



INTS 310 | The Baltic States: Contemporary Society (1.0 Unit*)

Instructor: Dr. Kapitolina Fedorova and Dr. Pavel Kononenko
Time: TBD
Location: Tallinn University, Tallinn, Estonia
Number of hours: 75 (5 academic hours per week, over the course of 15 weeks)

**One Bryn Mawr unit is equal to four undergraduate semester credits*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Designed to provide students a greater understanding of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, this course examines each of the Baltic states through the lenses of history, culture, language, economy, and politics. What features define Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania? What unites these states? What makes each separate and distinct? How has entry into the EU changed their societies? What are the major economic and political concerns of the 21st Century? What are the key challenges that lie ahead for each?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon the completion of this course, student shall be able to:

- Identify and explain the historical trajectories, cultural traditions, and linguistic landscapes that shape Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania;
- Analyze and compare the shared experiences that link the Baltic states, as well as the unique characteristics that distinguish each society;
- Evaluate the social, economic, and political transformations brought about by integration into the European Union;
- Assess the major contemporary challenges facing the Baltic region in the 21st century, including questions of governance, security, and economic sustainability;
- Find, analyze and compare relevant research and media publications to extract factual and statistical data on the Baltic region.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Students interested or specializing in sociology, political science and Russian and Eastern Europe area studies.

FLAGS

Global Cultures; Quantitative Reasoning

This course is flagged as a Global Cultures course. Global Cultures courses are designated to increase student awareness towards cultural groups outside of the United States. Therefore it should be expected that a larger portion of the course readings and assignments will cover specifics, techniques and ideologies related to at least one non-US cultural and social group. In addition, students will develop their quantitative reasoning skills as while preparing their presentations they will practice using statistical data for supporting their claims and explaining them to others.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance in this class is required. Make-up work will be allowed in exceptional cases, such as during documented medical leave, religious holidays, military service or family emergencies. It is required to notify the responsible instructor in writing, as soon as possible, in order to arrange for the make-up work. You are allowed to miss up to two undocumented absences without attendance repercussions. Each further undocumented absence will lower your course grade by two points (after the second absence 100-2.0 = maximum grade of 98, etc.). Students who arrive over 15 minutes late without a valid excuse will not receive credit for attending. Religious holidays will be respected but absences due to religious holidays must be notified in advance.

DISCUSSION RULES

As this class has a discussion component and group work covering potentially sensitive topics, including gender, ethnic identity, social inequality, and political views, please observe the following rules during the discussions and working in groups: (1) listen carefully and be respectful to the other participants in the discussion or group, (2) be sure that you understand the positions and opinions stated and ask for clarification, if necessary and (3) offer your viewpoint in respectful and non-confrontational manner, in order to achieve constructive dialogue with the instructor and your colleagues.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should notify the program coordinator who will pass the information to the responsible instructor to make appropriate arrangements. You are also advised to contact Tallinn University Student Support Centre:

<https://www.tlu.ee/en/student-support-centre>

OFFICE HOURS

Students in this course are encouraged to take advantage of instructor's weekly office hours for material clarification and guidance for midterm papers and presentations. Meetings must be arranged in advance.

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT

Grading will consist of:

Category	% Points
In-class participation and group work	10%
Short written assignments	5%
In-class quizzes	30% (6 quizzes x 5% each)
In-class group presentations	30% (6 presentations x 5% each)
Final in-class exam	25%
TOTAL	100%

Grade Scale

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
4.0 Scale	4	3.7	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.3	2.0	1.7	1.0	0.0
% Points	94–100	90–94	87–90	84–87	80–84	77–80	74–77	70–74	60–70	0–60

READING LOAD

Participants in the course are expected to read from around 25 to 50 pages per week. Students are expected to budget their time accordingly, as complete all required reading selections prior to a particular class for which they have been assigned. In addition to reading the assigned texts, students are responsible for independently finding, reading and analyzing necessary sources for their group presentations.

IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION

The class combines lectures, seminars and group-work sessions. During lectures, students are expected to participate answering the instructors' questions and giving feedback multiple times during each session. During seminars, students present their group home assignments and also are expected to take part in discussing other students' presentations. Group-work sessions are conducted in small groups, and then the results are reported to the instructor and fellow students who provide feedback. Thus active participation, rather than just voicing the correct answer, is very important for our progress. Simple passive attendance will not count as in-class participation. Participation will be graded on a one time basis at the end of the semester with an overall weight of 10%. Please, see the rules regarding the discussion participation.

One short written assignment will be given after the first class and should be submitted within two weeks via Moodle. Every day of delay will result in decreasing the grade by 5 points. For fulfilling the assignment, students will visit the Museum of Occupation and Freedom. Full instructions will be provided in Moodle.

IN-CLASS QUIZZES

This class has six in-class quizzes on paper that will be administered during weeks 2-7 of the semester. The quizzes consist of 7-10 closed and 2-3 open-ended questions each and are given after each corresponding topical course module/theme. The quiz should be taken within twenty minutes.

IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS

The presentations will be prepared by groups of 2-3 people. Three groups will be formed before the mid-term break and stay the same until the end of the course. Each group will focus on one of the Baltic states and will prepare presentations based on the topic assigned by the instructor in Moodle one week before each presentation is due. The assignment instructions will be distributed via Moodle.

FINAL IN-CLASS EXAM

The exam will be conducted in written format and will consist of three tasks dealing with political, economic and social aspects of societal life in three Baltic states. For each task, students will be given some data (statistical in tabular or visual format; textual; visual) to analyze, comment upon and use to answer the questions. The exam should be taken within three academic hours.

REQUIRED TEXTS

These are the texts that contain the required reading for this course:

- Auers, Daunis. *Comparative politics and government of the Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the 21st century*. Springer, 2015.
- Budryte, Dovile. *Taming nationalism? Political community building in the post-Soviet Baltic states*. Routledge, 2017.

- Hartwell, Leon, et al. *Winter is coming: The Baltics and the Russia-Ukraine war*. LSE ideas, 2022.
- Misiunas, Romuald, and Rein Taagepera. *The Baltic States: years of dependence, 1940-1990*. Univ of California Press, 1993.
- Nørgaard, Ole, et al. *The Baltic States after Independence*, Second Edition. Edward Elgar Publishing, 1999.
- Taagepera, Rein. *Estonia: Return to independence*. Routledge, 2018.
- Woodworth, Bradley, Violeta Davoliute & Darius Staliunas (eds.). *Ethnic Relations in the Baltic Reconsidered*. CEU Press, 2025.

Additional and optional reading, when necessary, will be uploaded to Moodle to corresponding lecture units.

COURSE CONTENT

Class	Topic	Required Reading	Assignment
1-2	Introductory session. Course overview. Justification of the term “Baltic States”. Basic geographical facts, key historical events, and prominent figures of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania until the Soviet occupation.	Kasekamp A. Konstantin Päts and Ethnic Minorities: The Political Trajectory of an Estonian Nationalist Authoritarian Leader; Klaus Richter, Economic Nationalism, Minority Policies, and the 1930s in Lithuania and Latvia (from <i>Ethnic Relations in the Baltic Reconsidered</i>)	Short written assignment
3-4	Under Soviet rule. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania between 1944 and 1985. Official ideology and everyday life (<i>the class is conducted at Estonian Open Air Museum</i>)	Misiunas, Romuald, and Rein Taagepera. <i>The Baltic States: years of dependence, 1940-1990</i> . Univ of California Press, 1993.	Quiz 1
5-6	The road to independence. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania between 1985 and 1992.	Taagepera, Rein. "The Baltic States." <i>Electoral Studies</i> 9.4 (1990): 303-311. Taagepera, Rein. <i>Estonia: Return to independence</i> . Routledge, 2018.	Quiz 2
7-8	Starting over, building up. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania after 1992.	Raun, Toivo. Ethnic Relations in the Baltic Region: Complexity and Coexistence (from <i>Ethnic Relations in the Baltic Reconsidered</i>). Nørgaard, Ole, et al. <i>The Baltic States after Independence</i> , Second Edition. Edward Elgar Publishing, 1999	Quiz 3
9-10	Political institutions and public debates.	Hellman, Joel S. Winners take all: the politics of partial reform in postcommunist transitions. <i>World politics</i> 50.2 (1998): 203-234. Rutland, Peter. Introduction: nation-building in the Baltic states: thirty years of independence. <i>Journal of Baltic studies</i> 52.3 (2021): 419-424.	Quiz 4

		Jurkynas, Mindaugas. <i>Regional identities in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania: being Baltic, looking north</i> . Problems of post-communism 68.4 (2021): 327-338. Romāne-Kalniņa, Līga. <i>Communicating Democracy: The Discourse of Political Leaders of the Baltic States</i> . Parliamentary Studies 32 (2022): 49-68.	
11-12	National economies and European integration. Social inequality. Regional differences.	Köll, Anu Mai. <i>Reinterpretation of economic history in the Baltic countries, 30 years after independence</i> . Scandinavian Economic History Review 73.2 (2025): 93-102. Randveer, Martti, and Karsten Staehr. <i>Macroeconomic trends in the Baltic States before and after accession to the EU. Does EU Membership Facilitate Convergence? The Experience of the EU's Eastern Enlargement</i> -Volume I: Overall Trends and Country Experiences. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. 211-237.	Quiz 5
13-14	When language matters. Media landscapes and educational reforms in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.	Budryte, Dovile. <i>Taming nationalism? Political community building in the post-Soviet Baltic states</i> . Routledge, 2017.	Quiz 6
15-16	Political parties and election results.	Auers, Daunis. <i>Comparative politics and government of the Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the 21st century</i> . Springer, 2015.	Presentation 1
17-18	The Baltic States in the international arena.	Van Elsuwege, Peter. <i>From Soviet republics to EU member states: a legal and political assessment of the Baltic states' accession to the EU</i> . Vol. 2. Brill, 2008. Van Willigen, Niels, and Joachim A. Koops. The EU's Relationship with NATO and OSCE. <i>The SAGE handbook of European foreign policy</i> (2015): 736-749. Hartwell, Leon, et al. <i>Winter is coming: The Baltics and the Russia-Ukraine war</i> . LSE ideas, 2022.	Presentation 2
19-20	Demographic trends and socio-economic stratification.	Berzins, Atis, and Peteris Zvidrins. "Depopulation in the Baltic states."	Presentation 3

		<i>Lithuanian Journal of Statistics</i> 50.1 (2011): 39-48. Lang, Thilo, et al. Socio-spatial polarisation and policy response: Perspectives for regional development in the Baltic States. <i>European Urban and Regional Studies</i> 29.1 (2022): 21-44. Ubarevičienė, Rūta, et al. Residential mobility and new forms of spatial inequality in the settlement system: A comparative study of Estonia and Lithuania. <i>Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science</i> 51.7 (2024): 1666-1688.	
21-22	National economies after 2022. Imports and exports in the age of disruption.	National statistical reports and corporate annual reports.	Presentation 4
23-24	Media landscapes. Local media and Russian propaganda.	Voltri, Johannes. Countering Russian information influence in the Baltic states: a comparison of approaches adopted in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. <i>Sõjateadlane</i> 19 (2022): 161-196. Chakars, Janis, and Indra Ekmanis, eds. <i>Information Wars in the Baltic States: "Russia's Long Shadow"</i>. Academic Studies Press, 2025.	Presentation 5
25-26	"Schoolyard battles". Educational reforms and debates around them.	Media coverage of the reforms: local news portals (ERR, Postimees, Delfi, etc.)	Presentation 6
27-28	Wrap-up session. Asking difficult questions: is there such a thing as "the Baltics"? What is more important: common history, human geography, or political alliances? What lies in the future for these three states?		
	Final in-class exam		