

“Former Socialist Economies and the Undergraduate Curriculum”

by

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**FORMER SOCIALIST ECONOMIES**  
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*Abstract.* The authors report on the results of a survey of current undergraduate instruction on the socialist economic system and post-socialist economies. Based on responses from eighty colleges and universities, they evaluate how course offerings and content have changed in light of the momentous developments of the past decade. The evidence is then used to comment on trends and potential future developments in classes on comparative economic systems and transition economies. Although undergraduate offerings in these areas have arrived at a short-run equilibrium, there are good reasons to believe that the structure of these courses should soon be re-thought.

Key words: college teaching, socialist systems, transition economies  
JEL codes: A2, P2

## **FORMER SOCIALIST ECONOMIES AND THE UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM**

More than a decade now has passed since the dramatic collapse of socialist systems in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Combined with the earlier-launched transformation of the Chinese economy, over a third of the world's population live in societies that in the past generation have abandoned systems dominated by communist-party-run planning agencies. For policy makers, the transition has presented the formidable challenge of how to "build" markets. For scholars and students, it has provided a fascinating natural experiment in systemic change. Though there are still fierce debates about "what has happened?" and "why?" all should agree that the tremendous regional variation in economic performance and in the pace and nature of institutional change has given us a greater appreciation for the complex relationship between historical legacies, economic policies and economic outcomes.

How have these developments affected course offerings at the undergraduate level? Given the passage of roughly ten years, we thought it was an opportune time to assess the current state of economic education in the area of post-communist economies, economics of transition and comparative economic systems. Below, we report on the results from what we believe to be the most comprehensive survey completed on this topic. We report who is offering courses in these areas, who is teaching them and what is the nature of the material that they are covering. We also report on the schools that are not offering classes in this area. And finally, we use the evidence from the survey to comment on current trends and potential future developments in the field. Ultimately, we conclude that while

undergraduate offerings in these areas have arrived at a short-run equilibrium, there are good reasons to believe that the structure of these courses may soon have to be re-thought.

### **The Survey**

During the 2001/02 academic year, we sent e-mails to each of the schools in the top two tiers of the *U.S. News and World Report's* most recent ranking of national universities and national liberal arts colleges.<sup>1</sup> The list included 232 schools, roughly equally divided between liberal arts colleges and universities. We received responses from eighty different schools, forty-three liberal arts colleges and thirty-seven universities. These included those that offer courses in our area of interest and those that do not. We should note that ours is not the first such survey to be conducted since the collapse of socialist systems. In the spring of 1993, Clark Ross sent a shorter but similarly themed questionnaire to ninety-two leading liberal arts colleges and universities and received responses from thirty-two (Ross 1995). Later in this paper, we use Ross' analysis and exploit the passage of time to help assess trends in instruction over the past decade.

Our e-mails were addressed to either economics department chairs or to the individual that we had learned from the departmental website was teaching a course on comparative systems or transition economies. The e-mail described the survey and included a link to the website on which it could be taken.<sup>2</sup> If the initial recipient felt there was another member of their department better able to answer questions about course offerings in our area of interest, we asked that he/she not complete the survey but send us the contact information for that other person. We would then contact that other person. In this way, we received no more than one completed survey from each school on our list.

For those at schools offering courses in comparative systems or transitioning economies, the survey was designed to last roughly twenty minutes. Most questions focused on current course offerings, but some addressed trends and potential changes in course content. For respondents at institutions not offering courses in the area, the survey could be completed in five minutes.

### **Who Is Offering What?**

Of the eighty institutions that responded, forty-six reported currently offering at least one undergraduate course exclusively devoted to post-communist economies, economics of transition or comparative economic systems. Twenty-eight of these offer such a course at least once per year and seventeen less frequently.<sup>3</sup> Fourteen of the eighty offer at least two undergraduate courses in the area; six offer at least three.

Before proceeding to a discussion of these responses, we must address to what extent they constitute a representative sub-sample of the group from which they were drawn. Was there, perhaps, some selection bias with respect to the individuals and/or the schools that answered our survey? Were we, for instance, more likely to receive responses from schools that continue to offer courses in these areas? At least in this limited sense, there is no reason to believe that our sample is biased. An examination of departmental course offerings via the web found that of the 152 colleges and universities that did not respond to our survey, eighty-three currently offer courses in our area of interest. That is, 55% of the non-responding schools offer such courses. This closely mirrors the 57% of the responding schools that do. Roughly 63% of the responding liberal arts schools offer a course in these areas, whereas only half of the responding national universities do. Among non-responding schools, these numbers are 51% and 56%, respectively.

Returning to the responses that we received, we can sub-divide the reported course offerings into three groups on the basis of their titles. Thirty-two schools offer an undergraduate course entitled "comparative economic systems" or "comparative economics."<sup>4</sup> Seventeen schools offer an undergraduate class that includes "transition" in its title -- *e.g.*, "economics of transition" or "economies in transition." Seven of these "transition" courses are at schools that also offer a "comparative systems" course. A third subset of classes carries titles that refer to a specific region or country in the former socialist bloc. For instance, eight schools offer a course exclusively on the Chinese economy, nine offer courses on the Soviet or Russian economy and three offer such classes on Eastern Europe.<sup>5</sup>

The mean year in which the instructors in these courses received their Ph.D. was 1981. Ten of twenty-six, 22%, are over the age of sixty; 29% are in their fifties; 36% are in their forties; 11% are in their thirties; and 2% are in their twenties.<sup>6</sup> They received their doctoral degrees from thirty-two different schools, with the greatest number being Ph.D.s from Harvard, seven, and UC Berkeley and Michigan, three each. Eleven were female and thirty-five were male.

Well over a majority (27/46) expressed having a current research interest in the former socialist countries.<sup>7</sup> Almost every one of those with research interests in these regions cited a specific transition-related topic as their primary area of interest.<sup>8</sup> In terms of country-specific research, twelve noted a focus on Russia and eight reported a focus on China.

Instructors of these courses, as others, face tradeoffs with regard to the type of material to present. One of the more noteworthy choices in terms of the courses of interest to us here turns on how much time to spend addressing general micro- and macro-economic relationships and how much gets spent covering region-specific material. These two, of

course, are not mutually exclusive as economic developments from the post-socialist region can be used to illustrate general economic principles. But instructors nevertheless may prioritize the two. Some may be primarily interested in teaching students about a particular part of the world and its unique economic institutions; others may be more interested in emphasizing basic economic relationships with illustrations from the economies of a particular part of the world. For instance, those that follow the former path might choose to spend more time and effort discussing the historical and political factors that shaped certain economic institutions or the cultural factors that shape the behaviors of economic agents at the micro level. Those following the latter path might explain the difficulties of central planning in terms of the literature on principal-agent problems or explain the transition countries' problems with developing financial markets in terms of the general literature on asymmetric information. In short, we were interested in whether or not instructors see themselves as teaching a course that is more about applying the tools of economic analysis or a course that is more about the economies of particular regions.

Specifically, the survey asked respondents to prioritize whether their class' purpose was to provide students with a better understanding of either (a) "economic developments and political economy in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, etc." or (b) "economic principles in general as illustrated by applications from these countries." The survey provided the respondents with a Likert scale from 1 to 3 for both (a) and (b) with one referring to the highest priority and 3 to the lowest. Thirty-four instructors established a clear ordering, with twenty of thirty-four (59%) giving greater weight to the first response.<sup>9</sup> There appears to be a weak correlation of these responses with age. Specifically, younger professors seem to prefer to view their course as more about economic principles than about the unique economic institutions of a particular region. Only 33% of instructors in their



thirties give greater weight to response (a); 42% of those in their forties; 66% of those in their sixties; and 71% of those over sixty.

Another, somewhat related choice that instructors must make involves the extent to which economic outcomes in other parts of the world are presented as either confirming or casting doubt on the basics of economic theory, generally understood. Many "comparativists," for instance, have been sympathetic to the notion that for reasons of history and culture, economic actors in formerly socialist countries cannot be expected to respond to market incentives in the anticipated manner. For instance, in a recent commentary about the impact of market liberalization in Russia, Marshall Goldman (1998, p. 10) wrote that:

What some very good economists both here and in Russia failed to realize was that Russia was very different. Despite their insistence to the contrary, the economic man in Russia (*homo sovieticus*) is very different from the *homo economicus* who prevails elsewhere in the world. How could it be otherwise after seventy years of communism ... when anything associated with the market or private initiative was treated as antisocial and penalized as an economic crime?

More generally, there is now a large literature emanating from other social science disciplines but increasingly seeping into economics that economic actors in some societies have more collectivist and less self-interested economic goals.

We thus hypothesized that there may well be a great deal of sympathy for the notion that studying other societies and their economies provided a window on the limitations of economic theory as much as or more than it provided illustrations of generalizable economic principles. Of the clear responses, however, a sizable majority (28/39) prioritized (b), "to better understand economic principles in general as illustrated by applications from these countries," above (c), "to better understand the limitations of economic theory as illustrated

by applications from these countries" as the goal for their course. Seven ranked them equally and only four ranked (c) above (b).<sup>10</sup>

As we noted above, thirty-two institutions currently offer undergraduate courses in comparative systems, with eighteen offering them at least once per year.<sup>11</sup> Historically, specialists on socialist economies dominated the field known as comparative economics systems. Even though the field was broadly defined to include comparisons of institutions in market-based, capitalist economies, in reality, the majority of "comparativists" were experts on the socialist system.<sup>12</sup> And since this is where the field's intellectual core lay, undergraduate courses in comparative economic systems and their texts consistently gave more serious attention to the theory and practice of socialism than to any other subjects in the comparative domain.<sup>13</sup>

With the end to the bi-polar division of the world, the field has been pushed to re-define itself. We might have expected "comparative systems" courses to give much greater attention to topics in comparative capitalism. We find, however, that the theory and practice of socialism and the post-socialist experience continue to occupy a disproportionate amount of attention (see Table 1). From the professors that provided information on the thematic distribution of their class material, we can report that 29% on average of "comparative systems" classes are devoted to the theory and/or practice of socialism, 30% to the post-socialist transition and 41% to other topics. Twenty of the twenty-six respondents devote at least half of their comparative systems class to socialism and post-socialism. And overall, nearly two-thirds of the country-specific material in these courses addressed the experiences of former socialist countries (see Table 2).

Only ten of the twenty-six comparative systems courses are at least half devoted to topics other than socialism and post-socialism.<sup>14</sup> But even among these ten courses, over half (53%) of the country-specific material deals with the countries of the former Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe and China.

We also found that 57% of the course content in "comparative systems" classes at schools that have also introduced "transition" classes remains focused on socialism in theory and practice and the post-socialist transition. So even though many institutions have introduced courses explicitly on transition and/or the economies of the former communist bloc countries, the content of comparative systems courses remains dominated by stories from the same countries that dominated the course prior to 1990.

Roughly two-thirds (19/29) of those that reported on the assigned readings in their comparative systems course use a standard text with the one by Paul Gregory and Robert Stuart, *Comparative Economic Systems*, being mentioned the most frequently. Twenty-one of twenty-eight report a "predominant" or "moderate" reliance on refereed journal articles and twenty of twenty-eight report a "predominant" or "moderate" reliance on articles in periodicals and non-refereed journals.

Of the seventeen schools that reported offering classes explicitly on "transition," ten give such courses at least once per year.<sup>15</sup> In most cases, these courses seem to have taken the place of "comparative systems" courses. Within this group of schools, of the eleven that responded to questions about courses that had been cancelled since 1985, ten reported that their departments had eliminated a course on either comparative systems or central planning.

Perhaps it is not surprising that given that transition is the newer sub-field, the age structure of the instructors in this cohort is younger than those that are teaching the comparative systems courses.<sup>16</sup>

The "transition" classes on average devote 22% of class time to covering the theory and practice of socialism and 74% of the time to the post-socialist experience. Of those classes not explicitly geared to transition in a particular region (*e.g.*, Eastern Europe) or country (*e.g.*, Russia or China), 42% of the country-specific material in the class was devoted to Russia, 12% to other countries in the FSU, 19% to China and 24% to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Texts by Marie Lavigne, Paul Gregory and Robert Stuart and the book on Russian privatization by Maxim Boycko, Andrei Shleifer and Robert Vishny, are cited most frequently among the assigned readings.

Eight schools reported offering undergraduate classes exclusively on China.<sup>17</sup> With the exception of one of these, all also offer other courses in the comparative or transition area. Four of the eight offer their classes at least once per year. Clearly, the demographics of this group of instructors differ from our overall sample as six of the eight respondents at these schools are women and the same number are under fifty. With the exception of one course explicitly focused on the transition, all provide relatively equal coverage to the socialist and post-socialist experience.<sup>18</sup> Barry Naughton's *Growing Out of the Plan* was the only reading to be listed by more than one instructor. Given China's recent accession into the WTO, it is not surprising that of the four that reported on enrollment trends, three noted an increase in enrollment relative to other departmental electives in the past five years.

Nine schools list classes on the Soviet economy and/or Russia, with five of these offering courses annually.<sup>19</sup> Seven of the nine respondents are male and the majority is older than fifty. The temporal emphasis in these courses varies. Four of six respondents report

devoting at least half the course to the socialist system; the remainder focus more on transition-related topics. Five of these courses use Gregory and Stuart's *Russian and Soviet Economic Performance and Structure* as the main text. Three of seven report an increase in enrollment and four of seven report no change.

It should come as no surprise to those that have followed the field that our survey finds little to no evidence that "comparative systems" has survived at the graduate level. Four of the universities that responded to our survey do periodically offer a graduate level course in "comparative systems."<sup>20</sup> None of these, however, offer a qualifying exam in the subject.

Some noteworthy programs, however, have introduced new classes on the transition. For at least four of these schools, an economic transition course is currently an elective fixture -- *i.e.*, offered annually in the graduate curriculum.<sup>21</sup> Berkeley alone offers two courses, a full year sequence taught currently by Gerard Roland and Yingyi Qian. Three of these schools offer qualifying exams in the "transition" field and each of these three uses Roland's text, *Economics and Transition*, in its graduate course(s). Respondents at two of these three institutions, however, expressed some doubt as to whether this would continue to be a distinct field; both volunteered that it might soon be folded into Development.

### **Who's Not Offering?**

Departments may choose not to offer a course in this area because of their preferences, because of resource constraints or both. To help disentangle these two potential reasons, we asked "If there were no staffing constraints, what do you feel would be the best combination of systems/transition classes for an undergraduate economics program?" To our surprise, almost all departments that currently do not teach courses in these areas did express some interest in offering them (see Table 3). Only four of twenty-nine responded that a

comparative systems and economics of transition were not needed as that material could be integrated into other courses. The remainder expressed a desire to offer at least one course with comparative systems and/or transition content. A majority (53%) of the institutions prioritized the option of a comparative systems class with significant emphasis on current economic transitions. It is thus clear that resource constraints play a role in the decisions at these schools. But it is also clear that their preferences are different as well.

In a world without resource constraints, only 6% of these departments gave priority to the option of having both a comparative systems course and an economics of transition class. This compares to 41% at schools now offering at least one such course.

It is also clear that preferences within these departments have changed with world events. A number of these institutions chose to drop courses in this area quite recently. Of thirty-two responding institutions, since 1985 sixteen have offered a course in comparative systems; and eight have offered a course on transitioning economies. Five of the schools offered classes in both areas. Over half (8/14) noted that their department had an offering in these areas after 1995. When prompted for general comments as to why these classes had been dropped, typical responses included "material moved to developing economies course," and "department felt had other needs that were more pressing."

At the graduate level, only one of the Ph.D. granting institutions among this group reports ever offering a qualifying field in comparative systems.

### **Current Trends and "What Is To Be Done?"**

As it is taught at the undergraduate level, the evolution of the comparative systems course appears to have reached a temporary plateau, a short run equilibrium of sorts. Where they have not been formally changed into courses on "transition," most retain a focus on former

socialist economies. And as indicated in Table 1, current instructors do not envision this situation changing perceptibly in the next five years. According to their predictions, nearly two-thirds of country-specific content will continue to focus on the former Soviet bloc countries and China. Instructors also do not envision a great deal of modifications in their "transition" courses -- perhaps a bit less attention to the pre-reform era, perhaps a bit more China-related content.

Ross' survey results, in conjunction with ours, support the short-run equilibrium thesis. Like Ross, we found that comparative systems courses continue to be offered at a significant number of institutions, many in modified form. "Transition" courses and transition-related content in the comparative economics class have continued to remain prominent, in a number cases having supplanted the "old" comparative systems course.

Trends spotted early in the 1990s, as well, continue to be evident at this time. As Ross noted some attrition of comparative systems courses around 1990, we found a not insignificant number of schools have chosen to drop offerings in this area in the past couple of years.<sup>22</sup> We both found, as well, that textbooks seemed to be declining in importance in these classes. This does not surprise us, for as these courses turn their focus to current history, tracking ongoing changes in dynamic systems, it has become more difficult for texts, even those that undergo periodic revisions, to keep up.

With regard to enrollment, neither Ross, nor we found indications that student interest in these courses was on the decline. Of the eighteen institutions that Ross found continuing to teach a comparative systems course, three reported increased enrollments, four reported a decrease and eleven reported either no change or did not answer. Among our respondents, of the thirty-two schools that offer an undergraduate comparative systems course, seventeen

reported unchanged enrollment relative to other departmental electives in the past five years; five reported enrollment increases and two reported enrollment decreases.<sup>23</sup> Among the "transition" courses, of those that did not respond "unchanged" or "do not know," two noted an increase and one noted a decrease. And finally among courses devoted to specific countries and/or regions, six respondents reported a rise in student numbers, whereas none reported a fall.

Thus there is little, if any, evidence to make us believe that a drop in demand has driven what is offered now or will impact what will be offered in the future. Students, most likely, will continue to be interested in learning about the economies of what remain geo-strategically important regions. Any changes in course offerings and their content thus are likely to emanate from changes on the supply side.

Despite developments at the end of the twentieth century, a majority of economics departments continue to acknowledge value in studying the theory and practice of socialism by continuing to offer courses that devote significant time to these topics. At the same time, many departments have responded to global events by modifying their comparative systems class and/or introducing a new class on the post-socialist transition. And though these developments have been driven by world events, these classes have been capable of providing students with much more than just newspaper headlines. Developments in these regions have been rightly viewed as fascinating natural experiments in systemic evolution. Perhaps as never before, we have been able to observe "in the field" how economic systems react, change and resist. We have been able to examine when systemic change can be planned and implemented, why and how markets develop and how apparently small differences in initial conditions can have a large impact on system-level dynamics. The transition has also made clear just how important a market economy's institutional



infrastructure is to its behavior and performance. Even those who do not teach or conduct research in this area have recognized this lesson. Well over half (12/17) of the responding department Chairs in programs that currently do not offer courses in this general area made explicit reference to the increased appreciation for the role of institutions and/or property rights in determining economic outcomes when asked "[W]hat has the study of the post-socialist transition contributed to economics generally?" These answers were in no manner prompted.

We must ask, however, how sustainable is this short run equilibrium. Will the "transition" and/or the modified comparative systems course (as currently constituted) which essentially had their origins in dramatic global developments continue to be justified as those events slip further into history? The economic transition from socialist central planning is, of course, self-defined as finite. It represents a process that has a goal and a presumable endpoint. Once that transition process has been widely recognized as having reached its conclusion, it is not clear that the current equilibrium is sustainable. Clearly, the passage of time will compel a re-evaluation of both the comparative systems field as well as special courses devoted to former socialist countries.

For some, the time for re-evaluation has already arrived. In a paper presented at a World Bank conference this spring, Djankov *et al.* (2002) call for the development of a "new comparative economics," one based on comparisons among capitalist economies. The authors rightly point out that recent global economic developments -- the Asian financial crisis, European integration and the post-socialist transition -- have focused increasing attention on cross-country differences in economic institutions, particularly the extensive variation in the nature of the public / private sector interface. A burgeoning research literature, promoted by increasingly sophisticated attempts to measure country-level

institutional variation, is showing that economies that rely primarily on market-based allocation mechanisms differ substantially in the extent to which politicians and other state actors regulate and/or own firms, moderate externalities, enforce private contracts and settle private sector disputes.<sup>24</sup> Importantly, Djankov *et al.* argue that these differences do not arise idiosyncratically but rather follow systematic patterns.

Clearly, at the undergraduate level, a transition to a "comparative capitalism" systems course is not imminent. Among the current cadre of comparative systems instructors, we have noted the clear bias toward the former socialist countries and their experiences. And we should also note that of the six instructors that devote over half of their course to "other" topics, three are over sixty and five are over fifty. So there is no pressure among the younger economists in the field to move in this direction.

But if we believe that what is taught at the undergraduate level is ultimately a function of the field that students specialize in in graduate school, the future of the comparative systems as currently conceived and courses on post-socialist economies is, at best, uncertain. In the past decade, we have seen comparative systems specialists and their journals focus almost exclusively on the post-socialist transition. But while this has become a sub-field of sorts in several of the graduate programs that had traditionally produced students of centrally planned systems, it is not clear that this configuration will be sustained. Indeed, as we noted, several of those now teaching graduate level courses believe that transition studies will ultimately be folded into the development field.

Clearly there are reasons to believe that the current constellation of "systems" and "transition" courses at the undergraduate level will not be sustainable in the medium to long run. But the likely long-term dynamics may not necessarily result in a decreased emphasis on

former socialist economies in the undergraduate curriculum. The transition from socialist central planning may turn out to be as influential on the profession at large as any single economic event since the Depression; its impact, therefore, could well be felt across a number of sub-fields. And, as we have seen already, many schools may continue to see value in teaching stand-alone, undergraduate courses about the economies of countries of the former socialist bloc outside of an explicitly comparative context.

But it is our sense that a "new comparative economics," focused on cross-country comparisons of institutions in market-based economies, will eventually replace "comparative economics" as now understood. Current "comparativists," the institutions that represent them, and the journals that publish their research should acknowledge and embrace these changes. Their expertise on capitalist systems in the process of formation (*i.e.*, transitioning economies) situates current comparativists well to influence the evolution of a field that focuses on institutional variation in market-based economies. Research on former socialist economies should be able to help shape the evolution of the new field even when "transitioning" no longer seems to be an apt modifier for those countries.

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<b>TABLE 1. SUBJECT MATTER IN COMPARATIVE SYSTEMS AND TRANSITION COURSES</b>				
	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Socialist</b>	<b>Post-socialist</b>	<b>Other</b>
Comparative Systems (now)	26	29%	30%	41%
Comparative Systems (in 5 years)	27	25%	37%	38%
Transition (now)	14	22%	74%	4%
Transition (in 5 years)	13	15%	77%	9%

<b>TABLE 2. COUNTRY-SPECIFIC MATERIAL IN COMPARATIVE SYSTEMS AND TRANSITION COURSES</b>						
	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Russia</b>	<b>Other CIS</b>	<b>China</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>Other</b>
Comp. Systems (now)	24	25%	7%	16%	15%	37%
Comp. Systems (in 5 years)	22	21%	7%	21%	13%	38%
Transition (now)	9	42%	12%	19%	24%	3%
Transition (in 5 years)	9	39%	11%	26%	21%	2%

<b>TABLE 3. DESIRED OFFERINGS IN COMPARATIVE SYSTEMS / ECONOMIC TRANSITION FIELDS (PERCENTAGES LISTING RESPONSE AS MOST DESIRABLE ABSENT RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS)</b>		
	Schools currently not offering course in CS and Transition areas	Schools currently offering course(s) in CS and Transition areas
A single CS class with little to no emphasis on current economic transitions	0	7
A single CS class with significant emphasis on current economic transitions	53	24
A CS class with little or not emphasis on current economic transitions AND separate ET class	3	11
A CS class w/ significant emphasis on current economic transitions AND separate ET class	3	30
An ET class only, emphasizing history of central planning and Soviet system	9	7
An ET class only, which does not emphasize history of central planning and Soviet system	6	7
Not needed; the CS and ET topics can be integrated into other courses	12	2
No Answer	15	13

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<sup>1</sup> We sent out one additional questionnaire upon request from an interested colleague at a university not on one of these lists.

<sup>2</sup> We accommodated the few respondents who were reluctant to complete an online survey and requested that we send them a hard copy. The complete survey instrument can be viewed at <http://www.davidson.edu/academic/economics/foley/Postcomm%20survey.asp>.

<sup>3</sup> One did not comment on the course's periodicity.

<sup>4</sup> We include in this group one school that offers a class for undergraduates entitled "World Economic Systems" and another school that offers an "Economic Systems in Theory and Practice" course.

<sup>5</sup> Two of the "China" courses also are in the "transition" group as are two of those in the "East European" group. One school offers a class on Vietnam.

<sup>6</sup> Surprisingly, the mean year of Ph. D. receipt for these individuals does not appear to differ greatly from the rest of the profession. Among the economic departments that reported offering a course in our area of interest, the mean year of Ph.D. receipt was 1980 (Hasselback 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Among those that did not express an interest in this area were five who noted interests in topics that would generally be categorized under the heading of "development economics." Another two expressed a general interest in the economics of property rights.

<sup>8</sup> Among this group, only four were female (4/27) and the age structure broke down along the following lines: 22% (6/27) are over the age of sixty, 22% are in their fifties, 41% are in their forties, and 15% are in their thirties.

<sup>9</sup> Of the remaining twelve that did not, it is not clear that all meant to rank (a) and (b) equally. If the respondent simply chose to disregard or skip the question, for whatever reason, we received an output of "1" for each of the responses.



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<sup>10</sup> Of the eleven that did not go along with the majority's prioritization, only one was in their thirties, five were in their forties, two were in their fifties, and two were in their sixties.

<sup>11</sup> Baylor, Beloit, Colorado College, Davidson, Duke, Georgetown, Holy Cross, James Madison, Kenyon, Luther, Michigan State, Mount Holyoke, Muhlenberg, Occidental, Presbyterian, Principia, Ripon, Rutgers, St. Johns, St. Mary's (Maryland), Transylvania, Trinity College, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Penn, University of Washington, Washington University, Wellesley, Wheaton (Illinois), William and Mary, Willamette.

<sup>12</sup> An economic system can be defined as the "organizational arrangements used to allocate resources in a given country or geographic setting." (Gregory and Stuart, p. 457) Such a system might be classified according to the mechanism for generating and using information (plan or price-mediated markets), the level of decision-making (centralized or not), property relationships and the system of incentives.

<sup>13</sup> Comparative systems texts that in the past had focused on static comparisons of market-based and centrally planned systems began to devote much more space to system dynamics, particularly the transition from socialism to capitalism. These changes are apparent in the market-leading text, Paul Gregory and Robert Stuart's *Comparative Economic Systems*. The 1985 edition was divided into three sections. The first addressed how to characterize, classify and evaluate economic systems. The capitalist economic system was introduced in one chapter that covered the standard competitive model, laid out justifications for state intervention and proposed several hypotheses regarding the system's performance with respect to efficiency, equity, *etc*. The subsequent two chapters summarized the Marxian critique of capitalism and laid out the evolution of socialist economic models. A second section addressed the systems of specific countries, devoting a chapter each to the two global superpowers, with additional chapters given over to socialist and capitalist variants. The final section of the book directly compared socialist and capitalist systems with regard to trade policy and performance with respect to efficiency, equity, *etc*. A final section briefly addressed reform

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within the two systems and touched on the theme of convergence. In all, only ten pages or so were explicitly devoted to themes of systemic change. The 1995 edition of the same text gave much more attention to dynamic themes. The first section now included a chapter on within-system change under socialism and capitalism. The chapters on the Soviet and US economies were retained but a new chapter that emphasized decline in the socialist world was added. This was followed by two new three-chaptered sections, the first on general issues relevant to the transition toward markets, the second on the post-socialist experiences of individual countries.

<sup>14</sup> The reason for a comparative systems course devoting at least half of its content to non-socialist and non-transition related topics does not necessarily stem from the institution in question offering other courses in those areas. Six of these ten institutions do not offer such a course. Nor does the reason seem to be that the instructors area of expertise lies elsewhere; seven of the ten report having interest in transition-related research. Four of these ten instructors are in their sixties, three in their fifties, one in their forties.

<sup>15</sup> Georgetown, Indiana, James Madison, Kenyon, Occidental, Penn, Penn State, Reed, Rutgers, St. Olaf, Trinity College, Tufts, UC Berkeley, University of Washington, Wake Forest, Wesleyan, Williams.

<sup>16</sup> Nearly two-thirds of the respondents at institutions offering “transition” courses (11/17) are under fifty; whereas less than half of those at those institutions teaching “comparative systems” (11/31) courses were in this age cohort.

<sup>17</sup> Beloit, Michigan State, St. Olaf, Trinity College, UC Berkeley, Minnesota, University of the South, University of Washington.

<sup>18</sup> In China's case, we assume that respondents interpreted post-socialist as referring to the post-Mao period during which there has been considerable liberalization of the economy despite the continuing dominance of the Communist Party on the political scene.

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<sup>19</sup> Carleton, Haverford, Michigan State, Minnesota, Penn, Rutgers, Trinity College, UNC, Wellesley.

<sup>20</sup> Baylor, University of Massachusetts, University of North Carolina, and University of Pittsburgh. Of these, two offer "systems" courses that do not focus exclusively on socialist and post-socialist economies. Not counted among these four is the University of Maryland, which has recently introduced a field in Comparative Institutional Economics.

<sup>21</sup> Indiana University, University of California -- Berkeley, University of Washington, and University of Pittsburgh.

<sup>22</sup> Of course, this does not mean in aggregate terms that the number of schools offering courses in these areas is declining. Since we did not ask institutions that currently offer courses in these areas when they introduced them, we cannot say if the number or percentage of schools teaching classes in the area has declined or risen in the past ten years.

<sup>23</sup> The remainder either did not know or did not answer.

<sup>24</sup> See Kaufmann *et al.* (2002) for perhaps the most comprehensive attempt to quantify the variation in institutional quality across countries.