POL354H1
Politics and Society in Russia

Time: 4-6 pm, Monday
Location: Sidney Smith Hall, 2127
Instructor: Egor Lazarev
Office Hours: 10:00am-12:30pm, Tuesday, Sidney Smith 3108
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Course Description:
This course examines critical issues in Russian politics and society. We will use historical and comparative approaches towards Russian political development. First, we will question whether history and culture can explain contemporary Russian politics. We will briefly examine attempts to modernize Russia under the tsars, the Russian revolution, Stalinism, the post-Stalin Soviet politics, and Gorbachev’s Perestroika. We will explore whether these historical junctures led to path dependency, or in other words, whether the past has determined the present and the future in Russia. Second, we will analyze the transformations of political regime and state-society relations in post-Soviet Russia in comparative perspective. We will ask how democratization in Russian was different from Brazil or Spain, why economic reforms in Russia were less successful than in Poland, how tools of control over media and civil society organizations are different in Russia and China, etc. In terms of topics, we will focus on the political logic of economic reforms, influence of the oligarchs, governance, center-periphery relations, authoritarianism, nationalism, the politics of memory, organized crime, and the media. Finally, we will explore changes in Russian foreign policy and Russia’s involvement in conflicts in Chechnya, Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria.

Course Objectives:
1) To familiarize with the most important debates and issues on Russian politics
2) To learn how to critically engage with media and academic narratives on Russia
3) To learn how to use historical and comparative analysis

Organization of the course:
Announcements, lecture slides, readings, assignments, and grades will be posted on the Quercus portal.

There is no textbook for this class. Most readings will be available online. I encourage you to buy the following books:
Readings are divided into required and recommended. Recommended readings are usually longer and more complicated. These readings provide a roadmap for further explorations. Students should read them if they want to learn more about the topic or better understand lecture materials.

There are no mid-term or final exam, so no need to memorize what is written in the readings. Instead, you will be asked to participate in class and complete a set of research assignments using the tools that we will learn in class.

You are encouraged to participate in class. Active, informed participation should be understood literally. You should read the required texts and be ready to talk about them in class, answer instructor’s questions and raise your own questions related to the topics of discussion. If you are uncomfortable speaking in class due to disability or psychological reasons, please let me know in advance and we will devise an alternative form of participation based on written responses to course readings.

You will have to write three response papers. The first response paper will ask you to find a media article about Russia that uses historical or cultural approach and provide a critical response to it. The second paper will ask you to write a critical review of a recent book on Russian politics and society. The third paper will be a research paper based on the comparative analysis of Russia on the issues of transformations of political regimes; or economic reforms; or civil society and media, etc.

Requirements weights and deadlines:
- Participation (10%)
- Response Paper 1; 750 words maximum; due February 1 at 5 pm (20%)
- Response Paper 2; 1500 words maximum; due March 1 at 5 pm (30%)
- Response Paper 3; 2500 words maximum; due March 29 at 5 pm (40%)

All writing assignments should be 12 Times New Roman font double-spaced; Word file or pdf; Late submissions will be penalized by one point of grade per day.

Useful Resources:
- Meduza https://meduza.io/en
- PONARS Eurasia http://www.ponarseurasia.org/
- Moscow Carnegie Center https://carnegie.ru/?lang=en
**The Schedule:**

1) January 7. Russia in the Historical and Comparative Perspectives

**Recommended:**

2) January 14. History is Everything?

**Required:**

3) January 21. The Collapse of the Soviet Union

**Required:**

**Recommended:**
- Georgi Derluguian, Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus, chapter 6.
- Yurchak, Alexei. *Everything was forever, until it was no more: The last Soviet generation.* Princeton University Press, 2013. Chapter 3.

4) January 28. “Russian Political Culture” and the Politics of Memory

**Required:**

**Recommended:**
5) February 4. The 1990s: Democratization?

Required:
- Gel'man Vladimir. 2015. *Authoritarian Russia*. Chapters 1 and 3.

Recommended:

6) February 11. The 2000s: Authoritarian Politics?

Required:

Recommended:

7) February 25. Economic Transformations

Required:

Recommended:

Required:

Recommended:

9) March 11. Beyond Moscow: Russian Regions and the Center-Periphery Relations

Required:

Recommended:
- Kimberly Marten, “Russia, Chechnya, and the Sovereign Kadyrov,” PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo no. 116, October 2010

10) March 18. Law and Order

Required:

Recommended:
- Popova, Maria. "Political competition as an obstacle to judicial independence: evidence from Russia and Ukraine." *Comparative Political Studies* 43.10 (2010): 1202-1229.
11) March 25. The Public Sphere: Media, Civil Society, and Gender

Required:

Recommended:

12) April 1. Foreign Policy

Required:

Recommended:
- Daniel Treisman. 2016. “Why Putin Took Crimea” Foreign Affairs 95.3 (May/June)
**Expectations:**
Evaluation in the course will be decided according to the following logic. ‘A’ Grades (A-, A, and A+) will be reserved for truly outstanding work. The grade of B+ indicates that the assignment has been completed satisfactorily with substantial merit. Grades of C or lower signify only adequate performance, with additional help recommended to fully grasp the material. Students will be expected to spend a minimum of 4-6 hours of independent learning in addition to the 2 hours of direct instruction they receive in the classroom.

**Turnitin:** Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

**Academic integrity:** Academic integrity is an important priority here at the University of Toronto. Our academic community honors the values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness and responsibility in order to protect you and your degree. Read Section B of the University of Toronto’s Code of Behavior on Academic Matters, as all students are expected to know and to respect this Code:
http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules

**Appeals:** Appeals must be accompanied by a half-page explanation of the merit for appeal (that you thought the assignment would get a better grade is not a sufficient reason for appeal). Appeals are to be submitted by e-mail to the instructor or your teaching assistant for consideration within 7 days after the tests/papers are returned. Your grade can go either way, up or down by re-grading. **E-mail:** Substantive questions on course subject matters should not be addressed via email as all such questions are best considered during the lectures and office hours. Email correspondence should only be used for organizational issues.

**Course accessibility:** Students with diverse learning styles and needs are always welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration, which may require accommodation, please feel free to approach me in person and/or the Accessibility Service
https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as/contact-us

**Illness and Extensions:** In the case that you submit an assignment late because of illness, you need to provide the verification of student illness or injury form. The form should be submitted within one week of the deadline – or, in the case of serious illness prior to the deadline, must be submitted before the due date.
http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca/index.php