**Introduction to Slovakia - Syllabus**

Lang 292 (1-3 credits)

Fall 2019

**Instructor:** Dr. Paul Foster

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In this course, students will study the cultural, political, and economic history of Slovakia, with particular emphasis on events of the past 30 years. Slovakia first gained its independence in 1993, following the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, but its cultural and political history extends far back in history. This course will serve as a general introduction to the main themes of Slovak national life, from the Cyril and Methodian mission until the present day. The class will meet weekly during the semester, and will include a number of guest lecturers from Slovakia who will be present in class or will participate remotely.

Students will also study the current situation in Slovakia and Central Europe, and the challenges to democracy in Europe, with Slovakia being a case study. We will compare the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland as they suffered through a common nightmare in the 20th Century – independence, alliance/submission to Nazi Germany, Independence, alliance/submission to the USSR, independence, emergence of democracy, free press, independent judiciary, rule of law, then the erosion of these institutions in some of these countries and the rise of “illiberal democracy.”

The course will be taught by Dr. Paul M. Foster, who holds a Ph.D. in Slavic Philology from Columbia University and currently is the Executive Director of International Studies and Outreach at MSUB.

The course is open to any member of the community and will include an optional short-term study abroad program in Slovakia during the semester. Dr. Foster will lead the study abroad excursion, which will last approximately 10 days.

The course is variable credit so students have the option of registering for 1 or 3 credits. 1 credit students will be required to attend all classes, read all material, watch all films and be fully prepared for classroom discussion. Students wishing to earn 3 credits must complete a research paper.

**What is expected of you:**

**Attendance:** Class attendance is very important. A perfect attendance record will certainly enhance your control of the course material and, even bolster your final grade. All students are expected to participate in classroom discussions and presentations.

**Guest Lectures:** Guest lecturers from Slovakia will be an integral part of this course. Intellectuals and artists, political and public figures will visit Billings during the Fall 2019 semester. In addition, Slovak guests will present lectures from Slovakia on a video link.

**Readings:** Readings will be provided every week in advance, and will be discussed in class. We will watch several video materials/films that will support discussion in class.

**Assignments and short quizzes:** You will have several short written or oral assignments during the semester. There will be short quizzes on the main topics.

**Study Abroad Trip to Slovakia**: during the month of November, interested students will have the opportunity to join the Study Abroad trip to Slovakia, organized by the Office of International Studies and led by the course instructor. The trip will last approximately 10 days and is NOT REQUIRED for students. There will be additional program fees for the Study Abroad Trip to Slovakia including room and board, museum and concert tickets, local transportation and international transportation to and from Vienna, Austria. Organized meetings will be organized with the US Embassy, Slovak government officials, Non-Governmental Organizations, Universities and High Schools.

**Fall 2019 Schedule**

September 4, 2019 First Week of Classes

November 2019 Excursion to Slovakia

December 12, 2019 Last Day of Classes

*Tentative Lecture Schedule – Note that the from Week 7 the schedule may change due to availability of visiting Slovak lecturers and live video lectures from Slovakia*

Week 1 Introduction to Slavic Studies – Ethnogenesis of the Slavs – Medieval Western Slavic Cultures - The Moravian Mission and Cyril and Methodian Tradition

Week 2 19th Century – Romanticism – 1848 - Slovak national movements – Multicultural Empires – Nationality vs. Ethnicity – Slovak Language

# Week 3 Slovaks in WWI and the creation of Czechoslovakia – Wilson Doctrine and Versailles - Masaryk and Štefáni Slovak national movements

Week 4 Slovaks and the US, Immigration, Political Developments between the wars

Week 5 WWII and Slovakia

Week 6 Post-War Political Developments, elections, rise of Communist party, Warsaw Pact, 1960s thaw, 1968 – Socialism with a Human Face – Normalization – Human Rights Movements

Week 7 The Velvet Revolution– Events of 1988-89 – the Velvet Divorce - Birth of Slovak Independent State

Week 8 Slovakia since 1992, From Planned to Free Market Economy, European Union – NATO

Week 9 Micropolitics: Islands of Positive Deviation - Rule of Law, Media, Judiciary, Education, Health Care

Week 10 Religion in Slovakia – Slovakia between East and West

Week 11 Rise of Illiberal Democracy and Authoritarianism in Central Europe – Corruption – Oligarchs – the Slovak Example

Week 12 Slovak Music

Week 13 Slovakia and International Relations – US – Russia - EU

Week 14 Slovakia and the United States