

POLITICAL SCIENCE 4218: RUSSIAN POLITICS

Fall, 2013
MWF 11:30-12:25
Bolz Hall 0436

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The purpose of this course is to give the student an introduction to the politics of the Russian Federation. There are five general goals: (1) to enable you to read and discuss materials written about the area; (2) to help you to talk about it in a well-informed manner; (3) to aid your understanding of the forces that have shaped Russian politics, mostly domestic; (4) to sensitize you to the importance of informal and local factors in Russian politics; and (5) to help you become a better analyst of American press and scholarly treatment of Russia-related issues.

There is no nation more exciting to study today than Russia. Your professor can testify personally to that, as since 1991 he has lived there for about ten percent of the time, having taken more than twenty separate trips. The events surrounding the revolution of August 1991; the bombing of the Russian “White House” in October 1993; the subsequent Duma elections of December 1993, December 1995, December 1999, December 2003, December 2007, and December 2011; the Presidential elections of June-July 1996, March 2000, March 2004, March 2008, and March 2012; the dramatic events surrounding Chechnya; 1998’s economic crisis; institutional changes beginning in 2001, including recent amendments to extend the terms of the President and Duma; a recentralization of national power under Putin; and hints of change under President Medvedev are key to our understanding of Russia. What we have witnessed since 1991 in Russia is political change that has world-wide implications. Is “democracy” evolving in Russia? If so, how, and what are the impediments to it? Is a “civil society” being formed in Russia? Is Russia becoming a nation of laws with properly functioning political and legal institutions? Or is Russia reverting to its “Soviet” past?

In order to understand change in Russian politics we must investigate numerous subjects, which are indicated in the syllabus. These include a number of policy areas that require a fundamental understanding of Soviet and Russian political institutions, processes, political culture, and history. Although we shall of necessity look at topics dealing with Soviet and Russian society, history, and economics, this is above all a political science course; the approach and questions we shall ask reflect that disciplinary perspective.

Students are expected to have read the required reading for the appropriate class sessions. The professor hopes to engage in a large number of class discussions to make the course less formal and more profitable. Indeed, events will likely be moving so rapidly this term that a portion of our class sessions will of necessity be spent understanding what is currently happening in Russia and placing events in their political, historical, social, and economic contexts. Needless to say, the professor will include his

experiences in Russia as part of the class sessions when they relate to the topic under consideration.

Class requirements include two examinations (October 4 and December 9), weekly *New York Times* quizzes, and a paper, due November 22. Everyone is to take the exams as scheduled and hand in their papers on time (late papers are penalized one grade), unless there are medical excuses. If a student must miss a quiz or examination for a legitimate reason, the professor should be notified of it *in advance*. Write him at hudson.212@osu.edu.

Required Readings

Marshall I. Goldman, *Petrostate: Putin, Power, and the New Russia*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-19-539863-2 (paperback).

Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*. Updated Edition. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-19-536863-5 (paperback).

Alena V. Ledeneva, *Can Russia Modernize? Sistema, Power Networks, and Informal Governance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-521-12563-5 (paperback).

New York Times, daily editions, M-F

Thomas F. Remington, *Politics in Russia*. Seventh Edition. New York: Longman, 2012. ISBN-10: 0205005799 • ISBN-13: 9780205005796 (paperback).

Students should be aware that significant money may be saved by purchasing these works electronically or in used form. Sometimes they can be rented, sometimes purchased and downloaded via a tablet reader. The OSU bookstore offers all these options. Also the New York Times is available for free in all the dormitories.

Grading

Your grades will be based on your class participation, exams, quiz scores, paper, and your improvement over the term. These elements are calculated as follows:

Quizzes: 15%
Mid-Term Exam: 25%
Final Exam: 30%
Paper: 30%

Class Participation and improvement will be used to weight the final grade as appropriate. Normally *one-half grade will be added* in cases of outstanding participation or significant improvement.

Office Hours

Office Hours are: **M, W: 10:15-11:15 and 12:30-1:30 in Derby Hall 2147.**

Appointments may be scheduled for other times.

Topic Outline and Assignments (Please try to read in order listed under each week)

- I. Weeks 1-3: Introduction and Brief Historical Background; Russia's Population Perils; Introduction to the Class Papers

Read- Remington, Chs. 1-2 (read these by 8/28); Kotkin, entire book (read by 9/4 and *use the study guide questions* at the end of this syllabus as you go);

NB: No class on 8/26 or 9/2

- II. Weeks 3-4: National Identity, Political Culture and the Media; The Development of Civil Society: Interest Groups and NGOs

Read- Remington, Ch. 5; Ledeneva, Introduction and Ch. 1; Remington, pp. 151-172.

- III. Weeks 4-7: Government Institutions (the "Horizontal" Distribution of Power); Evaluating Gorbachev, Yeltsin, Medvedev and Putin as Leaders

Read- Remington, pp. 57-74; Ledeneva, Chs. 2,3,4

Mid-Term Examination (Approximately October 4)

- IV. Weeks 7-8: Parties, Elections and Political Participation

Read-Remington, pp. 173-192; Remington, Ch. 4

- V. Weeks 9-11: The Patterns and Dilemmas of Russian Economic Policy; Russia's Energy Sector; The "Virtual Economy;" corruption

Read- Remington, Ch.7; Goldman, entire book (*use the study*

guide questions at the end of this syllabus as you go); Ledeneva, Chs. 5 and 6

NB: No class on October 18.

- VI. Weeks 11-12: Centralization of Power? Federalism (the “Vertical” Distribution of Power), The Kozak Commission Reforms; Nationalities and the War in Chechnya

Read- Remington, pp. 74-88; Ledeneva, Ch. 7 and Conclusion

- VII. Weeks 13-15: Russian Constitution and the Rule of Law: Toward Democracy?

Read- The Constitution of the Russian Federation (<http://www.constitution.ru/>); Remington, Ch. 8

Papers are due: November 22

NB: No class on November 27, 29, December 2. We may want to find time to present papers and/or meet at non-traditional times. Let's discuss this in class.

Final Examination: Monday, December 9, 12:00 p.m.-1:45 p.m. Please note that this is the time that the Registrar has scheduled. The Professor will not make arrangements for another exam time, unless there are serious extenuating circumstances. Plan your air flights and rides home accordingly!

КОHEЦ!!!

Questions to Help Guide Your Reading of Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*

Introduction:

- a. What does Kotkin contend were the main reasons for the fall of the USSR and when did that “fall” begin?
- b. What does Kotkin assert is the “greatest surprise of the Soviet collapse”?

1. Chapter 1:

- a. How did the USSR continue to sustain itself?

- b. What does Kotkin identify as “the Soviet Union’s central dilemma”? Explain what he means by this and how he justifies his argument.
 - c. How does Kotkin explain that the “market” is a political, rather than an economic concept?
2. Chapter 2:
- a. What were the main political characteristics of the Soviet system under Brezhnev?
 - b. What sort of losses did the USSR experience in WWII?
 - c. How can Kotkin contend that Gorbachev was a “quintessential product of the Soviet system”? (see also Chapter 3 to help you answer this)
3. Chapter 3:
- a. How did Gorbachev’s “romanticism” of reform actually help to bring the USSR down?
 - b. What role did institutional reform under Gorbachev help to speed the USSR’s collapse?
 - c. How would you explain to someone Kotkin’s statement: “Gorbachev’s predecessors had created an edifice lined with hidden booby traps that provoked their own detonation by calling forth the reformist impulse”? (p. 82)
4. Chapter 4:
- a. What impact did events in Eastern Europe have on the dissolution of the USSR?
 - b. Why didn’t the coup against Gorbachev in August 1991 work out?
 - c. Compare and contrast the role of political elites with popular movements in bringing about the collapse of the USSR.
5. Chapter 5:
- a. In looking at economic reforms, how does Kotkin demonstrate that the country’s predicament boils down to “a problem of institutions”? And, what is an “institution” from Kotkin’s perspective?
 - b. What role did foreign economic advice play in the “reform” of the economy under Yeltsin?
 - c. What does Kotkin identify as the two main causes of economic failure under Yeltsin? (Hint: see p. 140!)
6. Chapter 6:
- a. What does Kotkin mean when he asks “how was the incoherent Russian state going to solve the country’s problems what the state *was* the main problem?”
 - b. What forms did “executive aggrandizement” take and how was, in Kotkin’s view, this related to the decentralization of power?
 - c. Why does Kotkin term Russia under Yeltsin “democratic but not liberal”?

7. Chapter 7:

- a. What problems lie ahead for the future of Russia?
- b. What do you think of the last paragraph on p. 192?

8. Epilogue

- a. Name as many aspects of Putin's legacy as you can.
- b. List as many problems areas facing Russia as you can.
- c. Do you think that Medvedev promises a more liberal leadership than Putin? Does Kotkin?
- d. What will happen if Putin, as expected, is elected President in March 2012?

Questions to Help Guide Your Reading of
Marshall I. Goldman, *Petrostate*

General Questions

1. What is the thesis of this book? Try to encapsulate it in no more than two sentences
2. What is your overall opinion of the book? Was its argument persuasive? How could you criticize it?

Introduction

1. What is the "Dutch disease?"
2. What is the "Russian disease" and what are its implications for Russia?

Chapter 1

1. What patterns of early Russian and Soviet energy policy does Goldman point out that can be used for comparing them with current Russian policy? Is Russia doomed to repeat itself?

Chapter 2

1. What problems were endemic to the Soviet economic/planning system that hindered the production of oil?
2. What impact did prices have on the production of Soviet oil? On the collapse of the USSR?

Chapter 3

1. What was the “loans for shares” scheme and what was its significance?
2. How did the disposition of the gas industry differ from that of the oil industry after the fall of the USSR?
3. What do the stories of Fridman, Smolensky and Potanin tell you about the establishment of the early privatized economy in Russia?

Chapter 4

1. Make a list of some of the problems that foreign oil firms have had with their investments in the Russian economy.
2. What about recent patterns of supply and demand has made oil prices drop?

Chapter 5

1. What is the broad content and significance of Vladimir Putin’s doctoral dissertation?
2. How sorry do you feel for Mikhail Khodorkovsky? Why?
3. What is the significance of the Yukos case? The Sibneft case?
4. What is a “PSA” and what happened to Shell Oil’s PSA in Russia?
5. What would you identify as the major problem in/lesson from the way Russia effectively nationalized energy companies?

Chapter 6

1. Explain why Gazprom has become the “holy of holies” to Putin and Medvedev.
2. What is the importance of pipeline ownership to Gazprom’s economic strategy?
3. Name as many pipelines as you can that are involved in Russia’s complex chess game.
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Nord Stream pipeline?
5. Why can there be no organization for gas exporters, similar to OPEC?

Chapter 7

1. How does Putin’s idea of “national champions” link to the advancement of Russian interests abroad?
2. What assumptions does Goldman make about European dependence on Russian energy? Do they seem warranted? Would you change them today?
3. What happens to Russia’s economic engine now that a recession has occurred?
4. What, in addition to a recession, is hurting Russia’s energy production?

5. Can you give some examples of the “Russian disease?”
6. Who are the *siloviki* and what is their significance in Russian energy policy?
7. What explanation does Goldman offer about Putin staying on as Prime Minister? Are you convinced that Goldman is correct?
8. Is Russia today in the powerful position that Goldman says it is in the last 4 pages of the book? Explain.