Politics of Russia and Eastern Europe

Instructor: Brian Humphreys
Course: Political Science 01:790:381, Fall 2015
Location: ARH-100 on Cook/Douglass
Time: MW 5:35-6:55 PM
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Course overview:

This course will focus on a group of countries, which were under the Communist rule during much of the 20th century. These countries can be further subdivided into four categories. After 1989, some of the former Communist countries initiated a successful double transition (both political and economic) that ended with their membership in the European Union (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, the three Baltic Republics). Some of the less successful countries from the region are E.U. candidates (Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro), while others are potential candidates (Albania, Kosova, Bosnia and Herzegovina). However, democracy and market economies did not emerge in all of the former communist countries. The second group of countries ended up developing hybrid political regimes with unclear prospects in terms of democracy and market reforms (Moldova, Ukraine, Russia). The third group of countries includes authoritarian states like Belarus, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. As it often happens, some of these countries sit on rich resource reserves coveted by more developed countries. Hence, we will explore whether there is a link between the richness in resources and the prospects for democratization. The fourth group of countries includes those states still nominally Communist. China, Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam and Laos can be counted as the last bastions of Communism in the world. Although, we will deal mainly with transformations in Central and Eastern Europe and Russian politics, we will discuss the possible trajectories for the present Communist states. At the end of the class, the students should be equipped with concepts, information, and analytical skills necessary to understand the regional developments.

The course consists of the following four broad sections: 1) the rise and fall of the Communist states and ideology, 2) theories about transitions to democracy, 3) transitions to a market economy and 4) Russian politics, foreign policy, and society. Additionally, we will have sessions on the politics of memory, nationalism and ethnic conflict, the E.U. accession of CEE states.

The ultimate question we will try to answer is why certain transitions failed, while others were successful. However, we will also address questions such as: why was it difficult to challenge the totalitarian Communist regimes? Why didn’t Russia democratize? What is Ukraine in turmoil and what is Russia’s role in it? Will the 2018 Russian presidential elections bring an end to Putin’s rule in Russia? Is it accurate to call Russia’s economic system - “state capitalism”?
II. Course Requirements:

a) Map quiz on September 23 (5%).

b) Midterm exam on October 14 (30%).

c) Final paper. The paper should be written respecting the Rutgers rules of academic writing and should be no more than 15 pages long (guidelines will be posted online); due on the day of the Final. Students should submit a brief outline of the final paper by November 23. The paper is worth 30% of your grade.

d) Two reaction essays (3 pages each) due on October 5 and November 18 (20%).

e) Group presentation on Russia (in December), regular attendance and involvement in class discussions (15%).

University policies

Disability Accommodation: Information on Rutgers Disability Support Services can be found at http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/

Rutgers Student Code of Conduct & Academic Integrity rules are enforced in this class. See details at http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu

Attendance: daily attendance is taken. If you are going to miss a class, please use the university reporting system available at https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/. Absences for religious observance are excused without penalty and do not need to be reported, but you do need to notify me in advance. For medical problems please provide a doctor’s note. If you have more than three unexcused absences, points will be deducted from the final grade.

III. Required books:


IIIa. Recommended:

* Most of the other readings will be on Sakai, but it is the student’s responsibility to print and read them.

Historical perspectives
Political Science Approaches

Transition to capitalism

Russian politics
Joel Ostrow (ed.), *Politics in Russia: A Reader*, 2012.

Fiction
George Orwell, *Animal Farm*

**IV. Recommended journals:**

**V. Recommended sites covering post-Communist and Russian affairs:**


**VI. Think tanks**
Course schedule:

Session 1: Introduction (September 2nd) No readings

September 7: Labor Day. No class.

Session 2: The ideological underpinnings of the Communist regimes. (Sept 9)
* Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: The Communist Manifesto:
  http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf
* Archie Brown, Ch. 6: What do we mean by a Communist system?

Session 3: The Red Army and the transition to Communism. (Sept 14)
* Archie Brown, Ch.2 – 4,

Session 4: The Communist specter is haunting Europe and Asia. (Sept 16)
* Archie Brown, Ch. 9-11, Ch. 16.

* Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956, Ch. 1-3, p. 3-143.

Vaclav Havel, Open Letter to the Secretary General of the Czech Communist Party:

Session 6: Movie or guest speaker (Sept 23)

Session 7: Conceptualizing transitions to democracy I. MAP QUIZ !!! (Sept 28) * Stepan and Linz, Chapters 1-5.

Session 8: Conceptualizing transitions to democracy II. (Sept 30)
* Samuel Huntington, The Third Wave, Ch. 1&2.
* O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies, Ch. 2-6.
* Lucan Way and Steven Levitsky, *Competitive authoritarianism: hybrid regimes after the Cold War*, Cambridge University Press, 2010, Ch. 2 (theory), Ch. 3 (theory applied to Eastern Europe) and Ch. 6 (theory applied to former Soviet Union).

**Session 9: 1989 - violent and peaceful transitions. (Oct 5)**


* Video: Timothy Garton Ash: [http://iis.berkeley.edu/speakers/elberg/tash](http://iis.berkeley.edu/speakers/elberg/tash)

**Session 10: Why did the kremlinologists fail? The collapse of the Soviet Union: structural, actor-centered and cultural-ideatic explanations. (Oct 7)**


**Book Review/Reaction Essay 1 Due**

**Session 11: Review for the midterm exam!!! (Oct 12)**

**Session 12: Midterm exam. (Oct 14)**

**Session 13: Democratization and the European Union. (Oct 19)**


**Session 14. Escaping the valley of death: economic reforms and their consequences. (Oct 21)**

* Anders Aslund, Ch. 4 & Ch. 6.
* David Stuckler, Lawrence King, and Martin McKee, (2009), “Mass Privatisation and the Post-


**Session 15: Nationalism and ethnic conflict. Civil society versus tribal society (Oct 26)**


**Session 16: The politics of memory: WWII or the Great Patriotic War? Liberation or occupation? (Oct 28)**


**Session 17: Communist countries today. (Nov 2)**

* Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, Ch. 30 (What’s left of Communism?) and Ch. 18.

Russian politics

Session 18: Presidential government: Putin forever? (Nov 4)
* Ten Myths about Russia: Understanding and Dealing with Russia’s Complexity and Ambiguity (Foglesong and Hahn, 2012)

* Stephen White, Understanding Russian Politics, Cambridge University Press, 2011, Ch. 3.

Session 19: Russian political elites and political parties. (Nov 9)


Session 20: Russian oligarchs and the resource curse. (Nov 11)

* Anders Aslund, Ch. 10.
* Pauline Jones Luong and Erika Weinthal, Oil is not a curse: ownership structure and institutions in Soviet successor states, Cambridge University Press, 2010, Ch. 10 (The Myth of the Resource Curse).


* Corry Welt, “Georgia’s Rose Revolution: From regime weakness to regime collapse”, pp. 155-188.

* Ambrosio, Ch. 4 (p. 45-68), Ch. 5: Redefine


TBD


Session 23: The December 4th Duma elections and the 2012 presidential elections. (November 23)


* Stephen White, “What kind of system?”, Ch. 8 from Understanding Russian Politics.

Reaction Essay 2

Session 24: Movie 2 (Dec 2) Paper topic outline

Session 25: GROUP PRESENTATIONS ON RUSSIAN POLITICAL PARTIES (December 3)

Session 26: Twenty years after the end of the Cold War. (December 7)