

## **Gov 2410: Post-Communist Russian Politics and Society Fall 2018**

T/Th 1:15 PM - 2:40 PM  
Kanbar Hall 107  
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Office Hours:  
Mondays 1:00 – 2:30 pm  
Thursdays 3:00 – 4:00 pm  
and by appointment

“Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.” Karl Marx, *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852

This course explores one of the most dramatic political events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – the collapse of Soviet communism and disintegration of the USSR – and the political and economic developments in Russia that followed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It begins by examining the Soviet system and the political and social upheaval of the late Soviet period. It then proceeds to investigate the challenges of contemporary Russian politics, including political liberalization followed by growing authoritarianism, the effort to generate economic growth, corruption, the changing role of citizens in politics, the search for a new foreign policy, and the question of the current regime’s ideology.

### **Readings**

The following books are required and available for purchase at the campus bookstore:

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. by David McLellan, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Mary McAuley, *Soviet Politics 1917-1991*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Michael L. Bressler, ed., *Understanding Contemporary Russia*, 2<sup>th</sup> ed., Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2018.

Other required readings are available through our course Blackboard page and the Bowdoin library’s course reserve page.

## **Grading and Assignments**

This class is a lecture course, but we will have discussion and activities during each class meeting and I encourage your questions and comments throughout the class period. Please come see me in office hours, individually or in small groups, if you would like to discuss class topics in more detail.

### ***Grading***

Class participation:	10 percent
Including Course Blog Entries	
Short research papers:	20 percent each (40 percent total)
Midterm exam:	25 percent
Final exam:	25 percent

### ***Assignments***

Class participation and attendance:

- You are expected to attend class throughout the semester and to do the readings in advance of the class meeting, and to participate in discussions and activities in class. If you need to miss a class, please inform me in advance, in person or by e-mail, if possible.
- You may choose to enhance your participation in the class by watching any of the recommended films and writing a one-page critical response to the film's content.
- You also have opportunities to attend Russia-related talks during the semester and write a critical response to the speakers' remarks. These events will be announced in class.

Course blog entry:

You will select a news article related to Russian politics once during the semester. Your blog entry will include a summary of the article; a link to the article, your own analysis of the events described, and questions to consider for the future. Each entry also should include an image to attract the reader's attention.

Two short research papers

You will have **four opportunities** throughout the semester to write short research papers (5-7 pages) presenting your analysis based on course readings and at least four outside sources. You may choose your topic in consultation with the instructor. You are required to **complete two** of these assignments, one from the first two assignments and one from the last two assignments. These assignments will be described in more detail during the semester, and our course website will offer links to research materials in the library and on-line. Choose which essays you will complete based on your interest and schedule. All essays are due in class. Late papers will not be accepted without the prior agreement of the instructor.

Short paper deadlines:

**Choose one of the following two assignments:**

- Tuesday, September 25 Politics under the Soviets
- Thursday, October 4: Why did the Soviet Union Collapse?

**Choose one of the following two assignments:**

- Tuesday, November 20: Explaining Trends in Domestic Politics
- Tuesday, December 4: Challenges in Russian Foreign Policy

## Exams

There will be two exams with a mixture of essay and short answer questions.

- Midterm exam – Thursday October 11:  
The midterm exam will cover lecture material and readings through Thursday, October 4.
- Final exam – Friday, December 14, 1:30 pm:  
The final exam will be comprehensive, but particular attention will be paid to material presented during the second half of the semester.

## Laptop and Cellphone Policy

Laptops are not allowed in class unless you have a college accommodation or you receive permission from the instructor. While I recognize that they can be useful for note taking, they are also a distraction and can be a barrier to class participation. I am happy to grant exceptions for students who have an accommodation for technology use. Please speak to me individually about accommodations.

## International Perspectives requirement

This course fulfills Bowdoin's International Perspective requirement to "assist students in gaining a critical understanding of the world outside the United States, both contemporary and historical." We examine Russia's path to industrialization and modernization, contrasting the Communist approach to that of capitalist and democratic states in the West. The course also demonstrates how political institutions and concepts – such as democracy, the market, and human rights – can have different manifestations and meanings in different political settings as we consider the significance of Russia's past political experiences and political culture. Finally, we examine how international politics are perceived from the Russian perspective and the Russia government's preferences for the post-Cold War world order.

## Citation and Academic Honesty

All sources used in your written work should be properly cited. I recommend using the Chicago Manual of Style as a reference: [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch14/ch14\\_toc.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch14/ch14_toc.html).

I also recommend that you familiarize yourself with the library's website on avoiding plagiarism: <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/academic-honesty/avoiding-plagiarism.shtml>

Bowdoin College uses the following definition of plagiarism:

"Plagiarism is possible with any work performed in any medium and in any scholarly discipline. Plagiarism involves the intentional or unintentional use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment in all such scholarly work as essays, examinations, oral/written reports, homework assignments, laboratory reports, computer programs, music scores, choreography, graphic depictions, and visual presentations. ... Plagiarism also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in selling of term papers or other academic materials."

## Syllabus:

Thursday, August 30

### Introduction

Marshall T. Poe, "What Russia Is and What It Is Not," *The Russian Moment in World History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003, pp. 1-9.

Vladimir V. Kara-Murza, "The Kremlin Emboldened: Putin Is not Russia," *Journal of Democracy* 28, 4 (October 2017): 110-116.

Tuesday, September 4

### Marxism, Leninism, and the Beginning of the Soviet System

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, pp. 8-44.

Mary McAuley, *Soviet Politics 1917-1991*, pp. 12-33.

Richard Pipes, "The Communist System" in Alexander Dallin and Gail W. Lapidus, eds., *The Soviet System*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995, pp. 16-27.

### Recommended:

James von Geldern and Richard Stites, eds., "Anecdotes," *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 118-120.

Simon Sebag Montefiore, "What If the Russian Revolution Had Never Happened?" *New York Times*, November 6, 2017.

Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, "'No Lenin, No Hitler?' Reflections on Simon Sebag Montefiore's Bolshevik Revolution Counterfactual," *The Counterfactual History Review*, November 12, 2017. Available at: <http://thecounterfactualhistoryreview.blogspot.com/2017/11/no-lenin-no-hitler-reflections-on-simon.html>

Thursday, September 6

### Stalinism

Mary McAuley, *Soviet Politics 1917-1991*, pp. 34-61.

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 205-216.

Levada Center, "Perceptions of Stalin," January, 20 2016. Available at: <http://www.levada.ru/eng/perceptions-stalin>.

### Recommended readings:

James von Geldern and Richard Stites, eds., "Anecdotes," *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 228-230.

Merle Fainsod, "Terror as a System of Power," in Joel Ostrow, ed., *Politics in Russia*, Chapter 1.2.

Film: *Burnt by the Sun* OR *Magnitogorsk* OR *Death of Stalin*

Tuesday, September 11

**The Thaw and Stagnation**

Mary McAuley, *Soviet Politics 1917-1991*, pp. 62-88.

Khrushchev's Secret Speech.

Available at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1956khrushchev-secret1.html>.

Andrei Sakharov, Roy Medvedev, and Valery Turchin, "Letter to the Soviet Leaders, March 19, 1970" in Alexander Dallin and Gail W. Lapidus, eds., *The Soviet System*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995, pp. 75-80.

Recommended reading:

Seweryn Bialer, "Soviet Stability and its Sources," in Ostrow, ed., *Politics in Russia*, Chapter 1.3.

Web Documentary: To get a sense of how people lived in communal apartments in the late Soviet period, check out <http://kommunalka.colgate.edu/>. Select "English" and then take the video tour. Quite short, and fascinating!

Thursday, September 13

**Perestroika: Reform and Societal Awakening**

Mary McAuley, *Soviet Politics 1917-1991*, pp. 89-106.

Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, New York: Doubleday, 1995, pp. 165-193.

S. Frederick Starr, "Soviet Union: A Civil Society," *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1988), pp. 26-41.

Recommended reading:

Jim Riordan and Sue Bridger, eds., *Dear Comrade Worker: Readers' Letters to the Soviet Press Under Perestroika*, Bloomington, 1992, pp. 16-40.

Tuesday, September 18 and Thursday, September 20

**The Collapse of the USSR**

Mary McAuley, *Soviet Politics 1917-1991*, pp. 107-123.

Mikhail Gorbachev, "Resignation Speech, December 25, 1991," in Alexander Dallin and Gail W. Lapidus, eds., *The Soviet System*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995, pp. 644-646.

Stephen F. Cohen, "Was the Soviet System Reformable?," *Slavic Review* 63, 3 (Fall 2004): 459-488.

Alexander Dallin, "Causes of the Collapse of the USSR," in Joel M. Ostrow, ed., *Politics in Russia: A Reader*, Los Angeles: SAGE, Chapter 2.3.

Recommended reading:

Jonathan Steele, "Mikhail Gorbachev: I Should Have Abandoned the Communist Party Earlier," *The Guardian*, August 16, 2011.

FILM: Struggle for Russia

Tuesday, September 25 and Thursday, September 27

**Postcommunist Challenges: The Leninist Legacy and the Yeltsin Presidency**

Michael Bressler, "Politics," pp. 93-106. In *Understanding Contemporary Russia*.

Ken Jowitt, "The Leninist Legacy" in Ivo Banac, ed. *Eastern Europe in Revolution*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992, pp. 207-224.

M. Steven Fish, "The Executive Deception: Superpresidentialism and the Degradation of Russian Politics," in Valerie Sperling, ed., *Building the Russian State: Institutional Crisis and the Quest for Democratic Governance*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 2000, pp. 177-92.

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "Elections Without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 13, 2 (April 2002): 51-65.

Recommended reading:

Masha Lipman, "Yeltsin the Revolutionary," *Washington Post*, April 25, 2007.

Anne Applebaum, "Russia's Agent of Change; For All His Flaws, Boris Yeltsin Started Something Big," *Washington Post*, April 24, 2007.

FILM: My Perestroika

\*\*\*Tuesday, September 25 – Research Paper 1 Due in Class\*\*\*

Tuesday, October 2 and Thursday, October 4

**Capitalism, Russian-Style**

Anders Aslund, "Case for Radical Reform," in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *Economic Reform and Democracy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, pp. 74-85.

William Pyle, "The Economy," Chapter 5, pp. 147-174. In *Understanding Contemporary Russia*.

David Hoffman, "Mikhail Khodorkovsky," *The Oligarchs: Wealth and Power in the New Russia*, New York: Public Affairs, 2003, Chapter 5, pp. 100-126.

FILM: Brother OR Tycoon

\*\*\*Thursday, October 4 – Research Paper 2 Due in Class\*\*\*

Monday, October 9

**Fall Break**

\*\*\*First Blog Entry due by Wednesday, October 10\*\*\*

Thursday, October 11

\*\*\*Midterm exam, in class\*\*\*

Tuesday, October 16 and Thursday, October 18

**What is Putinism?**

Michael Bressler, "Politics," pp. 106-141. In *Understanding Contemporary Russia*.

Vladislav Surkov, "Russian Political Culture: The View from Utopia," *Russian Politics and Law* 46, 5 (September–October 2008): 10–26.

M. Steven Fish, "The Kremlin Emboldened: What Is Putinism?," *Journal of Democracy* 28, 4 (October 2017): 61-75.

Valerie Sperling, "The Purpose of Putin's Machismo," *Current History* 114, 774 (October 2015): 282-284.

Recommended reading: Masha Gessen, *The Future is History: How Totalitarianism Reclaimed Russia*, New York: Riverhead Books, 2017, pp.285-303.

FILM: The Putin Interviews

\*\*\*Weds., October 17, 4:30 pm\*\*\*

Talk by Svetlana Tulaeva, Arctic Fulbright Fellow on Oil in the Russian Arctic

Tuesday, October 23 and Thursday, October 25

**Putin's Economic Model and Challenges**

Andrei Schleifer and Daniel Treisman, "A Normal Country: Russia after Communism," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 19, 1 (2005): 151-174.

President Dmitri Medvedev, "Go, Russia!" September 10, 2009. Available at

[http://eng.kremlin.ru/speeches/2009/09/10/1534\\_type104017\\_221527.shtml](http://eng.kremlin.ru/speeches/2009/09/10/1534_type104017_221527.shtml)

Stephen Crowley, "Monotowns and the political economy of industrial restructuring in Russia," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32, 5 (2017): 397-422.

Sergei Guriev, "Russia's Constrained Economy: How the Kremlin Can Spur Growth," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2016.

Recommended reading: Sergei Guriev and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya. "(Un)Happiness in Transition." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 23, 2 (2009): 143-168.

Tuesday, October 30 and Thursday, November 1

**Political Institutions: Legislature, Parties, and Judiciary**

Ora John Reuter and Thomas F. Remington, "Dominant Party Regimes and the Commitment Problem: The Case of United Russia," *Comparative Political Studies* 42, 4 (2009): 501–26.

Joel C. Moses, "The Political Resurrection of Russian Governors," *Europe-Asia Studies* 66,9 (2014): 1395-1405, 1412-21. (Selected pages.)

Anna Arutunyan, "Why Putin won't get tough on Kadyrov," European Council on Foreign Affairs, April 25, 2017. Available at:

[https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_why\\_putin\\_wont\\_get\\_tough\\_on\\_kadyrov\\_7278](https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_why_putin_wont_get_tough_on_kadyrov_7278)

Alena V. Ledeneva, "'Telephone Justice' in the Global Age," *Can Russia Modernise? Sistema, Power Networks and Informal Governance*, Cambridge University Press, Chapter 5, pp. 150-178.

Recommended reading: Katherine E. Graney, "Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Multiculturalism," Chapter 7, pp. 209-235. In *Understanding Contemporary Russia*.

FILM: Prisoner of the Mountain

Tuesday, November 6 and November 8

**Average Russians and the Siloviki**

Brian D. Taylor, "The Russian Siloviki & Political Change," *Daedalus* 146, 2 (2017): 53–63.

Aleksandar Matovski, "It's the Stability, Stupid! How the Quest to Restore Order After the Soviet Collapse Shaped Russian Popular Opinion," *Comparative Politics* 50, 3 (April 2018): 347-390.

Anne Garrels, "The Russian Family," and "Schoolhouses and Barracks," *Putin Country: A Journal in the Real Russia*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Chapter 6, pp. 56-68 and Chapter 10, pp. 101-116.

Recommended reading: Timothy Heleniak, "Population, Health, and Migration," Chapter 8, pp. 237-273. In *Understanding Contemporary Russia*

FILM: Leviathan OR Loveless

Tuesday, November 13 and Thursday, November 15

**Civil Society and the Media in Contemporary Russia**

Saskia Brechenmacher, "Delegitimization and Division in Russia," *Civil Society Under Assault*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 18, 2017.

Vladimir Gel'man, "The Politics of Fear," *Russian Politics and Law* 53, 5–6 (2015): 6–26.

Laura A. Henry, "Russia's Environment and Environmental Movement," Chapter 9, pp. 275-301. In *Understanding Contemporary Russia*.

Vera Tolz and Yuri Teper, "Broadcasting Agitainment: a new media strategy of Putin's third presidency," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 34, 4 (2018): 213-227.

Film: Nightwatch



Tuesday, November 20

**Russian Foreign Policy**

Allen C. Lynch, "International Relations," Chapter 6, pp. 175-208. In *Understanding Contemporary Russia*.

Andrei P. Tsygankov, "The sources of Russia's fear of NATO," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 51, 2 (June 2018): 101-111.

Recommended reading: Kathryn Stoner and Michael McFaul, "Who Lost Russia (This Time)? Vladimir Putin," *The Washington Quarterly* 38, 2 (Summer 2015): 167–187.

\*\*\*Tuesday, November 20 – Research Paper 3 Due\*\*\*

Thursday, November 22

**Thanksgiving break – No class!**

Tuesday, November 27 and Thursday, November 29

**Russia in the Near Abroad and Beyond**

Dmitry Gorenburg, "Countering Color Revolutions: Russia's New Security Strategy and its Implications for U.S. Policy," PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 342, September 2014.

Marlene Laruelle, "The Three Colors of Novorossiia, or the Russian Nationalist Mythmaking of the Ukrainian Crisis," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32, 1 (2016): 55-74.

Maxim A. Suchkov, "Russia's Plan for the Middle East," *The National Interest*, January 15, 2016.

Available at: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/russias-plan-the-middle-east-14908?page=0%2C1>.

Susan B. Glasser, "Trump, Putin and the New Cold War," *POLITICO*, December 22, 2017. Available at: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/12/22/donald-trump-vladimir-putin-cold-war-216157>

Recommended reading:

John Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014.

Anders Åslund, "Is the West to Blame for Russia's Aggression in Ukraine? Of Course Not!," Peterson Institute for International Economics, August 20, 2014. Available at: <https://piie.com/blogs/realtime-economic-issues-watch/west-blame-russias-aggression-ukraine-course-not#.WIUbZDiXZaQ.email>.

FILM: Democratic Revolutionary Handbook OR Winter on Fire

Tuesday, December 4 and Thursday, December 6

**Can Putinism Last? Challenges Ahead**

Stephen Kotkin, "Russia's Perpetual Geopolitics: Putin Returns to the Historical Pattern," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2016.

Anders Åslund, "Russia's Economy: Macroeconomic Stability But Minimal Growth," *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 220, 2018.

Andrei Kolesnikov, "Why Putin's Approval Ratings Are Declining Sharply," *Foreign Affairs*, August 14, 2018. Available at: <https://carnegie.ru/2018/08/15/why-putin-s-approval-ratings-are-declining-sharply-pub-77049>.

Henry Hale, Reading TBA.

\*\*\*Tuesday, December 4 – Research Paper 4 Due\*\*\*

\*\*\*Final Exam: Friday, December 14, 1:30 pm\*\*\*