

## UMBC UGC New Course Request: POLI 372 – Understanding Transitioning Nations: Study Abroad in Poland

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### COURSE INFORMATION:

Course Number(s)	372
Formal Title	Understanding Transitioning Nations: Study Abroad in Poland
Transcript Title (≤24c)	Transitioning Nations
Recommended Course Preparation	POLI 260
Prerequisite	
Credits	3
Repeatable?	Yes X No
Max. Total Credits	3
Grading Method(s)	X Reg (A-F) X Audit X Pass-Fail

### PROPOSED CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

In this course, which must be taken simultaneously with POLI 476 – State and Societal Transition in Post-Communist Europe, students will study transitioning societies from a historical/cultural perspective. We will look at how Polish values and attitudes have been shaped by distinct political, geographical and cultural components. This, in turn, will help us grasp the political dimensions of ethnicity and nation in Poland, but also in a broader context.

### RATIONALE FOR NEW COURSE

- a) There is no other course taught like this subject, which will use various site visits during a study abroad in Poland to experience the development of a nation.
- b) To be taught every summer or every other summer (during study abroad in Poland)
- c) This is an upper level POLI elective which dovetails with other courses on comparative politics (POLI 260) and democratization (POLI 474). It is designed to be taken with POLI 476 - State and Societal Transition in Post-Communist Europe; while that course deals with the political side of Poland's evolution and democratization, this one deals with the social side. This is aimed to be one of a very small number of POLI courses approved for the Global Cultures (C) requirement.
- d) Upper level POLI students and other upper level students
- e) Heavy writing component coupled with more advanced approach to studying culture than would be found in a 200-level class, but less intense readings than is typical in a 400-level one.
- f) Basic background in comparative politics, upon which this course builds
- g) Students can take P/F or regular grades
- h) This course cannot be repeated (unless failing grade)

**ATTACH COURSE OUTLINE (mandatory):**

**POLI 372 – Understanding Transitioning Nations: Study Abroad in Poland  
Summer 2016**

Welcome to this 4-week study abroad in Poland! In this course, which must be taken simultaneously with POLI 476 – State and Societal Transition in Post-Communist Europe, students will study transitioning societies from a historical/cultural perspective. We will look at how Polish values and attitudes have been shaped by distinct political, geographical and cultural components. This, in turn, will help us grasp the political dimensions of ethnicity and nation in Poland, but also in a broader context.

Poland is a fascinating place to explore the evolution of a nation. Today, Poland is one of the world's most homogenous states (95% of the residents are ethnic Poles). Yet it has a rich and recent history of heterogeneity and multiculturalism that continues to affect various spheres of Polish life today. In addition, Poles have experienced existential challenges to their own nation, from imperial assaults from outside to ideological ones from within. In this class, we will consider how such factors help define national consciousness and subsequently influence the domestic and foreign policies of the state.

This 3-credit hour course must be taken with POLI 409. Unlike POLI 409, however, this course will focus less on outside readings and more on experiential learning. Since this is an experiential class, most of the learning will be through the site visits outlined above and related lectures. Readings, outlined below and available on the course BlackBoard site, are designed to contextualize and explain the meaning of the periods and events described in the visits to sites in Krakow, Gdansk and Warsaw. These site visits include museums, memorials, state institutions and other places that illuminate the historical and cultural factors that have helped create the Polish nation.

In addition to these various site visits, students will learn 'survival Polish'. Learning the country of study is an important part of study abroad. It helps engender respect on the part of students for the people and culture they are studying. This, in turn, rubs off on locals, who invariably appreciate the efforts you make to communicate with them in their own language. Your vocabulary will be very basic (ordering food, shopping, asking directions, etc.) but meaningful.

Your grade for this course will be composed of three parts. First, we will have regular discussions about the sites you visit – participation in these discussions (including the language component) makes up 40% of your final grade. Second, you will be assigned a brief (1 or 2-page) writing assignment for each site we visit. These assignments, described in more detail in a separate document, are designed to make you connect the phenomena you see with your own experiences and contemplate how these experiences inform one's sense of self and nation. They can take the format of a travel journal and will also account for 25% of your final grade. Finally, students will be required within two weeks of their return home to write a 10-page paper on what they believe to be the most critical experiences that define the Polish nation today. This last assignment will account for 35% of your final grade.

Site visits and corresponding discussion will last approximately three hours each. Among the sites we will visit for this course include:

*Krakow*

Wawel Castle  
Kazimierz (Jewish Quarter, Krakow)  
Rynek Underground (Krakow)  
Auschwitz (Oswiecim)  
Schindler's Factory Museum

*Gdansk*  
European Solidarity Center  
Tour of Old Town

*Warsaw*  
National Museum  
Institute of National Remembrance  
Monument to the Ghetto Uprising  
Warsaw Uprising Museum  
Jewish Museum  
Wilanow Palace  
Royal Baths Museum (with concert)  
Polish parliament (schedule permitting)  
Presidential Palace (schedule permitting)

### *Itinerary*

We will spend the first few days of this course residing in Krakow, where we will experience the joys and pain of Poland's more distant history. Next, we will travel to Gdansk, the birthplace of the Solidarity movement, to explore most defining national phenomena of the past several decades. Finally, we will reside for approximately three weeks in Warsaw, where we will encounter a variety of experiences, from royal times to communist and post-communist ones.

### **Day 1 – Arrive in Poland/Orientation**

*What is experiential learning and how can we integrate experiences into our regular course of study?*

- (1) Keeping a travel journal: <http://www.ciee.org/images/uploaded/pdf/occasional27.pdf>
- (2) Survival Polish: What you need to know

### **Day 2 – Introduction: The Role of History in the Polish Consciousness**

*What was the European/Polish experience of nation building and how did the context of empire and multiculturalism impact this process?*

- (1) Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-producing traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," in E.J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.) The Invention of Tradition (NY: Cambridge U Press, 1992).

*Day 2 Visit: Wawel Castle*

### **Days 3-4: Repression and Nation: World War II and The Communist Experience**

*How do repressive experiences become catalysts for nation-building?*

(1) Franz Neumann, Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism (New York: Harper, 1966) 98-129.

(2) Andrew Nagorski, Schindler's List and the Polish Question, *Foreign Affairs* 73(4) (July-August 1994): 152-157.

*Day 3 Visits: Kazimierz (Jewish Quarter), Schindler Factory Museum*

*Day 4 Visit: Auschwitz*

### **Day 5: Communism and the Nation (travel to Gdansk)**

*How did the communist experience affect the evolving Polish nation? To what degree did internal versus external actors influence this process?*

(1) J.V. Stalin, Marxism and the National Question (1913) either entirely (any edition) or the excerpt in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., Nationalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

(2) Paczkowski, A. (1999). Poland, the "Enemy Nation". The Black Book of Communism. S. Courtois, N. Werth, J.-L. Panne et al. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press: 363-393

### **Days 6-7: Dissident Movements and Social Movements in the National Narrative**

*How do the mechanisms of uprising affect the national narrative, from the dissident era to the mass-movement, Solidarity one? In what ways does memorial building change this national narrative, retrospectively?*

(1) Kennedy, M. D. (1991). Professionals, power, and Solidarity in Poland : a critical sociology of Soviet-type society. Cambridge [England]; New York, Cambridge University Press.

(2) Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities," in Hutchinson and Smith, Nationalism, 89-96.

*Day 6 Visit: Old Town Gdansk*

*Day 7 Visit: European Solidarity Center*

### **Day 8: National and Personal Identity in the Solidarity Experience (travel to Warsaw)**

*To what extent are self-interest and the interest of the nation represented in foundational social movements such as Solidarity?*

**Day 9: The Role of the Catholic Church in Bringing about Transition**

*How can cultural elements such as religion constrain or empower political oppositionists?*

(1) Rogers Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches," Nations and Nationalism, 18,1 (January 2012), 2-20.

*Day 9 Visit: Churches of Old Town*

**Day 10: Cultural Influences on the Selection of Political Institutions and Parties**

*How might the various aspects of nation we've discussed to date affect the creation of political parties and institutions in the transitioning post-communist state?*

(1) Szczerbiak, A. (2001). Poles together? : the emergence and development of political parties in postcommunist Poland. New York, Central European University Press.

**Day 11: Economics and Nation: Nationalism and Rebuilding**

*What is the role of economic upturns and downturns in creating nationalism? To what degree to such current phenomena function independently from or in conjunction with elements of historical memory?*

(1) Hilde Weiss, A Cross-National Comparison of Nationalism in Austria, the Czech and Slovak Republics, Hungary, and Poland, *Political Psychology* 24(2): 377-401.

*Day 11 Visit: Warsaw Uprising Museum*

**Day 12: Social Transition**

*What does 'ancient' history have to do with national identity and how can historical times of pride help people compensate for more recent negative periods?*

(1) Anthony D. Smith, "Gastronomy or Geology? The Role of Nationalism in the Reconstruction of Nations," Nations and Nationalism, I, 1 (1995) 3-23.

*Day 12 Visit: Wilanow Palace*

**Day 13: Transitional Justice and the Challenges of Nationalism**

*What is the role of national character in deciding how to deal with past periods of repression?*

(1) Wolchik, Sharon and Jane Curry. *Central and East European Politics*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014. Chapter 5: Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Expansion of Democracy.

*Day 13 Visit: Institute of National Remembrance*

**Day 14: The Decline of Solidarity and Malleability of Identity**

*How are identities challenged by internal fragmentation in a period following mass-based regime change?*

(1) Grodsky, B. (2012). Social Movements and the New State: The Fate of Pro-Democracy Organizations When Democracy is Won. Stanford, Stanford University Press. Chapter 6.

*Day 14 Visit: Polish parliament (schedule permitting); alternative: Monument to the Ghetto Uprising*

**Day 15: Nation in the New Europe**

*How are identities challenged by external factors in a period of international realignment and unification?*

(1) Michale Minkenberg and Pascal Perrineau, The Radical Right in the European Elections 2004, *International Political Science Review* 28, 1 (2007): 29-55.

*Day 15 Visit: Presidential Palace (schedule permitting); alternative: Monument to the Ghetto Uprising*