GOVERNMENT 334: RUSSIAN/POST-SOVIET POLITICS

Spring 2015, (Tu/Th: 11-12:20 & 12:30-1:50)
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Office Hours: Morton 29, Tuesdays, 2-3:30, Wednesdays: 9-10, and Thursdays, 2-2:30. & by appointment

This course introduces students to the unprecedented, fascinating, and sometimes tumultuous journey of political transformation upon which Russia has embarked. Is Russia in the process of creating a unique model of governance, will Russia become a democracy, or is it fated to be an authoritarian regime? How do ordinary people experience political and economic transition? What kind of political system do ordinary Russians want? Why is Russia more democratic than some states of the former Soviet Union and less democratic than others?

The study of the political transformation in Russia is a complex undertaking because political change is inextricably linked with economic, social, and cultural changes. We will emphasize comparative approaches and concepts that should enable students to make sense of political developments occurring in Russia. To guide our investigation, we will pay particular attention to the changing nature of mass-elite relations and how history and political culture in Russia shape the choices that elites and ordinary people make about politics. Because the states of the former Soviet Union did not launch their processes of political development with a blank slate, this course begins with a brief discussion of the politics and society of the Soviet state. We then analyze competing explanations for the collapse of the USSR. For the bulk of the class, we will examine the process of political change in post-communist Russia and factors that influence this process. We will briefly look at several other post-Soviet states to understand why Russia has developed a more open political system than some post-Soviet states and a less open one than others. By the end of the course, students should be able to use their understanding of factors that influence political dynamics in Russia to interpret current political events and anticipate future political developments.

Required texts:

Readings with urls are available for students logged onto the W&M network. (If students are using the proxy server or in the event that the URL has been changed, please locate the readings using the bibliographic information listed. I suggest using taking these steps: Go to the Swem library home page. Scroll down to “resources,” click on “journal title browse,” and type in the journal title name. This will lead you to the electronic link to this journal and you can search or browse to find the specific article listed. Readings not from the books or not accessible via electronic journal databases (indicated by *) are posted on blackboard.

Requirements:
A student's course grade will be calculated as follows:
- Attendance & Informed Participation 12%
- Midterm 28%
- Analytical paper 28%
- Final 32%

- Informed Participation. Students are required to attend class and to participate regularly in discussions by providing informed comments and/or questions that incorporate readings and/or discussion. Students should come to class having completed, and having thought critically about, the assigned readings. The syllabus contains discussion questions to help focus reading for class and study for exams. Students should bring readings to class and be ready also to discuss the following questions: “What is/are the author’s argument(s)?” “Do the theoretical concepts introduced help us better understand the issues
discussed? “Is the supporting evidence convincing?” “How does the reading relate to other course readings?” “How does the argument hold up against alternative arguments?” Students’ contributions to class discussion will be evaluated on the level of critical thought of assigned reading and our dialogue in class, rather than on the frequency, per se, of their comments. If student engagement in class discussion is inadequate, pop quizzes on the readings may be administered.

- **Attendance at two of the Tepper Lecture Series on Russian-Ukrainian Relations is a required component of participation.** All talks by distinguished scholars on the region are held on Thursdays from 5-6:30 p.m. The Tepper Lectures Series schedule is:
  - Feb. 12: Dr. Alex Motyl, Rutgers University, “After Imperial Collapse: Regime Change, Rebellion, and War in Russia & Ukraine, (Tucker 127a)
  - Feb. 19: Dr. Valerie Bunce, Cornell University, “Putin’s Game in Ukraine,” (Tucker 127a)
  - Feb. 26: Dr. Nancy Condee, University of Pittsburgh, TBA, (Washington 201)
  - Apr. 9: Dr. Lucan Way, University of Toronto, "The Origins of the War in Ukraine" (Tucker 127a)

Extra credit towards participation can be earned by attending additional Tepper Lectures.

- **Midterm.** This exam will consist of a short answer section and an essay section. It will cover all readings and lectures through Mar. 3. It will be on Mar. 5.
- **Analytical paper.** Students must draw on a diverse range of materials from the course and several outside source of high scholarly quality (books from academic presses or articles from academic journals) to write an approximately 6-paged paper on one of two topics. Topics will be distributed after the midterm. Due Apr. 16. No electronic copies will be accepted.
- **Final.** This exam will be cumulative, though it will emphasize material covered after the midterm. Essays will be emphasized, though there will also be a section on short answers. Finals: 11 a.m. Section: Tues, May 5 @ 2 p.m.; 12:30 p.m. section: Thurs., May 7 @ 9 a.m.

**Other policies:** No student can pass this course without passing all segments of this course specified above. All students are responsible for saving a copy of their papers; no late papers will be accepted. Please read and follow the Honor Code. I reserve the right to make minor adjustments to the syllabus. During class, all cell phones/PDAs need to be turned off completely. Laptops may be used only for class purposes; laptops may NOT be used by students sitting beside the walls of the classroom.


**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:**

Week 1
Jan. 22
- Introduction to the course

Week 2
Pre-Communist and Communist Approaches to Governing and Reactions to Them
Jan. 27
- Examining elite-mass relations during The Revolutions 1917 and the first years of the Soviet Union: Why did the provisional government fail? Why did the Bolsheviks succeed in fomenting a revolution?
  - Remington, pp. 31-33.
Jan. 29

- How did Lenin and Stalin approach state-building and governing in the USSR? Where is political power located? How and why was terror used?

Week 3

Feb. 3

- Modernization, Muddling Through, Reform…or Revolution of the State-socialist Model? What were the USSR’s sources of stability? Describe the social contract. What were the possibilities for and obstacles to political reform?
  - Remington, pp. 42 (first full para.)-49.

Feb. 5

- Why did the USSR collapse? Why did it collapse when it did? Was it inevitable?
  - Remington, "The Soviet System and its Demise" p. 39 (1st full para.)-p. 42 (top); p. 49 (bottom) -53.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE POST-SOCIALIST RUSSIA'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Week 4.

Feb. 10

- Designing political institutions: What constraints and opportunities do the rules of Russia’s 1993 Constitution pose for post-socialist Russian politics? What are the pluses and minuses of a strong presidency? What are the checks and balances on power in the Russian political system?
  - Remington, “The State and Regime in Russia” and "Russia’s Constitutional Order," pp. 16-25; 56-73

Feb. 12

- Political (non)Participation: Who participates in politics? Why does Putin win? How do we explain many citizens' alienation with politics? What are the consequences for democracy?

Week 5

Feb. 17

- The Straightjacket of Superpresidentialism: How do a strong presidency and a weak parliament impact political competition and openness?
Feb. 19
- Political culture: What are Russians’ views of good government and their political institutions? Does political culture influence the political institutions, vice-versa, or is the relationship reciprocal?

Week 6
Feb. 24
- What kind of political system do ordinary Russians prefer? An authoritarian, a democratic, or a hybrid regime? Why?

Feb. 26
- Political parties: What roles do political parties play in Russia? What is a Party of Power? What do the outcomes of Russian elections tell us about political competition and citizens’ political preferences?

Week 7
Mar. 3
- Interest groups: Which groups have the most influence over politics? Why? Does Russia have a space for voluntary associations that is independent of the state? What are the implications of grass-roots protest against the December 2011 parliamentary elections?

Mar. 5
- **MIDTERM**

**Spring Break!**

Week 8
Mar. 17
- Economic reform: How have Russia’s post-communist leaders varied in their approaches to economic reform? What is partial reform? What have been the social consequences of economic reform- who are more likely to be winners or losers?

Mar. 19
- What is the political impact of the Russian state role in the economy?
  - Fish, Ch. 6, “The Policy Problem: Economic Statism,” pp. 139-192.
Mar. 24
• Rule of Law or Rule by Law? What are the obstacles to the establishment of the rule of law in Russia? How can they be overcome?

Mar. 26
• Civil Society: Grassroots activism in post-Soviet Russia: Why have human rights groups been better at promoting individual rights than in bringing about policy change? Is Greene’s argument convincing?
  • Greene, Samuel, Moscow in Movement: Power and Opposition in Putin’s Russia, “Introduction,” & ch. 5, “Private Brutality and Public Verdicts,” pp. 1-10; 17-22, 110-144. (This is our THIRD REQUIRED BOOK).

Week 10
Mar. 31
• Civil Society part II: Why have groups of motorists been more successful in mobilizing grass-roots activists and in bringing about policy change than human rights activists? Does Greene accurately portray the power of civil society under Putin & help us anticipate the protests in reaction to the 2011 parliamentary elections & their impact?
  • Greene, Ch. 7, “Road Rage” & Ch. 8 “Seizing the Moment” pp. 167-201; 202-218.

Apr. 2
• The impact of Russia’s approach to managing its abundance of natural resources: What is a resource curse? What are the mechanisms through which the resource curse harms democracy in Russia? What is the connection between resources and corruption in Russia?

Week 11
Apr. 7
• Federalism: How has Moscow’s approach to the periphery affected: 1) democracy? 2) stability, and 3) ethnic autonomy? Under what conditions do non-Russians threaten the state?
  • Remington, “the Federal Dimension,” pp. bottom 73-82.
  • *King, Charles and Rajan Menon, “Russia’s Invisible Civil War: The Kremlin’s Crisis in the Caucasus,” Foreign Affairs, July/August, 2010, pp. 20-34.

EXPLAINING VARIATION IN THE POLITICAL TRANSITIONS OF POST-SOVIET STATES
Week 12
Apr. 9
• Russia’s role in Eurasia: How does Russia view its role toward the former Soviet Republics? What are Russia’s interests in the former Soviet Republics and how does it pursue them? What is the impact of Russia’s policy on the domestic politics of the states of the “near abroad?”
Apr. 14
- Western CIS: How does Ukraine’s post-socialist political system differ from Russia’s? Contrast the factors contributing to and the consequences of the “Orange Revolution” and the Euromaidan. Compare Kuzio, Kudelia, and our visiting speakers on the sources of the recent violence in Eastern Ukraine.

Apr. 16
**Paper Due**

Week 13
Apr. 21
- Central Asia: How different is Uzbekistan’s political system from Russia’s? What is Neopatrimonialism and how does it impact political and economic reform?

Apr. 23
- What are the most important factors—domestic and international—in bringing about the varying levels of democratization and authoritarianism of the post-Soviet states? What explains the level of stability of competitive authoritarian regimes?

UNDERSTANDING RUSSIA AND HER FUTURE
Week 15
Apr. 28
- Understanding the bases of legitimacy for Russia’s political system: What is Plebiscitarian Patrimonialism and how stable is it? What are its implications for developments in Russian politics?

Apr. 30
- Is Putin creating a unique model of governance or is it on a normal path of political development? How stable is the Russian political system? How have intervention in Ukraine, sanctions, and reliance on the export of natural resources affected the stability of the Russian political system? What kind of political system do Russians want?
  - TBA: Short news analyses updating political developments in Eastern Ukraine and the economic impact of oil prices and sanctions on Russia.