

# Political Science 377/477: Politics of Russia

Spring 2009

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Since independence in 1991 Russia has faced three challenges: the creation of a sovereign state, the development of a new political system, and the restructuring of its economy. In this course we will assess the extent to which these transformations have resulted in a strong, democratic, capitalist country, as many Russians and foreigners hoped in the 1990s. We will evaluate whether independent Russia has been a strong or weak state, specifically considering its civil war, devolution of power to its provinces, poor social service provision, and foreign campaigns. Furthermore, have “superpresidentialism,” an immature party system, and government economic monopolies stalled the country’s democratization? Finally, do organized crime, double bookkeeping, and barter indicate that a market has not developed in Russia? While evaluating evidence for state-building, democratization, and marketization, we will also examine how these three transitions relate to one another. Can they occur at once, or must one precede the others?

To explore these questions, we will read works by Russian and Western scholars as well as journalistic accounts. The course also incorporates film clips and slides of Russia in order to provide students with images of the country.

## Course Materials

**Books and Articles:** Three works are available for purchase at the bookstore: the edited volume *Developments in Russian Politics* (sixth edition), Linda Cook’s *Postcommunist Welfare States*, and Alena Ledeneva’s *How Russia Really Works*. The books are also on reserve at Kelvin Smith Library. Other course materials are available online or will be distributed, as noted in each citation below.

**News:** These sources offer some of the best coverage of events in Russia:

- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org), offers news analyses and reports.
- Johnson’s Russia List, [www.cdi.org/russia/johnson](http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson), offers summaries of media articles about Russia and some original content through an e-newsletter and web archives.
- The Russian Analytical Digest, [www.res.ethz.ch/analysis/rad](http://www.res.ethz.ch/analysis/rad), publishes themed reports.
- *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/>, provides daily news for free on its website, once you register. Also see the website for details about a student subscription discount.
- *The Economist* is available for free online through EuclidPLUS and in print at Kelvin Smith Periodicals. Also see the website for details about a student subscription discount.
- National Public Radio (WCPN 90.3 FM) broadcasts brief news updates at the top of the hour and news analyses throughout the day on programs like Morning Edition, Talk of the Nation, All Things Considered, and Marketplace. See <http://www.wcpn.org/schedule/> for the schedule.

**Blackboard:** Students will post questions on Blackboard, as later described. To post, select Blackboard on Case’s home page, login, select POSC 377, choose Discussion Board, click on the appropriate date, click on my Instructions message, select Reply, write your questions, and click Submit. Additional assistance is available through Blackboard FAQ on the Blackboard home page.

## Course Requirements

**Participation:** The focus of each class will be on discussion. Students should craft two analytical questions based on each week's readings and post them on the course Blackboard site by 8:30 pm Sunday prior to class meetings during Parts I, II, and III of the course. Students should read their classmates' questions before the start of class. For most of these class meetings the instructor will select questions from Blackboard for discussion, and students are always welcome to raise questions in class. Students are strongly encouraged to take notes on the readings in order to be prepared to integrate and critique the materials in class. Students should also bring a copy of the day's reading to class. Students are expected to actively participate in class discussion. Because participation is critical to understanding the material, students should attend all classes. Except under extraordinary circumstances, absenteeism will negatively affect students' final grades. As indicated below, some class meetings will be held at the library.

**Commentaries:** In addition to reading course materials and participating in class, students will write a weekly commentary on the readings for four of the weeks. Students should write papers for two weeks in Part I, one week in Part II, and one week in Part III of the course. No commentaries will be accepted for weeks when no reading is assigned or for Part IV. The purpose of the commentaries is to help students understand, critique, and integrate the readings and prepare to pose questions for discussion in class. Students should develop an argument related to an analytical question, such as to what extent Russia has a market economy. Students should incorporate concepts and arguments in readings from previous weeks, and the quality of the commentaries should improve throughout the semester. For the commentaries informal citations—phrases like “as Rutland argues” or “as Cook notes”—are acceptable. Commentaries should be between two and two and a half pages double-spaced. They must be submitted at the beginning of the class meeting for which the analyzed materials are assigned. Grading of the commentaries will take into account the degree of independent thinking, use of assigned materials, and quality of writing.

**Video Project:** Teams of two to four students will each create a 3-5 minute video of a single or series of mock Russian political productions, such as media interviews, public service announcements, or electoral advertisements. For the content of the videos, students should draw on course materials and gather and analyze additional research materials as needed. Students may also find it helpful to view actual Russian video productions on the web or cable television. To facilitate the completion of the videos, the creative director of Case's Freedman Center will lead two sessions on video production; each student will email the course instructor a two-sentence description of an idea for a video by 8:30 pm Tuesday, March 3; and teams will work during and outside of class, as needed. Videos are due at the beginning of class April 13. The instructor's evaluation will be based on the degree to which the video demonstrates an understanding of Russian politics, the extent of research, and the quality of the production. Each student will receive an individual grade.

**Final Paper:** Students will write a final essay examining how the three transitions—state-building, democratization, and marketization—interact in the context of Russia. Students are expected to analyze a specific question related to this larger topic. For example, can the three transitions occur at once, or must one precede the others? In completing this essay, students can rely exclusively on course materials, and informal citations are appropriate. *Undergraduates'* final essays should be 4-5 pages long. *Graduate students'* essays should be 8-10 pages long. Students should bring a 2-3 sentence description of their argument to class April 20. Papers are due at the beginning of class April 22. Grading of the final paper will take into account the degree to which the argument examines the interaction of the three transitions, the use of evidence to support the argument, and the quality of writing.

All written work should be carefully structured and grammatically correct. To avoid plagiarism, students should review “Plagiarism: What It is and How to Recognize and Avoid It,” distributed in class. Cases of plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be investigated by university judicial bodies.

Blackboard discussion questions, class participation, and class attendance will constitute 15 percent of the course grade, each of the four weekly commentaries will count for 10 percent, the video for 25 percent, and the final paper for the remaining 20 percent. Students will lose a half a grade on an assignment for each day it is late.

## Course Schedule and Readings

### I. January 12, 14: Introduction to Russia and the Course

#### PART I. STATE-BUILDING: FROM REPUBLIC TO SOVEREIGN COUNTRY

NO CLASS January 19

### II. January 21: Historical Background—The Soviet State and Its Demise

Geoffrey A. Hosking. *The First Socialist Society: A History of the Soviet Union from Within*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990. "The Making of the Soviet Union," 93-118. Distributed in class January 14.

Terry Martin. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001. "The Soviet Affirmative Action Empire" [part], 1-15. Distributed in class January 14.

Mark R. Beissinger. *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. "From the Impossible to the Inevitable" [part], 1-8, 36-37. Distributed in class January 14.

Ilya Prizel. *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia, and Ukraine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. "Russian Identity and the Soviet Period" [part], 180-181, 189-196. Distributed in class January 14.

### III. January 26, 28: Center-Periphery Relations—"Vertical of Power"

Gordon Hahn. "Reforming the Federation." In *Developments in Russian Politics 6*, edited by Stephen White, Zvi Y. Gitelman, and Richard Sakwa, 148-167. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

Darrell Slider. "Politics in the Regions." In *Developments in Russian Politics 6*, edited by Stephen White, Zvi Y. Gitelman, and Richard Sakwa, 168-185. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

Elizabeth Rubin. "'Only You Can Save Your Sons?'" *The New York Times Magazine*, July 8, 2001. Available at [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com). Search for title at top of the web page.

NOTE: Begin the heavier reading for next week.

### IV. February 2, 4: Services—The Disintegration of the "Nanny State"

Judy Twigg. "Social Policy in Post-Soviet Russia." In *Developments in Russian Politics 6*, edited by Stephen White, Zvi Y. Gitelman, and Richard Sakwa, 204-220. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

Linda J. Cook. *Postcommunist Welfare States: Reform Politics in Russia and Eastern Europe*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007. Read "Old Welfare State Structures and Reform Strategies," "Contested Liberalization: Russia's Politics of Polarization and Informalization," "Welfare Reform in Putin's Russia: Negotiating Liberalization within the Elite," 31-54, 99-144, 145-192.

## **PART I. STATE-BUILDING: FROM REPUBLIC TO SOVEREIGN COUNTRY**

[continued]

### **V. February 9: Foreign Relations—Influence in the Near Abroad**

Mark Kramer. "Tightening the Reins: Russian Policy Toward the Commonwealth of Independent States—Trends and Prospects," *Problems of Post-Communism*, 55, 6 (November/December 2008), 3-19. Available online through the library from a campus computer directly or an off campus computer using VPN software. From the Case home page, choose Libraries, Kelvin Smith Library, Research Tools, then ejournals. Search for journal then article title.

Jakob Hedenskog and Robert L. Larsson. *Russian Leverage on the CIS and the Baltic States*. Stockholm: FOI Swedish Defense Research Agency, June 2007. Read "Introduction," 15-18 and three of the following chapters: "Political Levers," "Human-Based Levers," "Energy Levers," "Economic and Trade Levers," "Military Levers." Available at <http://www2.foi.se/rapp/foir2280.pdf>

### **February 11—Video Production Session 1, 7 pm to 8 pm**

Class will meet from 7 pm to 8 pm in Room LL06 in Kelvin Smith Library. There will be no class meeting at 12:30. The creative director of the Freedman Center will lead a session on video production. There is no reading for this week, discussion questions need not be posted, and commentaries will not be accepted. Students are encouraged to begin the reading for next week.

**PART II. POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION:  
FROM POST-TOTALITARIANISM TO HYBRID REGIME**

**VI. February 16, 18: Historical Background—Soviet Communism and Its Demise**

Merle Fainsod. *How Russia Is Ruled*. revised ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965. "Party Organization, Activities, and Problems" [part], 208-220, 222-245. Distributed by email January 28.

Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski. "The General Characteristics of Totalitarian Dictatorship." In *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, edited by Zbigniew Brzezinski, 3-13. New York: Praeger, 1956. Distributed in class January 28.

Vladimir Shlapentokh. *A Normal Totalitarian Society: How the Soviet Union Functioned and How It Collapsed*. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2001. "Consequences," 201-215. Distributed in class January 28.

Richard Sakwa. "Politics in Russia." In *Developments in Russian Politics 6*, edited by Stephen White, Zvi Y. Gitelman, and Richard Sakwa, 1-17. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

**NO CLASS February 23**

**VII. February 25—Video Production Session 2, 7 pm to 9 pm**

Class will meet from 7 pm to 9 pm in Room LL06 in Kelvin Smith Library. There will be no class meeting at 12:30. There is no reading for this week, discussion questions need not be posted, and commentaries will not be accepted.

**VIII. March 2, 4: Government Institutions—Hegemonic Presidency**

John P. Willerton. "Putin and the Hegemonic Presidency." In *Developments in Russian Politics 6*, edited by Stephen White, Zvi Y. Gitelman, and Richard Sakwa, 18-39. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

Thomas F. Remington. "Parliamentary Politics in Russia." In *Developments in Russian Politics 6*.

Michael McFaul. "The Electoral System." In *Developments in Russian Politics 6*.

**DUE: Video Idea Description—Tuesday, March 3, 8:30 pm by email**

**NO CLASS March 9, 11**

**IX. March 16, 18: Regime Type—Hybrid Regime**

Kelly M. McMann. *Economic Autonomy and Democracy: Hybrid Regimes in Russia and Kyrgyzstan*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Read "Capitalism, Democracy, and Economic Autonomy," "The Concept of Economic Autonomy [part]," "Measurement of Democracy [part]," "Activism under the State's Thumb," "Illustrations of Economic Autonomy [part]," "Hybrid Regimes," 1-27, 28-34, 44-49, 56-68, 69-137 [parts], 138-157, 162-173, 174-183.

**PART III. ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION:  
FROM SOVIET SOCIALISM TO CRONY CAPITALISM**

**X. March 23, 25: Historical Background—The Command Economy**

Merle Fainsod. *How Russia Is Ruled*. revised ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965. “Management and Labor in Soviet Industry,” “Controls and Tensions in Soviet Agriculture [part], 503-547, 569-575. Distributed by email January 28.

Alena V. Ledeneva. *Russia’s Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking, and Informal Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. “Blat: The Unknown Commonplace,” 11-38. Distributed in class January 28.

Katherine Verdery. “What Was Socialism, and Why Did It Fall?” In *Beyond Soviet Studies*, edited by Daniel T. Orlovsky, 27-46. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995. Distributed in class January 28.

**XI. March 30, April 1: Shadow Economy—Double Books and Organized Crime**

Peter Rutland. “Putin’s Economic Record.” In *Developments in Russian Politics 6*, edited by Stephen White, Zvi Y. Gitelman, and Richard Sakwa, 186-203. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

Andrew E. Kramer. “The Almighty Ruble: Once Feeble, a Strong Currency Fuels Spending in Russia.” *The New York Times*, August 8, 2007, C1, C4. Available at [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com). Search for title at top of the web page.

Alena V. Ledeneva. *How Russia Really Works : The Informal Practices That Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business, Culture and Society after Socialism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006. Read “Tenevoi Barter: Shadow Barter, Barter Chains, and Nonmonetary Markets,” “Dvoinaia Bukhgalteriia: Double Accountancy and Financial Scheming,” “Post-Soviet Tolkachi: Alternative Enforcement and the Use of Law,” 115-141, 142-163, 164-188.

## **PART IV. INTERACTIONS AMONG THE THREE TRANSFORMATIONS**

### **XII. April 6, 8—Video Final Preparation**

Students will have the class periods to work on their videos. There is no reading for this week, discussion questions need not be posted, and commentaries will not be accepted. Students should use time they would normally prepare for class discussion to work on their videos.

### **XIII. April 13, 15—Video Viewing**

For these class meetings students are expected to have completed their videos and reviewed their notes in preparation for watching the videos and preparing to write the final paper. There is no reading for this week, discussion questions need not be posted, and commentaries will not be accepted.

**DUE: Videos—beginning of class April 13**

### **XIV. April 20: Triple Transformation—A Rossiianin, Demokrat, and “Novyi Russkii”**

Stephen Holmes. “What Russia Teaches Us Now.” *The American Prospect* 33 (1997), 30-39. Available online through the library from a campus computer directly or an off campus computer using VPN software. From the Case home page, choose Libraries, Kelvin Smith Library, Research Tools, then ejournals. Search for journal then article title.

V. Bunce. “Democratization and Economic Reform.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001), 43-65. Available online. See instructions above.

For this week students are expected to review their notes and be prepared to offer their own analysis of the interactions among the three transformations in Russia. Discussion questions need not be posted, and no commentaries will be accepted for this week.

**DUE: Description of Final Paper Argument—beginning of class**

### **XV. April 22: Conclusion**

**DUE: Final Paper—beginning of class**

**NO CLASS April 27**