

Russian and Post-Soviet Politics

POL SCI 310
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Spring 2016
Time: TR 12:30-1:45
Room: Bolton B40

Professor: Ora John Reuter
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Email: reutero@uwm.edu
Office Hours: W 1:00-3:00pm or by
appointment
Mode of Delivery: In-person

Prerequisites: Comparative politics course, jr standing.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Comparative politics uses the general to explain the specific and the specific to illuminate the general. This course uses Russia and other countries in the post-Soviet world to illuminate general themes, topics, and questions in the study of comparative politics.

The collapse of the Soviet Union left in its wake fifteen sovereign states--Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Nearly twenty years later, each continues to bear the traces of its Soviet past, but they have also diverged in important ways. This is a course on the politics of the states of the former Soviet Union. It stresses both similarities in their political processes and areas of divergence. As the largest, most important, and most studied post-Soviet country, Russia will receive special attention.

The countries in this region are bound together by two things. First, to varying degrees, they are bound by the cultural, political, linguistic, ethnic, and economic ties that were cultivated by geographic proximity and empire. Second, they are bound together by their shared experiences as constituent parts of the Soviet Union. Thus, this course begins with a brief examination of politics, economics, and society in the Soviet Union. In this section of the course, we will consider how the legacies of communism affect politics in contemporary post-Soviet states. The course then moves to consider the collapse of the Soviet Union and the new political institutions that took its place. The middle part of the course undertakes a thematic examination of regime change in the post-Soviet space. Here we will focus on the causes of regime divergence across the post-Soviet space. The course concludes by considering issues related to nationalism and ethnicity in the region.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

In this course you will:

- 1) become familiar with the Soviet Union as a political and economic system
- 2) learn about the political institutions and processes of Russia and the countries of the former Soviet Union
- 3) gain appreciation for the effects of the transition from communism on political development

- 4) use the analytic toolkit of social science to examine why we observe certain political outcomes in the countries of the former Soviet Union
- 5) learn more about the logic social scientific inquiry through the application of its methods in this world region
- 6) gain factual and useful real-world knowledge about political developments in Russia and the post-Soviet periphery

REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) Attend class sessions and participate

The format of this class will be discussion and lecture. Your participation includes both attendance and engagement in class discussion.

I will lecture at times, but much of our class time will be spent discussing the themes and arguments presented in our readings. Everyone should be ready to contribute something in every class. Your comments need not dazzle every time. Often times, the most productive contributions to class discussions are questions. If you don't understand something in the readings, say so. The authors we read are not perfect; their prose may not always be clear and their arguments will never be bulletproof. Speak up and air your grievances if you are confused. We will all be better for it and you will be rewarded come evaluation time.

Attendance is mandatory. Our class is small, and therefore, you cannot free ride on your fellow classmates. Your absences will be noticed by all and have a palpable impact on our sessions. Each unexcused absence will result in the reduction of your participation grade by 1/3 of a letter grade. Absences will be excused for documented illness, family crises, religious observances etc.

Late Policy: You are expected to arrive to class on time unless you have a valid excuse. It is disruptive and disrespectful to arrive to class late. If you are not present when I take roll at the beginning of class, you will be marked as absent for the day unless you have a documented excuse for your tardiness.

Your class participation grade will be based upon three components: 1) reading quizzes (see below), 2) participation in class, 3) participation in our class debate (see below), and 4) attendance.

- 2) Complete assigned readings before the date indicated on the syllabus

In order to participate effectively in discussion, you will need to have done the required readings for that day. Much is expected in terms of reading, but you are up to the task.

On certain weeks I will post on D2L a short list of questions that you should keep in mind while doing the next week's readings. These questions will help facilitate discussion on a given reading. On some, but likely not all, class days we will begin class with a short quiz. These quizzes will contain one question drawn from that week's questions. Grades of "check" or "check-minus" and "unsatisfactory" will be assigned.

3) One geography and history quiz

Situating the countries we study on a map and in time will help you access the readings more readily. This quiz will cover the geography, demographics, and barebones history of Russia and the former Soviet Union.

4) One 3-4 page reaction paper/presentation

You will write one reaction paper on one of the “starred” readings on the syllabus.

This paper should have three components:

1) The paper should briefly (one paragraph) sum up the main argument made by the author and the evidence provided.

2) It should contain an evaluation and critique of the author’s argument and evidence. Does the author’s argument make sense? Why or why not? Does his evidence (if any) comport with his/her argument? Why or why not? Do you know of other evidence that undermines (or supports) the author’s argument? Does one of the other readings for that day offer a perspective that is discordant with the perspective offered by the author? This section should constitute the lion’s share of the paper.

3) The paper should conclude with some questions for the class that flow from your evaluation/critique.

You will give a short 5-minute presentation on your paper to kick off our discussion of that reading. Your questions should help us in our discussion.

Each week we will determine who will write reaction papers for the following week. I will ask for volunteers.

All papers are due on the day that we cover the reading in class. Late assignments are NOT accepted.

5) One Midterm Exam—March 10

6) Prepare and participate in two in-class debates on April 12 and May 5. For these debates, the class will be divided into four teams. Each team will be assigned a position to defend. In order to prepare for this debate you will be required to prepare a 1-page ‘position paper’ that lays out why you think the position you are defending is the correct one and why the opposition position is incorrect. The individual position paper for the first debate is due by email on April 11. The paper for the second debate is due on May 4. You will also be required to meet with your debate team outside of class. More specific instructions will be distributed in the weeks prior to the debates.

7) One Final Paper

In this analytic practicum, you will either a) identify two different political outcomes in two post-Soviet countries and explain that cross-country variation or b) identify two different political outcomes in one post-Soviet country at two different points in time and explain that cross-temporal variation. In making your argument, you should draw on both scholarly and news sources. Early in the semester, I will distribute more detailed

information on the research paper, including a list of sample topics. A bibliography of not less than 10 sources and a three page, annotated outline of your paper is due on March 31. The final draft of the paper will be due on May 20 by email. The paper should be no less than 2800 words.

The outline will constitute 5% of your final course grade and the final paper will constitute 20% of your final grade. Together, the final paper accounts for 25% of your course grade.

8) One Final Exam –In-class. Thursday, May 12 at 12:30pm.

EVALUATION:

Class Attendance, Reading Journals and Participation:	20%
Geography Quiz:	5%
Response Paper:	5%
Debate Papers and Participation in Debates:	10%
Midterm Exam:	15%
Final Paper:	25%
Final Exam:	20%

GRADING SCALE:

100-93	A	77-73	C
92-90	A-	72-70	C-
89-88	B+	69-68	D+
87-83	B	67-63	D
82-80	B-	62-60	D-
79-78	C+	59-0	F

REQUIRED BOOKS FOR PURCHASE:

White, Stephen, et. al, Eds (2014). *Developments in Russian Politics 8* [DIPR]

Remington, Thomas. (2010). *Politics in Russia 7th Edition*. New York: Longman [PIR]

All other readings listed on the syllabus be made available on D2L or are available at the web link provided on the syllabus.

Late Assignment Policy

All assignments are due on the assigned date. Response papers are due on the day that a reading is covered in class. I do not accept late assignments. Exceptions are made only in the most severe and extraordinary circumstances.

Expected Time Commitment:

This is a three-credit course, so the expected time commitment from students is approximately 144 hours. Students will spend 40 hours in class over the course of the semester. Approximately 50% of the remaining time will be spent preparing for class by doing assigned readings and reviewing previous lecture notes. A further 25% will be spent preparing for quizzes and exams. Students should expect to allocate the final 25% to writing the final paper.

Academic Honesty:

All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's academic misconduct policy. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course and any plagiarism on any assignment will result in a failing grade for the course. *When in doubt, cite.* If you have questions about attribution, please see me. I am here to help! More information is available at http://www.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm

University Policies (<http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf>)

[NOTE: ALL READINGS ON THIS SYLLABUS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. I WILL NOTIFY YOU IN ADVANCE BY EMAIL AND/OR IN CLASS IF A CHANGE IS MADE PLEASE CONSULT THE D2L VERSION OF THE SYLLABUS BEFORE DOING YOUR READINGS.]

COURSE SCHEDULE:

PART I: THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS COLLAPSE

January 26-Course Introduction and Primer on the Region

January 28-Geography and Pre-Soviet Legacies

Braudel, Fernand.. 1993. A History of Civilizations. Pp527-546

Hill, Fiona and Clifford Gaddy. 2003. *The Siberian Curse: How Communist Planners Left Russia out in the Cold.* Chapter 3*

PIR 32-33.

February 2-The Russian Revolution and the Origins of the Soviet Union

Mary McAuley,. 1992. *Soviet Politics* 11-33

PIR 34-47

Richard Pipes. 2004. "Flight From Freedom: What Russians Think and Want." *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2004. 9-15.*

February 4-The Soviet System in Equilibrium

Mary McAuley,. 1992. *Soviet Politics* 62-88

Darden, Keith and Anna Grzymala-Busse. 2006. "The Great Divide: Literacy, Nationalism, and the Communist Collapse." *World Politics* 59: 83-115*

February 9-The Collapse of the Soviet Union: Glasnost and Perestroika

Mary McAuley,. 1992. *Soviet Politics* 89-106

Pop-Eleches, Grigore and Joshua Tucker. 2013. "Communist Legacies and the Democratic Support Deficit" *

Where in the world is Dushanbe!? (Geography, History, and Demographics quiz [in class])

February 11—Special Guest Speaker: John Micgiel, Columbia University.

February 16— Nationalism and the Collapse of the Soviet Union

Barnes, Andrew. 2015. "Three in One: Unpacking the Collapse of the Soviet Union" *Problems of Post-Communism*.

Hale, Henry. 2004. "Divided We Stand: Institutional Sources of Ethnofederal State Survival and Collapse," *World Politics*, v.56, no.2*

February 18-The Transition: Political Institutions and Economics

PIR 47-53

Fish, Steven. 2005. *Democracy Derailed in Russia: The Failure of Open Politics*. New York: Cambridge. Chapter 6 pp160-176

February 23: In-class Film Screening: *My Perestroika*

February 25-Debating Regime Type in Russia: 1990-2015

DEVELOPMENTS IN RUSSIAN POLITICS 7 Chapter 15, pp 263-275 only.[Note this is not your textbook, DIPR 8. This is a previous edition. It will be posted for you on D2L]

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way. 2002. "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy*, 13(2): 51-65.*

March 1-Institutional Choice: Executives and Legislatures

PIR 56-73

DIPR Chapter 2

March 3-Elections and Voting

DIPR Chapter 4

Colton, Timothy and Henry Hale. 2009. "The Putin Vote: Presidential Electorates in a Hybrid Regime" *Slavic Review* 68(3)*

March 8-Political Parties

DIPR, Chapter 5

Reuter, Ora John and Thomas F. Remington. 2009. "Dominant Party Regimes and the Commitment Problem: the Case of United Russia." *Comparative Political Studies* 42(4).*

March 10- Mid-Term Exam

March 22—No class

March 24—The Media

Gehlbach, Scott. 2010. "Reflections on Putin and the Media" *Post-Soviet Affairs*. 26(1): 77-87*

Reuter, Ora John and David Szakonyi. 2014. "Online Social Media and Political Awareness in Authoritarian Regimes" *British Journal of Political Science*.*

March 29 Civil Society and Social Transformation

DIPR Chapter 7 and Chapter 12

March 31— What undermines democracy in the former Soviet Union? Political Culture?

Colton, Timothy and Michael McFaul. 2001. Are Russians Undemocratic? <http://carnegieendowment.org/files/20coltonmcfaul.pdf>*

PIR 117-134

April 5---What undermines democracy in the former Soviet Union? Natural Resources

Fish, Steven. 2005. *Democracy Derailed in Russia: The Failure of Open Politics*. New York: Cambridge. Chapter 5*

April 7: No Class

April 12: Debate 1: The Future of Putin's Russia

April 14: What undermines democracy in the former Soviet Union? Presidentialism

Fish, Steven. 2005. *Democracy Derailed in Russia: The Failure of Open Politics*. New York: Cambridge. Chapter 7*

April 19: What undermines democracy in the former Soviet Union? Regime Institutions and International Factors

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. New York: Cambridge Chapters 2 and 5*

April 21—Ukraine: A Primer on Politics

D’Anieri, Paul. 2007. *Understanding Ukrainian Politics*. [Selection]

Katchanovski, Ivan. 2006. “Regional Political Divisions in Ukraine, 1991-2006” *Nationalities Papers**

Familiarize yourself with maps and discussion here:
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/12/09/this-one-map-helps-explain-ukraines-protests/>

April 26—Ukraine: The Orange Revolution and Aftermath

Katarnycky, Adrian. 2005. “Ukraine’s Orange Revolution” *Foreign Affairs* 84(2).

Beissinger, Mark. 2013. “The Semblance of Democratic Revolution: Coalitions in Ukraine’s Orange Revolution. *American Political Science Review*.*

April 28-Euromaidan and the Donbass War

Sakwa, Richard. 2015. *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands* [Selections]

May 3—Russian Foreign Policy in the Region

Shevel, Oxana. 2015. “Russia and the Near Abroad” *Foreign Policy Association Briefing Book*. Great Decisions 2015 Series.

Rutland, Peter. 2015. “An Unnecessary War: The Geopolitical Roots of the Ukraine Crisis” in Sakwa, Richard. *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda, and Perspectives*.

May 5—In class debate. Crisis in Ukraine: Possible Solutions

May 10 —Centre Periphery Relations in Russia

PIR 73-4, 77-82

Treisman, Daniel. 2011. *The Return: Russia's Journey from Gorbachev to Medvedev*. Chapter 8.