Study Center in Warsaw, Poland

Course name: Social Issues in Contemporary Poland
Course number: SOCI 3002 WRSW
Language of instruction: English
Programs offering course: Central European Studies
Contact Hours: 45
Credit: 3
Term: Spring 2018

Course Description
The lecture covers major social issues related to the transition period in Poland on its way from the centrally managed economy into the market-oriented one and into a parliamentary democracy. The course refers to some historical background, but concentrates on the present situation that requires constant action on the part of the citizens, the state and its institutions that deal with countering or solving the existing social problems. Site visits to institutions dealing with various social issues (mainly unemployment, poverty and social exclusion) are included in the one-day study tour to a local community that will be organized in the course of the semester. The study tour pertains mostly to lectures No. 5, 8 and 18. The three intended site visits in the local area take place at the following institutions: County Labor Office, Local Social Welfare Center and a local NGO. Students are met by relevant directors/heads, who present the work of their institutions. Knowledge gained in the course of these meetings should be used to prepare for the final presentation and discussion.

Learning Objectives
The course aims to present the results of the emergence of a civic society in Poland, as well as the country’s collaboration and integration with other EU societies.

Schedule
Session 1. Introduction to the lecture: Poland on the way of the fundamental political, social and economic transformations. Social issues in the transformation process.
  • Start point 1989/1990
  • Current changes.

Session 2. Concept of social change.
  • Attitudes and behaviors of the population towards a new political system and market economy.
  • Expectations for state protection. Conflicts, compromises, adaptations to the new situation.
  • Democratization as a social process, tasks ahead before and after the admission to the EU

Session 3. Major trends of the demographic changes.
  • Family and its structure, changes, functioning, living conditions.
  • Existing differences among various groups, both socio-economic and regional.
  • Professional career patterns of women.
  • Changes in the system of values.

Session 4. Social aspects of privatization and re-privatization.
  • Social approvals and social conflicts.
  • Contemporary situation.
• Conclusions drawn from the policy of full employment.
• Employment tendencies.
• Unemployment as a new phenomenon in Poland and issues concerning adaptation

Session 5. Employment and unemployment in contemporary Poland
• Conclusions drawn from the policy of full employment.
• Employment tendencies.
• Unemployment as a new phenomenon in Poland and issues concerning adaptation abilities to the new market economy.
• Social reaction to unemployment.
• Labor market institutions combating unemployment.

Session 6. Social issues of the black market (hidden) economy.
• Its scale and impact on social life.
• The CSO surveys on unregistered employment
• Territorial differences of unregistered employment

Session 7. Economic security of the population.
• Definition.
• Changing expectations of the population.
• Programs/forecasts until 2030.

Session 8. Poverty.
• Definition.
• Measurement methods.
• Scale and dynamics.
• CSO surveys and other research.
• Social and regional differentiation.

• Definition, scale and factors of growth.
• Result of the surveys at the national and local level.
• The role of social policy in reduction of this phenomenon.

• The reform of 1999 and its effects.
• New health insurance system (draft).
• Standard of health protection services.
• Health protection costs.

Session 11. Changes in the educational system
• Public and private schools.
• Costs of education.
• Changes in university teaching programs.
• Regional differentiation of educational conditions

Session 12. Opportunities for the young generation in Poland
• Educational opportunities.
• Professional career.
• Migration.
• Participation in the EU labor market.

Session 13. Cultural transformations and contemporary issues of cultural development in Poland.
Main changes in cultural policy.
The role of national cultural institutions.
The role of local cultural institutions.

Session 14. The role of religion in social life in Poland.
- Changes in the role of religion in the period of transition.
- The place of religion in contemporary social life.

Session 15. Issues of national minorities in Poland. New situation.
- Minorities in Poland before and after transition.
- Minorities in the light of statistical and research data.
- New minorities as the effect of globalization.

- Definitions.
- Main infrastructure institutions.
- Local differentiation and social consequences.
- Satisfaction of social needs. Social services.

Session 17. Major changes in social and professional structures in contemporary Poland.
- Changes in educational structure of the population.
- Changes in employment structures.
- The growing role of women in employment and occupational structure.
- Tasks for the social policy in creation of the modern occupational structures.

Session 18. Developments of NGOs and their cooperation with governmental institutions and local governments.
- Definition.
- Development of NGOs after 1990.
- The role of NGOs in solving social problems.
- Non-governmental organizations and social integration.

Session 19. Social issues of environmental protection.
- Tasks of governmental institutions.
- Tasks of regional institutions.
- Tasks of local institutions.
- Tasks of non-governmental institutions.

Session 20. Social pathology as a problem.
- Definitions of social pathology.
- The reasons.
- Dynamics in the light of statistics and research.
- Social consequences of the phenomenon.

- Macro- and micro dimensions of social policies.
- Implementation options for social policies.
- Social policy in Poland in the background of the European Union social policy.

Session 22. The Polish society after accession to the European Union.
- Cooperation with societies belonging to the EU.
- Principles of establishment of compatible data for social analyses.
- Comparative analysis on social development in the EU Member States.

Session 23 - Summary and discussion of final papers.
Required Readings

