PS 122: SOVIET, RUSSIAN, AND POST-SOVIET POLITICS
Fall term, 2011
T&Th 12 noon - 1:15 (Block F+)
TERR RM

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Office hours: Wed 4:15-5:45 pm, and by appointment
Course website accessible through https://trunk.tufts.edu

Course description and objectives

In this course, you will be studying one of the most important countries of the 20th century, the Soviet Union, and the states – the Russian Federation (Russia) and 14 others – that were formed from its collapse. Approximately one third of the course will be devoted to an overview of political, economic, and social structures that defined Soviet Communism. This historical overview will cover the time period from the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution through Gorbachev, “perestroika,” and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

In the remaining two-thirds of the course we will explore the unprecedented “triple transition” in national identities, political institutions and economic systems that followed the collapse of Soviet Communism, and will examine and critically evaluate theoretical attempts to explain the different developmental trajectories upon which the 15 successor states of the Soviet Union have embarked. While Russia will receive the most extensive consideration, we will cover the other successor states as well, paying particular attention to Ukraine, but also other states.

As we examine and compare developments in the region after 1991, we will consider topics such as state collapse and state formation, regime types, political and institutional changes, the politics of economic reform, the challenges of nationalism within the multinational state, electoral revolutions, and others.

Course requirements

Final grade will be based on grades awarded for each of the following:

Class participation 10%
Midterm 25%
Two policy memos 15% each, 30% total
Research paper 35%

All assignments will be given a numerical grade on the following scale:

A 93 and higher
A- 90-92
B+ 87-89
B 83-86
B- 80-82
C+ 77-79
C 73-76
C- 70-72
D+ 67-69
D 63-66
D- 60-62
F 59 and below
Important dates and deadlines:

October 18     In-class midterm
November 8     No class (Friday schedule)
November 18    Memo #1 due in my office by 5pm
November 24    No class (Thanksgiving break)
December 9     Memo #2 due in my office by 5pm
December 16    Final paper due in my office and via Trunk by 5pm

Class attendance and active participation. You should come to class having done the readings and having thought about them critically. I will be posting a study guide to course website on Trunk at the end of each week for the following week. The study guide will indicate what to focus on when you do the readings, and writing down answers to the study guide questions will be an excellent preparation for the midterm, memos, and also the paper.

Midterm. The in-class midterm will take place on Tuesday, October 18. The midterm will include identification questions on key concepts, events, people, and dates, essay questions, and a map component. Study maps will be posted on course website on the Trunk.

Two policy memos. Two times during the semester, students will write a two-page (single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margin) “executive memo” that answers a specific question given by the professor on the basis of at least four course readings pertinent to the topic of the memo. An important aim is to help students learn to write concisely, conveying as much information as possible without being vague--this skill is highly valuable in the policy and business worlds. Memos getting the best grades will be those that make a single crisp, clear argument demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the relevant course material. Memos that are more than 3-4 lines over page limit will be graded down.

Research paper. All students will write a 10-12 page paper (Times New Roman 12 font, double-spaced with standard margins) applying one of the theories that we cover in class to an empirical case of your choice. The goal is to provide evidence from one (or more) post-Soviet countries’ experience that either bolsters or challenges a given theory. For example, if you would like to write about Armenia, you can look into how its experience with ethnic conflict in Nagorno Karabakh bears on the theories of ethnic conflict we will discuss in class – which theory does it support and which theory does it undermine. The paper should, of course, cite at least one source from the required readings, and at least 5 respectable sources on the country of your choice. A research guide prepared by Tisch librarian Ms. Reick for our class should help you with identifying respectable sources for your paper. The guide is available at http://researchguides.library.tufts.edu/PoliticalScience122, and also on Trunk.

Course policies

Late policy: Extensions will be given and make-ups allowed only when a legitimate and documented excuse exists (such as serious illness, family or personal emergency, university business). Since paper and memo deadlines are known well in advance, I will grant extensions only in truly exceptional circumstances. Students experiencing such circumstances should inform me as far as possible in advance. Under no circumstances will extensions be granted
due to general pressures of academic life such as exams and assignments due in other classes, or due to computer failures. Students who miss class are responsible for keeping track of any announcements, including possible changes in the syllabus, made in class.

Possible changes to the syllabus: the syllabus may change as the semester progresses. Updates/changes will be announced in class as well as posted on Trunk. Please treat the version on Trunk as the most up-to-date, and thus definitive, version.

On academic integrity: Tufts University values academic integrity. All students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences by familiarizing themselves with The Academic Integrity booklet available at http://uss.tufts.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/#academicintegrity and also on Trunk. If a student's work is suspected of not being original, Turn-it-in.com will be used to investigate the case. Per Tufts policy, any instance of suspected academic dishonesty will also be reported to the Dean of Student Affairs office.

Special needs: Please inform me in advance of any special needs.

Course readings

Books. We will be using the following books extensively in the course. They can be purchased at the campus bookstore. The books will also be placed on reserve at Tisch.


Additional required readings are posted on Trunk course site. They are marked TR in the syllabus.

Useful web sites. Starting in October, we will analyze contemporary political, economic, and social developments in the newly independent countries that once were part of the Soviet Union. I will assume some basic familiarity with the current events on your part. To keep up with the news I recommend that you read either a daily paper with good foreign coverage such as the New York Times or the Washington Post, or a weekly magazine such as the Economist. In addition, you can follow current events in the region through one or several of the web sites that specialize in news and analysis of the former Communist states. A list of such sites will be on our course website on Trunk.

Schedule of topics, readings, and assignments

Readings should be completed *before* the start of the class for which they are assigned.

To help you budget time, figures in brackets (e.g., “[32]”) report the number of pages in each reading.
#1. Tue, Sept 6. Introduction to the course.

No readings assigned.

_The Soviet experiment (1917-1991)_

# 2. Thur, Sept 8. The old regime, Marxism, and the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution [34].

2. Suny, pp. 3-21 (“The Revolution of 1917.”) [18].

# 3. Tue, Sept 13. The creation of party-state under Lenin and Stalin: from pluralism to totalitarianism (1) [26].

2. Suny, pp. 67-72 (The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly) [4].
3. Suny, pp. 82-83 (Lenin's letter to V.V. Kuraev et. al.) [1].
4. Suny, pp. 77-81 (Iuli Martov's letter to A.N. Stein) [5].
6. Suny, pp. 118-120 (Lenin’s “testament”) [2].

#4. Thur, Sept 15. Shaping economy and society under Lenin and Stalin: industrialization, collectivization, and famine [61].

1. McAuley, ch. 3, pp. 37-43 only (until “Meanwhile the ruling authorities”) [6].

#5. Tue, Sept 20. Stalin to Khrushchev: terror to “thaw” [49].

1. McAuley ch. 3, pp. 44-49 only; chs. 4-5, pp. 50-74 [29].
2. Suny, pp. 245-250; 447-452. (Nikolai Bukharin's letter to Stalin. Interview with Nikolai Bukharin’s widow and Bukharin’s last letter) [10].

#6. Thur, Sept 22. Khrushchev to Brezhnev: optimism to stagnation [41].

1. McAuley ch. 6, pp. 75-88 [25].
4. White, pp. 1-8 [7].

#7. Tue, Sept 27. Gorbachev and reforms: from optimism to collapse. [52].

2. Kotkin, pp. 58-71 (Until “National movements also emerged…”), pp. 93-103 [23].
5. Suny, pp. 452-455 (Boris Yeltsin resigns from the Communist Party) [3].

#8. Thur, Sept 29. The rise of nationalism in the republics [46].


Approaches to understanding post-Soviet trajectories


1. White, pp. 321-368 [47].


#13. Tue, Oct 18. IN-CLASS MID-TERM

Nation-building, nationalism, and ethnic conflict

#14. Thur, Oct. 20. Explaining war and peace in the former Soviet space. [51].


#15. Tue, Oct. 25. Challenge of nation-building in Russia 1: managing center-region relations. [36].


#16. Thur, Oct. 27. Challenge of nation-building in Russia 2: inventing the nation. [41]


The politics of economic reforms.

#18. Thur, Nov. 3. From command to market economy: what had to be done and why it was hard to do [36].

2. White, pp. 115-137 [22].

**Tue, Nov. 8. No class – Friday schedule.**

**#19. Thur, Nov. 10. Economic reform results [51].**

1. White, pp. 138-161, 163-191 [51].

**#20. Tue, Nov. 15. Why did some countries reform quicker/better than others? [63].**


*Regime types and trajectories of development*


**Memo #1 due Friday, Nov. 18, by 5pm in my mailbox at the PS department.**

**#22. Tue, Nov. 22. What are post-Soviet hybrid regimes and how do they work? [44].**


**Thur, Nov 24. NO CLASS – Thanksgiving break**

**#23. Tue, Nov. 29. The instability of hybrid regimes and colored revolutions [36].**


**#25. Tue, Dec. 6. Democracy and lack thereof after colored revolutions [44].**


**#26. Thur, Dec. 8. Wrap-up.**

Readings TBA.

* Memo #2 due Friday, December 9, by 5pm in my mailbox at the PS dept *

* Research paper due Friday, December 16, by 5pm in hard copy AND ALSO electronically via Trunk Assignments function. There will be a box near the front desk at the PS department where you can drop off your papers.

There is no final exam.