'Europe'](#)<sup>17</sup>  
[Rethinking "democratic backsliding" in Central and Eastern Europe – looking beyond Hungary and Poland](#)<sup>18</sup>

All the texts mentioned above should be accessible to students using a VPN or an internet connection provided by the University of West Bohemia.

For the brief introduction of the concept of national identity, students can utilize following schematics

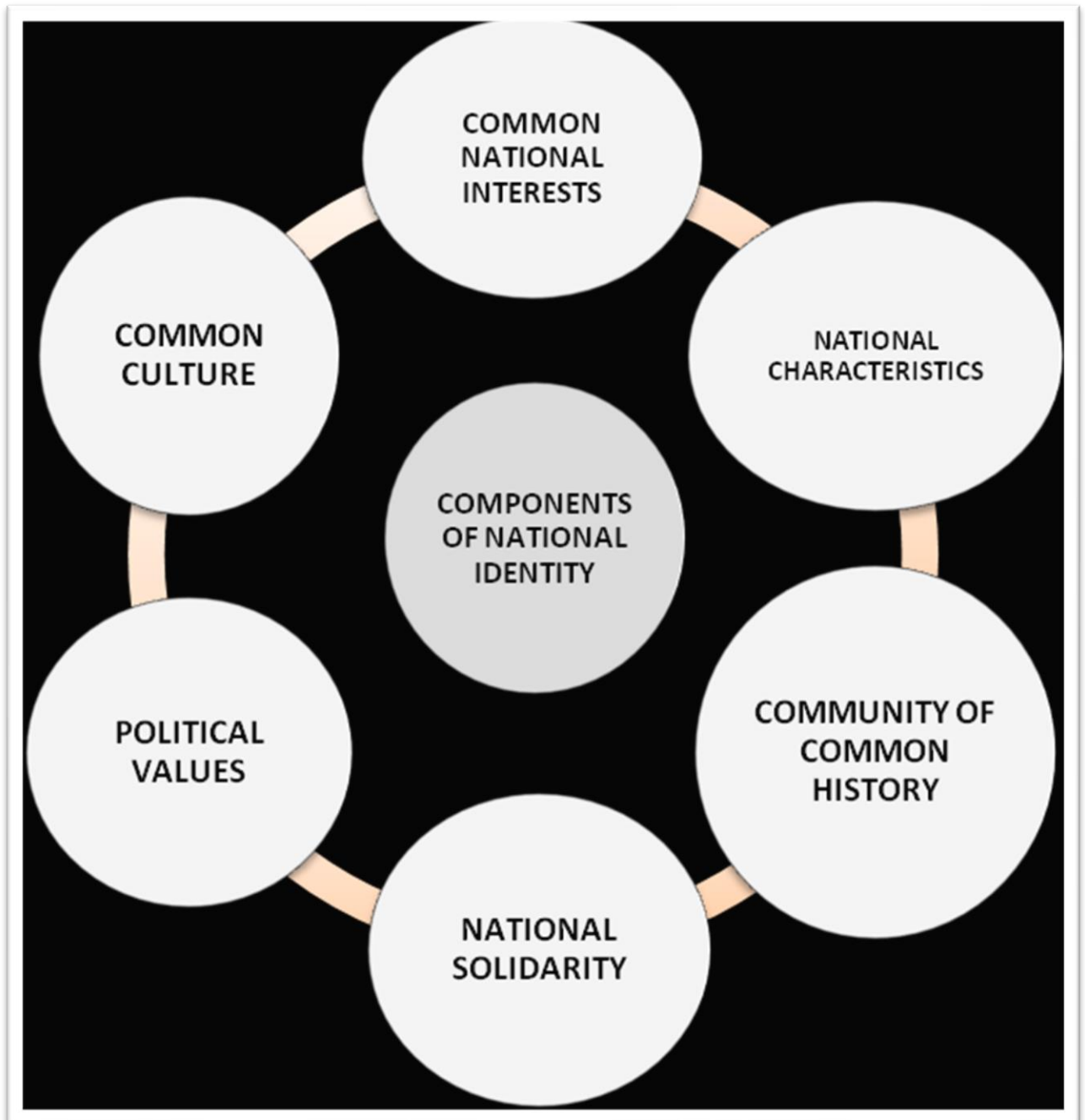


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<sup>17</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03932729.2022.2093934>

<sup>18</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21599165.2018.1491401>

<sup>19</sup> Used schematics is from this scientific article: Yogeeswaran, Kumar & Dasgupta, Nilanjana. (2014). Conceptions of national identity in a globalised world: Antecedents and consequences. *European Review of Social Psychology*. 25. 189-227. 10.1080/10463283.2014.972081.

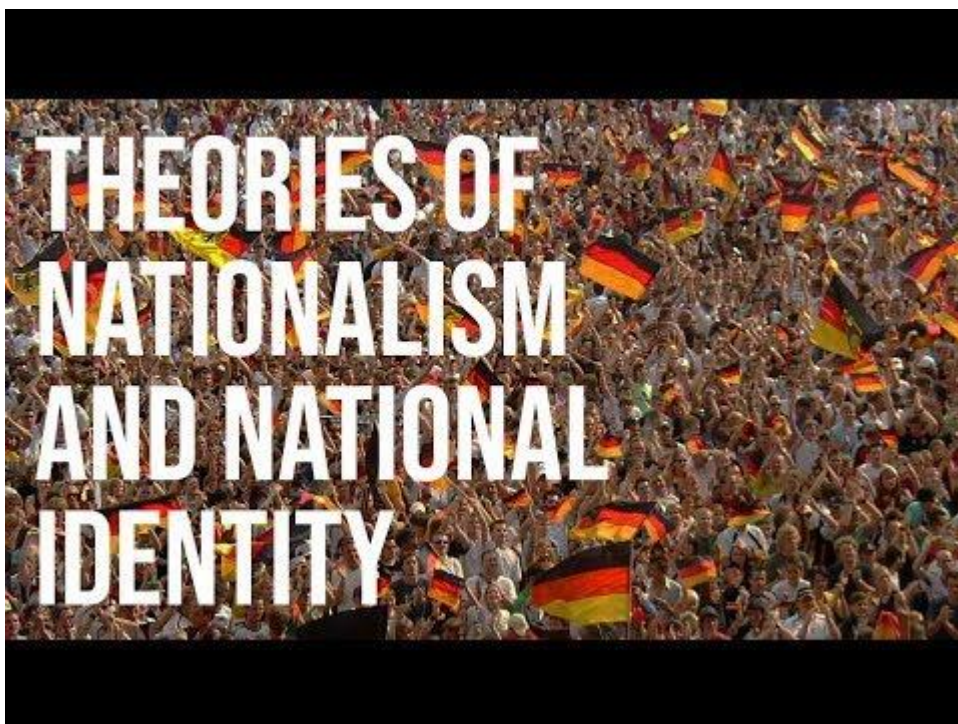


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Attendees can also utilize a series of short introductory videos, that will provide deeper insight to the topic of national identity and othering.

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<sup>20</sup> Used schematics is from this scientific article: Bałdys, Patrycja & Piątek, Katarzyna. (2015). ALTERNATIVE MEMORY-ALTERNATIVE HISTORY. RECONSTRUCTIONS OF THE PAST IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE.



**Knowledge and skills obtained by the lesson:**

- 1/ Basic understanding of the concepts of national identity and othering
- 2/ Capability of application of those concepts to the Central-European context
- 3/ Knowledge about the national cleavages in Central-European region

## Week 8:

### **Title of the lesson:**

Politics and Media Systems in Contemporary Central Europe

### **Structure of the meeting and its main goal:**

This meeting is dedicated to the introductory discussion related to the everyday political praxis in Central-European region. Attendees will be introduced to the basic outlines of structure of political systems in this geographical context. The other topic, that will be discussed during the lesson is the mutual relation between political subsystem and medial subsystem and its application on the Central-European empirical reality.

### **The required preparation for students:**

Students should be prepared to discuss following article related to the relation between illiberal backlash and medial subsystem.

[Introduction: Media and Illiberal democracy in Central and Eastern Europe](#)<sup>21</sup>

The text mentioned above should be accessible to students using a VPN or an internet connection provided by the University of West Bohemia.

### **Study materials related to the topic:**

For further understanding of the lecture's topic, students can utilize a series of articles.

[Towards illiberal conditioning? New politics of media regulations in Poland \(2015–2018\)](#)<sup>22</sup>

[State advertising as an instrument of transformation of the media market in Hungary](#)<sup>23</sup>

[Perpetually “partly free”: lessons from post-soviet hybrid regimes on backsliding in Central and Eastern Europe](#)<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21599165.2019.1692822>

<sup>22</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21599165.2019.1608826>

<sup>23</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21599165.2019.1662398>

<sup>24</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21599165.2018.1493993>

All the texts mentioned above should be accessible to students using a VPN or an internet connection provided by the University of West Bohemia.

**Knowledge and skills obtained by the lesson:**

- 1/ Capabilities to interpret and explain the mutual relation between political and medial subsystem
- 2/ Understanding of the everyday political and medial praxis in the Central-European region
- 3/ Skill to apply the main theoretical framework to the student's country of origin

## Week 9:

### **Title of the lesson:**

Political Thought in Central Europe with the Focus on Václav Havel's Reflection of Politics

### **Structure of the meeting and its main goal:**

This lesson focuses on political thought in the Central-European region and is loosely connected to the lecture on political culture. Students will be introduced to the basics of political thought, deepening their understanding of political culture in this geographical context. The lesson will specifically explore Václav Havel's reflections on politics. As the first post-revolutionary president, Havel significantly influenced the perception of politics by citizens, making his reflections a relevant influence across the entire region.

### **The required preparation for students:**

Attendees should be familiar with the following text written by Václav Havel, and they should be prepared for a discussion related to the study of political thought in the Central-European region.

[The Power of the Powerless](#)<sup>25</sup>

The text mentioned above should be accessible to students using a VPN or an internet connection provided by the University of West Bohemia.

### **Study materials related to the topic:**

As an extension and for a deeper understanding of Central-European political thought and Havel's reflections on politics, students can refer to the following literature.

[Political Thought in East Central Europe](#)<sup>26</sup>

[The Paradoxes of the Revolutions of 1989 in Central Europe](#)<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

<https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/1979/01/the-power-of-the-powerless.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23801883.2019.1644726>

<sup>27</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1163/1568516042653594>



[Czech Rhetoric of 1989 and Václav Havel](#)<sup>28</sup>

[Václav Havel's Legacy: Politics and Morality](#)<sup>29</sup>

[The Political Philosophy of Václav Havel](#)<sup>30</sup>

All the texts mentioned above should be accessible to students using a VPN or an internet connection provided by the University of West Bohemia.

**Knowledge and skills obtained by the lesson:**

- 1/ Understanding the key aspects of political thought in the Central-European region
- 2/ Appreciation of the significance of Havel's philosophy and its impact on the Central-European geographical and political context
- 3/ Familiarity with the main principles underlying the Velvet Revolution

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<sup>28</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/action/doSearch?AllField=V%C3%A1clav+Havel>

<sup>29</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14409917.2023.2262343>

<sup>30</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13698230212331294544>

## Week 10:

### **Title of the lesson:**

What's Central Europe? The Concepts and Approached to the Region of Central Europe

### **Structure of the meeting and its main goal:**

The primary goal of this lesson is to elucidate the operationalization of Central Europe in academic discussions. The academic debate surrounding this issue is extensive, and attendees will be introduced to a series of approaches aimed at defining Central Europe.

### **The required preparation for students:**

Students should be capable to discuss following questions during the seminar part of the lecture:

1. What are the most important aspects of Naumanns concept of Mitteleuropa?
2. Define the most important alternatives to the mitteleuropa concept (the Europe in between/Zwischeneuropa, Pan-Slavism, Austroslavism etc.)
3. Discuss the French approach to the Central European issue in the 1910s-1930s.
4. Discuss the (post)WWII changes in Central Europe (shoa, transfers of populations etc.).
5. Discuss the revitalization of Central European concepts in the 1970s up till the 1990s (Habsburg nostalgia, catholic political culture and past etc.)

To do so, students are required to be familiar with three compulsory articles.

[Mitteleuropa in German Political Geography](#)<sup>31</sup>

[Central Europe / Eastern Europe: Behind the Definition](#)<sup>32</sup>

[Central Europe: Mitteleuropa](#)<sup>33</sup>

All the texts mentioned above should be accessible to students using a VPN or an internet

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<sup>31</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2560933.pdf?acceptTC=true>

<sup>32</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/650853.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/621131.pdf>

connection provided by the University of West Bohemia.

**Study materials related to the topic:**

Attendees can deepen their understanding of the concept of Central Europe by watching the following introductory videos.



**Knowledge and skills obtained by the lesson:**

- 1/ Ability to define the Central European region
- 2/ Familiarity with various approaches to understanding the region
- 3/ Understanding the specific characteristics of Central Europe

## Week 11:

### Title of the lesson:

Visegrad Four

### Structure of the meeting and its main goal:

The main goal of this lecture is to introduce students to the cooperative organization known as the Visegrád Group, an alliance of four Central European countries. Attendees should gain knowledge about the basic structure, modus operandi, goals, and main objectives of the V4.

### The required preparation for students:

Attendees should be prepared to discuss following issues.

1. Define the basic goals of V4 cooperation before and after EU-accession.
2. Describe the most important shared policies.
3. Define the V4 as the populist regional cooperation.
4. Most important obstacles for the Central European Cooperation.
5. Describe the alternative contemporary formats of Central European Cooperation

To do so, students are required to study following materials.

[The Visegrad Four as an Ambitious Actor of \(Central-\)European Foreign and Security Policy](#)<sup>34</sup>

[The Stigmatization of Central Europe via \(failed\) Socialization Narrative](#)<sup>35</sup>

[An East-West Divide in the European Union? The Visegrad Four States in Search of the Historical Self in National Discourses on European Integration](#)<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

[https://www.politicsincentraleurope.eu/documents/file/WISEGRAD\\_us\\_CELEK.pdf](https://www.politicsincentraleurope.eu/documents/file/WISEGRAD_us_CELEK.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41268-021-00229-9>

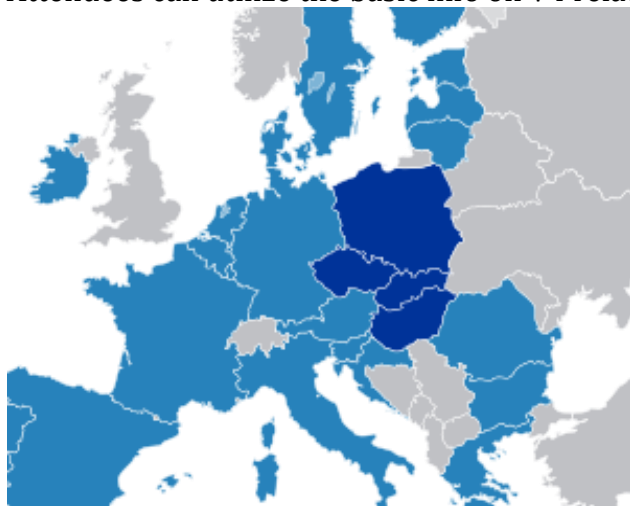
<sup>36</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327723534\\_An\\_East-West\\_Divide\\_in\\_the\\_European\\_Union\\_The\\_Visegrad\\_Four\\_States\\_in\\_Search\\_of\\_the\\_Historical\\_Self\\_in\\_National\\_Discourses\\_on\\_European\\_Integration](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327723534_An_East-West_Divide_in_the_European_Union_The_Visegrad_Four_States_in_Search_of_the_Historical_Self_in_National_Discourses_on_European_Integration)

All the texts mentioned above should be accessible to students using a VPN or an internet connection provided by the University of West Bohemia.

### Study materials related to the topic:

Attendees can utilize the basic info on V4 related to Wikipedia.



The **Visegrád Group** (also known as the **Visegrád Four**, the **V4**, or the **European Quartet**) is a cultural and political alliance of four Central European countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. The alliance aims to advance co-operation in military, economic, cultural and energy affairs, and to further their integration with the EU. All four states are also members of the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Bucharest Nine (B9).

For the deeper understanding of how V4 operates, students can utilize its official [website](#)<sup>37</sup>.

Series of articles related to the V4 can be also useful.

[Great Expectations or Misplaced Hopes? The Role of the Visegrád Group in the Brexit Process](#)<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.visegradgroup.eu/>

<sup>38</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
[https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09668136.2019.1643825?\\_gl=1\\*59hs4x\\*\\_ga\\*MTY1NTIxMDExMC4xNjk5ODY3NjMy\\*\\_ga\\_0HYE8YG0M6\\*MTY5OTg2NzYzMj4xLjEuMTY5OTg2NzcwMC4wLjAuMA..&journalCode=ceas20%EF%BB%BF&\\_ga=2.61810284.1920840784.1699867632-1655210110.1699867632](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09668136.2019.1643825?_gl=1*59hs4x*_ga*MTY1NTIxMDExMC4xNjk5ODY3NjMy*_ga_0HYE8YG0M6*MTY5OTg2NzYzMj4xLjEuMTY5OTg2NzcwMC4wLjAuMA..&journalCode=ceas20%EF%BB%BF&_ga=2.61810284.1920840784.1699867632-1655210110.1699867632)

[NATO's "near abroad": The Visegrad Group and the Atlantic Alliance](#)<sup>39</sup>

[The Contribution of the Visegrad Group to the European Union's Eastern Policy: Rhetoric or Reality?](#)<sup>40</sup>

All the texts mentioned above should be accessible to students using a VPN or an internet connection provided by the University of West Bohemia.

### **Knowledge and skills obtained by the lesson:**

- 1/ Ability to define the Visegrád Four
- 2/ Familiarity with its main purpose and goals
- 3/ Understanding the specific characteristics of V4 within the European Union

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<sup>39</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

[https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03071849308445764?\\_gl=1\\*irkp6q\\*\\_ga\\*MTY1NTIxMDExMC4xNjk5ODY3NjMy\\*\\_ga\\_0HYE8YG0M6\\*MTY5OTg2NzYzMi4xLjEuMTY5OTg2NzgyMi4wLjAuMA..&\\_ga=2.75434194.1920840784.1699867632-1655210110.1699867632](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03071849308445764?_gl=1*irkp6q*_ga*MTY1NTIxMDExMC4xNjk5ODY3NjMy*_ga_0HYE8YG0M6*MTY5OTg2NzYzMi4xLjEuMTY5OTg2NzgyMi4wLjAuMA..&_ga=2.75434194.1920840784.1699867632-1655210110.1699867632)

<sup>40</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:

[https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09668130903278934?\\_gl=1\\*1djjr20\\*\\_ga\\*MTY1NTIxMDExMC4xNjk5ODY3NjMy\\*\\_ga\\_0HYE8YG0M6\\*MTY5OTg2NzYzMi4xLjEuMTY5OTg2NzkyNC4wLjAuMA..&\\_ga=2.67051758.1920840784.1699867632-1655210110.1699867632](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09668130903278934?_gl=1*1djjr20*_ga*MTY1NTIxMDExMC4xNjk5ODY3NjMy*_ga_0HYE8YG0M6*MTY5OTg2NzYzMi4xLjEuMTY5OTg2NzkyNC4wLjAuMA..&_ga=2.67051758.1920840784.1699867632-1655210110.1699867632)



## Week 12:

### **Title of the lesson:**

Alternative Concepts of Central European Cooperation

### **Structure of the meeting and its main goal:**

In addition to the V4 group, there are other integration groups within the Central European region. The aim of this lecture is to provide a basic insight into this issue. Students will be introduced to alternative concepts of cooperation (political, economic) in this geographical context. The relationship of these alternative groups to the European Union will also be discussed.

### **The required preparation for students:**

To be familiar with this topic, students should study following articles.

[Visegrad Group in the Context of Other Central European Cooperation Formats](#)<sup>41</sup>

[Regional Cooperation in Central Europe](#)<sup>42</sup>

[From Intermarium to the Three Seas Initiative](#)<sup>43</sup>

### **Knowledge and skills obtained by the lesson:**

- 1/ Understanding the key aspects of alternative cooperation initiatives in the Central-European region
- 2/ Familiarity with the main principles underlying the alternative cooperation initiatives
- 3/ The delimitation of the alternative cooperation initiatives and V4

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<sup>41</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://intapi.sciendo.com/pdf/10.2478/pce-2018-0014>

<sup>42</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23615759>

<sup>43</sup> In case of non-functional link in the text, you can use this one:  
<https://journals.akademicka.pl/politeja/article/view/1586/1400>

## **Week 13:**

### **Title of the lesson:**

The Final Student's Presentations; Closing Discussion and Remarks

### **Structure of the meeting and its main goal:**

Students will present their own research papers related to the Central-European region.

### **The required preparation for students:**

Students should prepare an approx. 10-minute presentation that will be supported by a PowerPoint (PPT). Attendees should also prepare a series of questions that will be discussed after their presentation.

