

**BAL 315: Introduction to the Balkans: History, Culture, Politics and Religion  
(4 Credits)**

**Instructor**

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Office Hours: Mon and Wed 1:30pm to 2:30pm and by appointment

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**Lead Guest Lecturer**

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**Course Hours**

Follow the syllabus schedule below

**Course Location**

ECSWP main classroom

Fieldtrip locations

**Course Description**

This course will serve as a broad introduction to the history and culture of the Balkans with special attention to recent events and tensions of political and religious significance. The course will feature a series of guest lectures by local cultural, political, religious and literary figures and will involve regular excursions to points of interest within Zagreb and the surrounding areas and a 12 day journey throughout the Balkans.

Inevitably, one of underlying question of the course will be what does it mean to tell or learn a story of a place, of people, of culture, of history. Is it possible to learn the truth? How do competing narratives shape our understanding of events? With this in mind, and aided also by the course readings, students will be asked to pay particular attention to the way stories are told through historical and cultural monuments, media portrayals, our

guest speakers, etc, and how these stories affect the diverse communities in the Balkans, especially with regard to past wars and throughout the last 20 years of postwar reconstruction. Students will also be asked to reflect critically on themselves as culturally and historically situated recipients of this communication.

The course will end at the end with our biannual, end of semester, interdisciplinary conference at which students will present their final projects. (*Note that after the traveling portion of the course, students will spend the rest of the semester working on their final projects (while taking other courses) and will be assisted by faculty and lecturers in this when needed*).

The course will also include weekly language instruction designed to help students become acquainted with local customs and orient themselves within the culture.

- Serves as broad introduction to the history and culture of the Balkans with special attention to recent events and tensions of political and religious significance. Features guest lectures by local cultural, political, religious and literary figures and excursions to the major regions and cities of the Balkans countries. Program Core. 2 credit option available only to students enrolled in an approved 4-credit internship during the program. -

### **Texts**

Misha Glenney: *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers 1804-1999*

Texts delivered by guest speakers prior to lectures

### **Grading**

Journals	30 %
Presentation	15 %
Final Paper	15 %
Participation	30 %
Pre Arrival Reading Quiz	10 %

### **Assignments**

#### **Participation**

Particularly for this course, participation is essential. This class will be interactive in the sense that 1) most classes will include a visit to a relevant local site or destination, 2) a major component of the course is the 12-day sojourn through the Balkans, and 3) the course will include your participation in the workshop/conference that will conclude the semester. Throughout the course you are expected to engage the local culture, sites, and festivities in a respectful and interested manner.

#### **Journals**

Throughout the course you are required to keep a journal. The journal can also take form of an online blog. You need to have 8 journal entries total, four of these must be from our 12 day trip.

The length of an entry is less important than the substance but generally it should not be shorter than 350 words.

You can use the journal to keep impressions, collect data, write down questions, think through a problem etc. Think of this journal also as an aid toward your final presentation- a way of keeping track of all that you are learning and experiencing.

At times we will give you creative prompts for journals to help you along with the writing process and to help you process various experiences to which you will be exposed.

Each satisfactory journal will count 4 percentage points toward the total. (All “good-faith” efforts will receive the same 4 percentage points, while anything less than a full effort will be given whatever grade the instructor deems appropriate.)

*\*The two journals on Misha Glenny’s book that you need to complete prior to your arrival will also count under this category (so total number of journals counting them is 10). See your email for more information.*

### **Pre Arrival Reading Quiz**

This quiz will be given during the first week of classes. The quiz carries 10% of the total class grade. Do not attempt to memorize all dates and names but read to understand the course of main historical events and trends in the region and be prepared to recognize names of the key actors in these events.

### **Presentation**

The final conference workshop presentation can be on any topic touched upon during the semester and having to do with the region of the Balkans. The students will need to have a topic chosen and discussed with me during office hours **by the end of week 7**, but are encouraged to think about the topic much earlier. Students are also encouraged to select a faculty mentor from among the guest speakers or the Balkans semester faculty.

The presentations should be 10 minutes in length with 5-10 minutes left for questions.

Students will turn in their presentation materials (paper, PowerPoint etc.) to prof. Taylor at [petra.taylor@gordon.edu](mailto:petra.taylor@gordon.edu) by 10 am on the day after the conference.

You will be graded on the following aspects of your presentation:

*Adherence to allotted time, content of the presentation, delivery of the presentation and fielding of questions.* You will receive a handout further explaining these categories prior to the conference.

### **Paper**

You will be required to write a 10-12 page research paper based on your presentation. The paper should use 3-5 secondary sources. The paper will be due on January 15, 2016.

## **Schedule**

**PRE ARRIVAL READING:** From Misha Glenny: *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers 1804-1999* (Introduction, 1-21, 39-57, 70-83, 249-271, 280-297, 302-305, 366-377, 428-436, 529-535, 456-459, 471-476, 484-505, Chapter 9)

### **WEEK 1**

10/18 Visit to the Museum of the City of Zagreb;  
*Quiz on Misha Glenny book*

**PROMPT FOR CREATIVE ASSIGNMENT/ JOURNAL #1**

### **WEEK 2**

10/24 Viewing of the BBC Documentary “Fall of Yugoslavia” Part #2 and discussion  
**Assignment:** View first part prior to this class

### **WEEK 3**

09/30 Aleš Debeljak, Guestspeaker: “Twilight of the Idols: Fall of Yugoslavia, and the Aftermath”

10/10 Ivana Bodrožić-Šimić, Guestspeaker (Crosslisted with Literature Course): “The Refugee Camp: War and Everyday Life through the Eyes of Literature”

### **WEEK 4**

10/06 (**Vukovar**)

Peace Youth Organization “Danube” workshop  
Trips to the Vukovar City Hospital, Ovchara Mass Grave Sight, Vukovar Grave Yard, Vukovar Water Tower

10/07 (**Vukovar**)

Peace Youth Organization “Danube” workshop  
Personal Testimonies of Living through the Siege of Vukovar (Vukovar City Library)

10/08 (**Belgrade**)

Historical Tour of Belgrade

10/09 (**Belgrade**)

Museum of Yugoslavia with the Museum Curator  
Lecture by Vladimir Arsenijevic “Jugolaboratorija”

10/10 (**Srebrenica**)

Visit to the Srebrenica Graveyard and Memorial Center  
Discussion and Reflection Time

10/11 (**Sarajevo**)

Walking Tour of Sarajevo

\*Literature Class held (see the Literature Syllabus)

## **WEEK 5**

### **10/12 (Sarajevo)**

Visual Storytelling: The aftermath of Genocide (Visit to the Srebrenica Genocide Gallery guided by the photographer)

Museum of History of Bosnia and Herzegovina (The Hague Trials exhibit and Sarajevo under Siege)

\*Literature Class held (see the Literature Syllabus)

### **10/13 (Sarajevo)**

Morning Prayer in White Mosque

Christians as Peacemakers vs. Religion as Dividing Force (Conversation with fra. Drago Bojic)

\*Literature Class held (see the Literature Syllabus)

### **10/14 (Mostar)**

Mostar through Centuries: Historical Walk with writer and peace activist Marko Tomaš

### **10/15 (Vis)**

Retreat

### **10/16 (Vis)**

Retreat

### **10/17 (Vis)**

Retreat

### **10/18 (End of Retreat and Travel to Zagreb)**

## **12/ 19-20 CONFERENCE AND STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

**01/15 Final Paper Due via email to [petra.taylor@gordon.edu](mailto:petra.taylor@gordon.edu)**