



Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University

Syllabus of the Academic Discipline «Democracy in Transition with V4 Experience»

Degree Level	3rd (Educational-Scientific) Level
Specialty	032 History and Archaeology
Number of Credits	4 ECTS Credits (120 hours)
Classes	Lectures – 20 hours Seminars – 20 hours
Language of Teaching:	English
Department Offering the Course	History
Lecturer	Alina IOVCHEVA PhD in Political Science Associate Professor Personal Page: https://surli.cc/rgmoil E-mail: alina.iovcheva@gmail.com 

1. Course Annotation

The course “*Democracy in Transition with V4 Experience*” offers an in-depth analysis of democratic transitions with a particular focus on Central and Eastern Europe, emphasizing the experience of the Visegrad Group (V4) countries and their relevance for contemporary democratic development in Ukraine.

The course is designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the nature, dynamics, and complexity of democratic transformations. It examines the political, institutional, economic, and sociocultural factors that shape processes of democratization, highlighting both successful reform trajectories and persistent challenges. Through a comparative perspective, students explore how historical legacies, political institutions, elite behavior, civil society, and media environments influence the outcomes of democratic transitions.

A central component of the course is the systematic study of the democratic transformations of the Visegrad Group countries: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. Students analyze the stages of post-communist transition, key reform strategies, and the role of European integration in consolidating democratic institutions. Particular attention is paid to the European Union as a normative and political actor, assessing its impact on democratic governance, rule of law, and institutional development in the region.

Special emphasis is placed on the Ukrainian context. The course equips students with analytical tools to critically assess democratic change in Ukraine in the conditions of armed conflict, post-authoritarian reforms, and European integration. Students engage with contemporary debates on

democratic resilience, institutional reform, and state-building, and develop practical, policy-oriented recommendations for policymakers, experts, and civil society actors based on comparative European experience.

Throughout the course, students explore key challenges and risks associated with democratic transitions, including populism, oligarchization, democratic backsliding, political instability, and external interference. The role of political culture, civic participation, and civil society is examined as a crucial factor in democratic consolidation. The course also addresses the growing importance of digital technologies, information environments, and global communication in shaping democratic practices and civic engagement.

By the end of the course, students will have developed advanced analytical and comparative skills necessary to evaluate democratic transitions across different regional contexts. The course fosters critical thinking and provides students with theoretical and practical tools to engage with academic research, policy analysis, and expert debates on democracy and democratization in the contemporary world.

2. The Aim and Objectives of the Course

The aim of the course "*Democracy in Transition with V4 Experience*" is to develop a systematic understanding of the nature and dynamics of democratic transformations and to examine the institutional, political, and sociocultural factors that influence the success or complexity of transitions to democracy. The course focuses on comparative perspectives of democratization, with particular attention to reform strategies, the role of civil society, political elites, and the media, as well as the influence of international actors – especially the European Union – on democratic change in the region. Special emphasis is placed on the Ukrainian context, providing analytical tools for critically assessing democratic transformations and formulating practical policy-oriented recommendations based on European experience.

The main **objectives** of the course are:

- To present key theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of transitional democracies.
- To examine the stages and specific features of democratic transformations in the countries of the Visegrad Group.
- To analyze political processes of democratization in Central and Eastern Europe from a comparative perspective.
- To develop the ability to compare democratic models and apply analytical insights to the Ukrainian political process.
- To enhance strategic thinking skills among students and professionals working at the intersection of politics, civil society, and policy analysis.

3. Outcomes:

Students will know:

- the content and meaning of key terms and concepts related to democratic transformations, including transitional democracy, transitology, democratic deficit, hybrid regimes, and others;
- the main theoretical approaches to the study of democratization, including liberal, institutional, cultural, and comparative perspectives;
- the stages, challenges, and outcomes of democratic transformations in the Visegrad Group countries and their impact on domestic and foreign policy;
- the specific features of democratic transformation in Ukraine in the context of armed conflict, reform processes, and European integration;
- the main risks and challenges arising during democratic transitions, such as populism, oligarchization, political instability, and external interference;
- the role of information technologies, digital platforms, and global communication in shaping civic engagement and democratic culture.

Students will be able to:

- identify key factors that facilitate or hinder democratization processes in specific national and regional contexts;
- apply methods of political analysis and applied research tools to assess political developments in transitional democracies;
- formulate independent analytical conclusions based on qualitative and quantitative research, including in the formats of policy analysis, policy briefs, and expert assessments;
- independently work with new sources of knowledge, academic literature, and empirical data related to transitional democracies;
- design, present, and critically defend their own research projects or scholarly hypotheses;
- work effectively both individually and in teams, participate in academic discussions, contribute to collective decision-making, and conduct peer review;
- apply the acquired knowledge in the fields of political consulting, expert analysis, teaching, and civic engagement.

4. Topics:

Topic 1. Democracy: Definition and Main Characteristics

Topic 2. The Role of Civil Society in the Democratisation Process

Topic 3. Formation and Democratic Processes in the Visegrad Countries

Topic 4. Prospects and Challenges for Democracy in Modern Society

5. Methods

A variety of forms and methods of work: lecturing, conducting seminar classes, organizing independent student work under the guidance of the lecturer, supervising and controlling the completion of creative individual tasks, encouraging students to participate in discussions on problematic issues raised in the practical sessions.

6. Control

The assessment of the quality of students' knowledge is carried out through current and final (semester) control.

Forms of students' participation in the educational process subject to current control include:

- Presentation on the main topic
- Supplementing, asking questions to the speaker, reviewing the presentation
- Participation in discussions, interactive forms of organizing the class
- Analysis of legal acts, historical sources, and monographs
- Written assignments (independent work, analytical work, etc.)
- Scientific research task (project) (written work formatted according to requirements).

A positive assessment of current performance (the cumulative result of the current assessment for the semester), provided there are no missed or unmade seminar sessions, is the basis for admission to the final form of control – the pass/fail assessment.

7. Grade

Grade in Points	Grade on the National Scale	Grade on the ECTS Scale	
		Grade	Explanation
90-100	Excellent	A	Excellent (Excellent performance with only a few minor mistakes)
82-89	Good	B	Very Good (Above average level with a few mistakes)
		C	Good (Generally correct performance with a significant number of substantial mistakes)
67-74	Satisfactory	D	Satisfactory (Not bad, but with a considerable number of shortcomings)
60-66		E	Sufficient (Performance meets the minimum criteria)
35-59	Unsatisfactory	FX	Unsatisfactory (With the possibility of re-taking)
1-34		F	Unsatisfactory (With mandatory re-taking of the course)

8. Recommended Literature

1. Literature:

1. Archibugi Daniele. Principles of Cosmopolitan Democracy // www.danielearchibugi.org/downloads/papers/Principles.PDF
2. Auster Lawrence. How the Multicultural Ideology Captured America // http://www.thesocialcontract.com/artman2/publish/tsc1403/article_1227.shtml
3. Banks J.A. Educating Global Citizens in a Diverse World // New Horizons for Learning (www.newhorizons.org).
4. Bunce, V., & Wolchik, S. (2011). "Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries". Cambridge University Press.
5. Citizenship Education by Yvonne Hebert and Alan Sears // http://www.cea-ace.ca/media/en/Citizenship_Education.pdf
6. Howard, M. M. (2011). The Weakness of Postcommunist Democratic Transitions. *Journal of Democracy*, 22(2), 36-49.
7. Iovcheva, A. (2018). Gender-balanced political system in the context of Ukraine's European integration aspirations. In Y. V. Pahliuk & S. I. Shkirchak (Eds.), *Current issues of societal transformations in Ukraine: Security and European integration dimensions* (pp. 87–112). Publishing House of the Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University.
8. Iovcheva, A., & Reichardt, D. (2023). Democratic Values in Times of War: the Case of Ukraine. *Acta De Historia & Politica: Saeculum XXI*, 48-60.
9. Iovcheva, A. (2023) Implementation of EU Values in Transitional Democracies: Experience of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova Alina Iovcheva. *Acta de Historia & Politica: Saeculum XXI*, 06 (2023), 96-107.
10. Iovcheva A. (2013). Gender quotes in the political systems of the countries in transition such as Republic of Serbia and Ukraine / A. Iovcheva // *Science and Education a New Dimension // Humanities and Social Science*. – Budapest, 2013. – Vol. 6. 78–81.
11. Kerr David. Citizenship Education: an International Comparison // http://www.inca.org.uk/pdf/citizenship_no_intro.pdf
12. Klein, L., & Ackerman, J. M. (2017). The Rise of Liberal Nationalism in Europe and its Challenge to Democracy. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 22(2), 199-220.

13. Kuhn, T. (2018). "The Political Economy of Transitions: Economic Reform, Structural Adjustment and the Rise of Democracy in Eastern Europe". *East European Politics*, 34(1), 16-34.
14. Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2010). *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*. Cambridge University Press.
15. Lust, E. (2011). The Middle East: Democracy's Dilemmas. *Journal of Democracy*, 22(3), 60-73.
16. Mounk, Y. (2018). *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It*. Harvard University Press.
17. Raschke, J. (2017). "The Rise of Right-Wing Populism in Europe and the Erosion of Democracy". *European Journal of Political Research*, 56(1), 45-61.
18. Svolik, M. W. (2013). "When Do Dictatorships Collapse? The Political Economy of Autocratic Regimes". *American Political Science Review*, 107(1), 1-17.
19. Young Iris Marion. *Self-determination and Global Democracy: A Critique of Liberal Nationalism // Multiculturalism in Contemporary Societies: Perspectives on Difference*

2. Online Resources:

- *Journal of Democracy*
Official website: <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org>
- *Foreign Affairs*
Official website: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com>
- *Freedom House*
Official website: <https://freedomhouse.org>
- *The Economist: Democracy Index*
Official website: <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>
- *The Brookings Institution*
Official website: <https://www.brookings.edu>
- *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*
Official website: <https://carnegieendowment.org>
- *European Union External Action*
Official website: <https://eeas.europa.eu>
- *World Bank: Governance and Democracy*
Official website: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/governance>
- *United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)*
Official website: <https://www.un.org/democracyfund>
- *Council of Europe: Democracy and Human Rights*
Official website: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/>
- *The V-Dem Institute (Varieties of Democracy)*
Official website: <https://www.v-dem.net>
- *Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)*
Official website: <https://www.idea.int>
- *International Crisis Group*
Official website: <https://www.crisisgroup.org>