

International Community Rebuilding: Croatia 2004

Political Science 369/399
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Politics is the art of living together. From the original Greek philosophers' efforts to define the proper form of the republic to contemporary efforts to frame constitutions for newly independent states, the problem is the same: how to establish rules by which people can interact in reasonably predictable ways that permit them to lead safe, productive and fulfilling lives? If we consider the modern period, that is, from Machiavelli on, politics is truly front and center. From the end of the Greeks until Machiavelli, God always figured in the story as the ultimate arbiter of right, justice and authority. From Machiavelli on, the issue was clearly man. There is no ultimate arbiter, no final authority. All there is and all there can be are rules made and agreed to by men in the full knowledge that they can be broken at any time for there is no ultimate truth and no ultimate authority to back them up. So politics—the means by which the actual “rules of the game” are forged—is all important. And so, too, we ask, what is that political process like? Is it domination of the strong over the weak—Thomas Hobbes famous state of nature in which life is “nasty, brutish and short”?—or is it a creative process by which humans come together in compromise not only to survive but to thrive?

This course teaches the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to create thriving communities. It begins from the simple observation that citizens are not born, they are educated, just as successful political communities are not “born” but are created through hard, sustained effort on the part of their citizens. What does it take to be a good citizen? Alexis de Tocqueville had a great phrase: Citizens must be masters of the “arts of association.” They must understand this issues confronting their communities; they must know how to organize and act to deal with those issues; and perhaps most important, they must believe that they can and indeed they must act because it is their *personal* responsibility to do so.

This course is about how citizens—young and old—*can* mobilize and act for social change. The discussion of progressive change is set against the backdrop of the most terrible possible reminder of what can happen when people tear up the fragile political understandings that bind communities together. Here, of course, the setting is Croatia where the civil war is a still a living memory that literally took the lives of members of your classmates' families. But this is not a course about teaching the Croatians how to do anything. Rather for you, beyond learning about Croatia, we hope that the Croatian experience will serve as a sobering reminder of the fragility of the ties that bind all communities, ours included, and that when you return to the US from Croatia you will apply your new skills as more active and engaged citizens at home.

your real lives as citizens.

Required reading and videos

Please read and view **before** arriving in Zagreb:

X

X

X

The Global PACT Trainer's Manual will be provided on the first day.

Grades

X
X
X
X

Class Expectations

This will be an intense course in which we will make high demands on you. First, of course, you will be operating in another country, not just as tourists but as active partners with your Croatian peers. As you know from personal experience, group work is always hard—it is much harder across cultural barriers. We will be here to help, but we need you to be self-aware and ready to confront and work through your own, natural culture shock frustrations. Second, you must always be sensitive to the fact that there are also deep cultural, historical and personal divisions among your Croatian team mates, differences far deeper than any that separate you from them. You are privileged to participate in an intense process of, we hope, reconciliation among young people whose previous knowledge of each other is informed by the facts and stories of a terrible civil war not yet ten years over. Finally, simply as a course, this course will be different. Unlike most courses, it requires substantial, graded group work and active participation, often in the form of required public presentations. Unlike most courses, it also requires that you actually practice the skills and knowledge you have acquired in a live setting. This is a course about activism and advocacy, about grassroots organizing. And activists agitate, advocates advocate and organizers organize. So that is what you are going to do, since there is no way to learn how to do any of these things except by doing them. And since the only real test of anything is the real thing, your final test will be the real thing: an actual press conference for the national press.

Schedule