

# Political Science 377/477: Politics of Russia

Spring 2020

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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 outcome of these transformations. We will evaluate whether independent Russia has a strong or weak state, specifically considering Moscow's role in the regions, insurgencies in the North Caucasus, and the country's efforts at foreign influence. Furthermore, to what extent do "Putinism," a dominant party regime, and obstacles to political opposition mean that there is no hope for democracy in Russia? Finally, do stalled economic reforms and practices like double bookkeeping 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 films, slides, and artifacts in order to provide students with images of the country.

## Course Materials

**Books and Articles:** Two works are available for purchase at the bookstore: the edited volume *Developments in Russian Politics* (ninth edition) and Anna Politkovskaya's *Putin's Russia*. Politkovskaya's book is also on KSL course reserves. Other course materials are available on Canvas.

**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.
- *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/>, provides a limited number of online news articles for free each month. The newspaper is also available through KSL e-journals.
- *The Economist* is available for free online through KSL e-journals. Also see the website for details about a student subscription discount.

**Canvas:** Students will post questions on Canvas, as later described. To post, select Canvas on Case's home page, login, select POSC 377, choose Discussion, click on the appropriate week, select Reply, write your questions, and select Post reply. Additional assistance is available by selecting Help in the left menu bar.

## 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 Canvas site by 8 pm Monday 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 Canvas 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. For class each Thursday, students should read at least one media article about Russia; see preceding pages for suggested media outlets. Because participation is critical to understanding the material, students should attend all classes. Except under extraordinary circumstances, absenteeism will negatively affect students' final grades.

**Short Essay:** In addition to reading course materials and participating in class, students will write a short essay for five of the weeks. Students should write papers for two weeks in Part I, two weeks in Part II, and one week in Part III of the course. No short essays will be accepted for weeks when no reading is assigned or for Part IV. The purpose of the short essays 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 the week they are writing, and the quality of the short essays should improve throughout the semester. For the short essays informal citations—phrases like “as Fainsod argues” or “as Remington notes”—are acceptable. Short essays should be between two and two and a half pages double-spaced. They must be submitted in paper form at the beginning of the class meeting for which the analyzed materials are assigned. Grading of the short essays will take into account the degree of independent thinking, use of assigned materials, and quality of writing.

**Final Paper:** Students will write a final paper examining how, in the context of Russia, the three transitions—state-building, political transformation, and marketization—interact or each are affected by or affect some other phenomenon. 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? Or, how has Russia's vast terrain shaped each of the transitions? Or how have each of the transitions affected senior citizens? In completing this essay, students can rely exclusively on course materials, and informal citations are appropriate. Final essays should be 4-5 pages long. Students will provide a one-paragraph description of their final paper idea(s) during an individual meeting with the instructor April 9 in Mather House 218. Students will provide a one-page outline of their final paper argument, subpoints, and evidence during an individual meeting with the instructor April 16 in Mather House 218. Papers are due at the beginning of class April 23. Grading of the final paper will take into account the degree to which the argument examines how the three transitions interact or are affected by or affect some other phenomenon, 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.

Canvas discussion questions will constitute 10 percent of the course grade, current events participation 10 percent, other class participation and class attendance 10 percent, *each* short essay 10 percent, and the final paper the remaining 20 percent. Students will lose a half a grade on an assignment for each day it is late.

## Course Schedule and Readings

### Day 1. January 14: Introduction to Russia and the Course

NO CLASS January 16 in order to prepare for first class discussion

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

#### Week 1. January 21, 23: 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.

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.

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.

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.

#### Week 2. January 28, 30: Center-Periphery Relations—Recentralization

Marlene Laruelle. “National Identity and the Contested Nation.” In *Developments in Russian Politics*, edited by Richard Sakwa, Henry Hale, and Stephen White, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 67-79. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

Darrell Slider. “A Federal State.” In *Developments in Russian Politics*, edited by Richard Sakwa, Henry Hale, and Stephen White, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 119-132. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

Judith Thornton. “Regional Challenges: The Case of Siberia,” In *The Oxford Handbook of the Russian Economy*, edited by Michael Alexeev and Shlomo Weber, 661-689. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Anna Politkovskaya. *Putin’s Russia: Life in a Failing Democracy*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004. Read “Our New Middle Ages, or War Criminals of All the Russias,” 25-80.

Russian Analytical Digest. No. 238. July 22, 2019. Available from <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD238.pdf>. Read Ekaterina Sokirianskaia, “Chechnya under Ramzan Kadyrov” and Sufian N. Shemukhov, “Radical Islam in the North Caucasus,” 2-9.

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

(continued)

### Week 3. February 4, 6: Foreign Relations—Russian Nationalism

Valentina Feklyunina. “Russian Foreign Policy.” In *Developments in Russian Politics*, edited by Richard Sakwa, Henry Hale, and Stephen White, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 165-179. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

Samuel Charap. “Russia and Its Neighbours.” In *Developments in Russian Politics*, edited by Richard Sakwa, Henry Hale, and Stephen White, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 192-204. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

Bettina Renz. “Security, the Military and Politics.” In *Developments in Russian Politics*, edited by Richard Sakwa, Henry Hale, and Stephen White, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 180-191. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

Russian Analytical Digest. No. 212. December 19, 2017. Available from <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD212.pdf>. Read Jolanta Darczewska and Piotr Zochowski, “Russia’s ‘Activity’ toward the West—Confrontation by Choice,” 2-6 and Robert W. Orttung, “Russia’s Intervention in the U.S.,” 6-9.

Nikita Lomagin. “The Economic Tools of Russian Security Strategy.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Russian Security*, edited by Roger E. Kanet, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 169-180. Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge, 2019.

### Week 4. February 11, 13: Foreign Relations—Ukraine

Russian Analytical Digest. No. 203. May 15, 2017. Available from <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD203.pdf>. Read Taras Kuzio “Russian-Ukrainian Relations: From Friendship of Peoples to War,” 7-10.

Elizabeth A. Wood. “Introduction.” In *Roots of Russia’s War in Ukraine*, edited by Elizabeth A. Wood, et al, 1-25. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2016.

“Chronology.” In *Roots of Russia’s War in Ukraine*, edited by Elizabeth A. Wood, et al, xi-xv. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2016.

William E. Pomeranz. “Ground Zero: How a Trade Dispute Sparked the Russia-Ukraine Crisis.” In *Roots of Russia’s War in Ukraine*, edited by Elizabeth A. Wood, et al, 51-73. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2016.

Elizabeth A. Wood. “A Small, Victorious War? The Symbolic Politics of Vladimir Putin.” In *Roots of Russia’s War in Ukraine*, edited by Elizabeth A. Wood, et al, 97-129. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2016.

Russian Analytical Digest. No. 242. December 3, 2019. Available from <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD242.pdf>. Read André Härtel “A New Momentum for Settling the Donbas Conflict,” 2-5 and “Opinion Poll,” 5-11.

**NO CLASS February 18, 20**

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

**Week 5. February 25, 27: 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], 209-220, 222-245.

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.

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.

**Week 6. March 3, 5: A Week at the Russian Cinema**

We will watch and discuss the film *Burnt by the Sun*.

**NO CLASS March 10, 12**

**Week 7. March 17, 19: Government Institutions—Putinism**

John P. Willerton. “Presidency and Executive.” In *Developments in Russian Politics*, edited by Richard Sakwa, Henry Hale, and Stephen White, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 18-37. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

Graeme Robertson and Samuel Greene. “The Kremlin Emboldened: How Putin Wins Support.” *Journal of Democracy*, 28, 4 (October 2017), 86-100.

Julie A. Cassiday and Emily D. Johnson. “A Personality Cult for the Postmodern Age: Reading Vladimir Putin’s Public Persona.” In *Putin as Celebrity and Cultural Icon*, edited by Helena Goscilo, 37-64. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Ora John Reuter. “Political Parties.” In *Developments in Russian Politics*, edited by Richard Sakwa, Henry Hale, and Stephen White, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 38-53. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

Ben Noble. “Parliamentary Politics in Russia.” In *Developments in Russian Politics*, edited by Richard Sakwa, Henry Hale, and Stephen White, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 54-66. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

## **Week 8. March 24, 26 Opposition—Politics Returns to Russia**

Graeme B. Robertson. "Protest, Civil Society and Informal Politics." In *Developments in Russian Politics*, edited by Richard Sakwa, Henry Hale, and Stephen White, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 80-93. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

Alfred B. Evans Jr. "Protests in Russia: The Example of The Blue Buckets Society." *Demokratizatsiya*, 26, 1 (Winter 2018), 3-24.

Masha Gessen. "Alexey Navalny's Very Strange Form of Freedom." *The New Yorker* (January 15, 2016). Available from <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/alexey-navalny-very-strange-form-of-freedom>.

Russian Analytical Digest. No. 239. September 26, 2019. Available from <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD239.pdf> Read Jan Matti Dollbaum, "Outsmarting Electoral Authoritarianism," 5-7 and Yana Gorokhovskaia, "Protest and Regional Elections," 2-4 and "Results of the Regional Elections," 8-11.

Russian Analytical Digest. No. 233. March 14, 2019. Available from <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD233.pdf> Read Heiko Pleines, "Oligarchs and Political Regime Change" 2-4.

Ellen Mickiewicz. "Russia, Media and Audiences." In *Developments in Russian Politics*, edited by Richard Sakwa, Henry Hale, and Stephen White, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 94-107. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

### PART III. ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION: FROM SOVIET SOCIALISM TO MANAGED CAPITALISM

#### Week 9. March 31, April 2: 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], 503-525, 530-547, 569-575.

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

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.

#### Week 10. April 7: Managed Economy—Russkii and Novyi Russkii

Anders Åslund. “Russia’s Economic Transformation,” In *The Oxford Handbook of the Russian Economy*, edited by Michael Alexeev and Shlomo Weber, 86-101. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Philip Hanson. “Managing the Economy.” In *Developments in Russian Politics*, edited by Richard Sakwa, Henry Hale, and Stephen White, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 133-149. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

Thomas F. Remington. “Inequality and Social Policy in Russia.” In *Developments in Russian Politics*, edited by Richard Sakwa, Henry Hale, and Stephen White, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 150-164. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

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 “Why are Informal Practices Still Prevalent in Russia,” 10-27; “*Dvoinaia Bukhgalterii*: Double Accountancy and Financial Scheming,” 142-163; “Post-Soviet *Tolkachi*: Alternative Enforcement and the Use of Law,” 164-188.

**April 9:** Students will meet individually with the instructor in Mather House 218 to discuss their ideas for the final paper. Students should bring a one-paragraph description of their final paper idea(s) to the meeting to facilitate discussion. We will not meet as a class.

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

### **Week 11. April 14: Triple Transformation—A Rossiianin, Demokrat, and Novyi Russkii**

Stephen Holmes. "What Russia Teaches Us Now." *The American Prospect* 33 (1997), 30-39.

Joel S. Hellman. "Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Postcommunist Transitions." *World Politics*, 50, 2 (1998), 203-234.

V. Bunce. "Democratization and Economic Reform." *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001), 43-65.

**April 16:** Students will meet individually with the instructor in Mather House 218 to discuss their final papers. Students should bring a one-page outline of their final paper argument, subpoints, and evidence to the meeting to facilitate discussion. We will not meet as a class.

**NO CLASS April 21** in order to polish final paper.

### **Week 12. April 23: Conclusion—The Russian Train Chugs Forward...**

**DUE: Final Paper**, at the beginning of class