

History and Law in Southeast Europe, 19th-beginning of 20th century

After a series of uprisings and wars in the course of the 19th and the beginning of 20th century the Ottoman Empire gradually lost most of its European provinces on which new states emerged, among which Greece (1832), Romania (after the unification of the two principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, 1859/61, independence, 1878), Bulgaria (1878, independence 1908), with both Greece and Bulgaria expanding at the expense of the Ottoman Empire until the end of the Balkan wars (1912-1913).

Nineteenth century is also a time of reforms in the Ottoman Empire which aimed at its modernization and introduction of some practices in the government influenced by western models, among the most important being in the field of law and the judicial system. Developments in the Empire had different impact on the legal systems in the region subject to various factors – level of integration within the Ottoman administrative system, length of the Ottoman rule and time of liberation, influence of international treaties.

The course will introduce students to developments in the field of law and in its application in the Ottoman Empire, Greece, Romania, and Bulgaria, against the backdrop of traditions, political events and social processes in the region and the respective country during a crucial period, a period of state- and nation-building, modernization and laicization.

Apart from attempts at the introduction of western legal models in the Ottoman Empire, and the successor states, the course will also focus specifically on the role of international treaties in the modernization of the respective legal systems and more specifically in the establishment of the principles of treatment of religious minorities (non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, in 1856; Jews and Muslims in Romania, 1878; Muslims in Bulgaria and Greece, at several instances – 1878, 1913, the Versailles system); on the role of the international obligations of the Ottoman empire on the legal regime in the successor states (the capitulations).