**Civil Society in Central Europe**

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**Brief introduction/Course description**

The main goal of the course is to provide an overview of the civil society in Central Europe for non-Hungarian speaking students. In addition, further insight is provided on the theory of civil society. Various issues are connected with the topic of the lectures (NGO-related fundraising, man management of voluntary organizations, methods of influencing various decisions). The course suggests that the civil society not as an abstract concept, but as an organic entity, the lessons strengthen social responsibility, creative thinking and adapting knowledge.

**Course schedule/outline**

1. Theory of civil society Definitions theories connected with the civil society. What is the civil society?

2. Civil society and civil organizations – what is the difference? NGO’s, civic participation and connection to the civil society.

3. The civil society in Central Europe – the strength and weakness of local organizations and networks.

4. Interest groups and civil society involvement in policy-making. Theories on interest representation.

5. Differences and similarities in interest-representation, various strategies on influencing of the decision-makers.

6. Civil activities – how to create and sustain an activity? Management and practical problems connected with NGO’s.

7. Dangers, threats and opportunities – how influencing works in practice? Central European examples of civic activism.

8. Local, regional and nationwide activities. Theoretical and practical differences and similarities.

9. Civil society, NGO’s and long-time sustainability. The place of civil society in the future. Populism, ideological struggles and the civil society. The theory of “bad” civil society.

10. The evolution of Hungarian civil society. Best and worst practices.

11. Civil society and the European Union. Civil society in the context of the European Union.

**Literature/Textbook/Materials/Readings**

Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, Civil Society and Political Theory, MIT Press, 1992

Howard M.M. (2002): The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe (Cambridge University Press)

Dür, A. And De Biévre, D. (2007): The Question of Interest Group Influence, Journal of Public Policy 27 (1), 1-12.

Pérez N. ‐ Borragán S. (2004): EU accession and interest politics in central and Eastern Europe, Perspectives on European Politics and Society, 5:2, 243-272

**Assessment/exam**

33% - active participation on class

33% - presentation (.ppt, discussion). If the courses are online, the .ppt presentation is part of the essay.

33% - essay on a selected topic (introducing an NGO), 8,000 characters