

# 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

Sign Up: <https://calendly.com/egorlazarev/office-hours-winter-2019>

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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 Russia 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:

- Gel'man, Vladimir. *Authoritarian Russia: Analyzing Post-Soviet Regime Changes*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015.
- Stephen Kotkin 2008. *Armageddon Averted*. The Soviet Collapse 1970-2000.

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/>
- Russian Analytical Digest <http://www.css.ethz.ch/en/publications/rad.html>
- The Monkey Cage <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/>
- Moscow Carnegie Center <https://carnegie.ru/?lang=en>

## The Schedule:

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

#### Recommended:

- Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Treisman. 2005. "Russia: A Normal Country: Russia After Communism." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. Winter. 19:1, 151-174
- Lazarev, Egor, Anton Sobolev, Irina V. Soboleva, and Boris Sokolov. "Trial by fire: a natural Disaster's impact on support for the authorities in rural Russia." *World Politics* 66, no. 4 (2014): 641-668.

### 2) January 14. History is Everything?

#### Required:

- Pipes Richard 1995. *Russia under the Old Regime*. Foreword and Chapter 1.
- Sheila Fitzpatrick 2001. *The Russian Revolution*. P 1-23; 61-72; 120-163.

### 3) January 21. The Collapse of the Soviet Union

#### Required:

- Stephen Kotkin 2008. *Armageddon Averted*. The Soviet Collapse 1970-2000. 1-10; 58-86.
- Bunce, Valerie. 1999. *Subversive Institutions: the Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

#### 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:

- Surkov, Vladislav. "Russian political culture: The view from utopia." *Russian Social Science Review* 49.6 (2008): 81-97.
- Forest, Benjamin, Juliet Johnson, and Karen Till. "Post-totalitarian national identity: public memory in Germany and Russia." *Social & Cultural Geography* 5.3 (2004): 357-380.

#### Recommended:

- Oushakine, Serguei. "We're nostalgic but we're not crazy": Retrofitting the Past in Russia. *The Russian Review* 66.3 (2007): 451-482.
- Pop-Eleches, Grigore, and Joshua A. Tucker. *Communism's Shadow: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Political Attitudes*. Princeton University Press, 2017. Chapter 1.
- Masha Gessen. 2018. *The Future is History: How Totalitarianism Reclaimed Russia*. Pages 137-164.

## 5) February 4. The 1990s: Democratization?

### Required:

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

### Recommended:

- Colton, Timothy J., and Michael McFaul. "Are Russians Undemocratic?." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 18.2 (2002): 91-121.

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

### Required:

- Gel'man Vladimir. 2015. *Authoritarian Russia*. Chapters 4 and 5.

### Recommended:

- Smyth, Regina, and Irina Soboleva. "Looking beyond the economy: Pussy Riot and the Kremlin's voting coalition." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 30.4 (2014): 257-275.
- Frye, Timothy, Ora John Reuter, and David Szakonyi. "Political machines at work voter mobilization and electoral subversion in the workplace." *World politics* 66.2 (2014): 195-228.
- Rosenfeld, Bryn. "Reevaluating the Middle-Class Protest Paradigm: A Case-Control Study of Democratic Protest Coalitions in Russia." *American Political Science Review* 111.4 (2017): 637-652.

## 7) February 25. Economic Transformations

### Required:

- Anders Aslund, 2002. *Building Capitalism: The Transformation of the Former Soviet Bloc*, Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1, 20-38
- Johnson, Juliet. *Priests of prosperity: How central bankers transformed the postcommunist world*. Cornell University Press, 2016. Chapter 6.

### Recommended:

- Appel, Hilary. 2000. "The ideological determinants of liberal economic reform: the case of privatization." *World Politics* 52.4: 520-549.
- Aleksashenko Sergei, 2018. *Putin's Counterrevolution*. Chapters 1 and 7.
- Freeland, Chrystia. *Sale of the century: Russia's wild ride from communism to capitalism*. Crown, 2000. Introduction.

## 8) March 4. Governance: Formal and Informal Institutions

### Required:

- Ananyev, Maxim. "Inside the Kremlin: The Presidency and Executive Branch" *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin's Russia*, 2018.
- Ledeneva, Alena C. *Russia's economy of favours: Blat, networking and informal exchange*. Cambridge University Press, 1998. Chapter 1.

### Recommended:

- Noble Ben and Ekaterina Schulmann. "Not Just a Rubber Stamp: Parliament and Lawmaking." *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin's Russia*, pp. 49–82
- Wengle, Susanne. "Power politics: Electricity sector reforms in post-Soviet Russia." *Russian Analytical Digest* 27/07 (2007).
- Sokhey, Sarah Wilson. "Market-Oriented Reforms as a Tool of State-Building: Russian Pension Reform in 2001." *Europe-Asia Studies* 67.5 (2015): 695-717.

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

### Required:

- Petrov Nikolay and Evgeniya Nazrullaeva. "Regional Elites and Moscow." *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin's Russia*.
- Sharafutdinova, Gulnaz. "Why was democracy lost in Russia's regions? Lessons from Nizhnii Novgorod." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 40.3 (2007): 363-382.

### Recommended:

- Kimberly Marten, "Russia, Chechnya, and the Sovereign Kadyrov," PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo no. 116, October 2010
- Golosov, Grigorii V. "The regional roots of electoral authoritarianism in Russia." *Europe-Asia Studies* 63.4 (2011): 623-639.
- Herrera, Yoshiko M. 2007. *Imagined economies: The sources of Russian regionalism*. Cambridge University Press, Introduction.

## 10) March 18. Law and Order

### Required:

- Hendley, Kathryn. *Everyday Law in Russia*. Cornell University Press, 2017. Introduction.
- Paneyakh Ella and Dina Rosenberg. "The Courts, Law Enforcement, and Politics." *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin's Russia*, 2018.

### Recommended:

- Ledeneva, Alena. "Telephone justice in Russia." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 24.4 (2008): 324-350.
- Popova, Maria. "Political competition as an obstacle to judicial independence: evidence from Russia and Ukraine." *Comparative Political Studies* 43.10 (2010): 1202-1229.
- McCarthy, Lauren A. "Beyond Corruption: An Assessment of Russian Law Enforcement's Fight Against Human Trafficking." *Demokratizatsiya* 18.1 (2010): 5.

## 11) March 25. The Public Sphere: Media, Civil Society, and Gender

### Required:

- Sobolev Anton and Alexei Zakharov. "Civic and Political Activism in Russia." *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin's Russia*, 2018, pp. 249–276.
- Maria Lipman et al. "Media in Russia: Between Modernization and Monopoly." *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin's Russia*, 2018, pp. 159–190.
- Janet Elise Johnson, "Fast-Tracked or Boxed in? Informal Politics, Gender, and Women's Representation in Putin's Russia," *Perspectives on Politics* 14, no. 3 (2016): 644.

### Recommended:

- Kulmala, Meri, and Anna Tarasenko. "Interest representation and social policy making: Russian veterans' organizations as brokers between the state and society." *Europe-Asia Studies* 68.1 (2016): 138-163.
- Adrian Chen (2015) *The Agency*, *New York Times Magazine*

## 12) April 1. Foreign Policy

### Required:

- Seva Gunitsky and Andrei Tsygankov. 2018. "The Wilsonian Bias in the study of Russian Foreign Policy." *Problems of Post-Communism*, 65.
- Kimberly Marten. 2019. "Russia's Use of semi-state security forces: the case of the Wagner Group." *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol 35.

### Recommended:

- Vladimir Putin. 2013. "A Plea for Caution From Russia" *New York Times*. September 11.
- Daniel Treisman. 2016. "Why Putin Took Crimea" *Foreign Affairs* 95.3 (May/June)
- Laruelle, Marlene. 2016. "The three colors of Novorossiya, or the Russian nationalist mythmaking of the Ukrainian crisis." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32.1: 55-74.

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>