

POL 335 Russian Political System
Moscow State University
Faculty of Foreign Languages and Area Studies
(in collaboration with Knowledge Exchange Institute)

Course Description

This course provides an overview of contemporary Russian politics and government. Students will explore Russia's main political and legal structures; learn about economic reforms and challenges, as well as domestic and foreign policy. The first part of the course (three lectures) provides a brief survey of Russian Imperial and Soviet history and introduces historical legacies that play an important role in Russian politics today. In the second part of the course we will explore in depth contemporary Russia's political, economic and legal structures and challenges as well as the country's efforts to find its new place in the world.

Readings

There are two required books for this course that will be distributed by the program coordinator:

Stephen Kotkin. *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Stephen Wegren & Dale Herspring, eds. *After Putin's Russia*. 4th ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.

Additional readings include scholarly and journalistic articles as well as book excerpts that will be distributed electronically via e-mail or handed out in class. Most of the additional reading materials are not included in the syllabus and will be assigned later in order to reflect current developments in Russian politics and keep up with the most recent news and events.

Assignments and Grading

This course is a combination of lectures and discussions. Attendance and participation is mandatory and failure to attend and participate will affect your final grade. Students must do the assigned reading before the class meets. There will be two scheduled ID quizzes, a mid-term and a final exam. During the exams you will write a brief essay on a broader question of Russian politics that addresses changes since 1991.

Students will also write one analytical paper that reviews three scholarly articles or book chapters on a specific topic of your choice (8-10 double-spaced pages). With this assignment you will practice summarizing the authors' arguments in your own words, comparing different views on the same topic and making clear your own position about which arguments you find most convincing. You should choose articles that take different positions on the same topic or disagree with each other. Possible topics include Russian-Georgian relations, Corruption in Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church in Russian Politics, Russian-Ukrainian Relations, Oil Export and Russian Foreign Policy,

Russian policies towards South Ossetia and Abkhaziiia, the Influence of Islam and Russian Control over the Caucasus, etc.

Scholarly articles on Russian politics can come from journals such as *World Politics*, *Comparative Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Political Science Quarterly*, *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, *Slavic Review*, *Russian Social Science Review*, *Problems of Post-Communism*, *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, *Journal of Democracy*, etc. They should be scholarly articles, not journalistic or policy-oriented articles that have no or very few footnotes. Articles can be retrieved from JSTOR or other internet resources.

The three articles should be listed at the very beginning of your paper. Please hand in copies of your three articles with the paper.

Your final grade will consist of:

quizzes	10%,
participation	20%,
mid-term exam	20%,
final exam	25%,
paper assignment	25%.

COURSE TOPICS AND READINGS

Introduction: What is Russia? Territory, People and Imperial Russia's Legacies

The Duma Experiment, Russian Revolution and the Creation of the Soviet Union

Readings: Kotkin, *Armageddon*, p. 1-57.

1936 Constitution of the Soviet Union

(<http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/1936toc.html>)

The Soviet Union between Stagnation and Reforms, Khrushchev to Gorbachev

Readings: Kotkin, *Armageddon*, p. 57-112.

Taubman, "How a Speech Won the Cold War," *New York Times*, February 25, 2006.

Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for our Country and the World*. [excerpts]

Collapse of the Soviet Union and Yeltsin's Years

Readings: Kotkin, *Armageddon*, 113-196.

Russian Constitution of 1993 [TBA]

Applebaum, "Russia's Agent of Change; For All His Flaws, Boris Yeltsin Started Something Big," *Washington Post*, April 24, 2007.

Lipman, "Yeltsin the Revolutionary," *Washington Post*, April 25, 2007.

Yeltsin's Resignation Speech, *New York Times*, Jan. 1, 2000.

(paper topics due)

Putin's Russia: Political System and Political Leadership

Readings: Wegren, Herspring, "Introduction," in *After Putin's Russia*, 1-16.
Sakwa, "Political Leadership," in *After Putin's Russia*, 17-38.
Whitefield, "Russian Citizens and Russian Democracy: Perceptions of State Governance and Democratic Practice, 1993-2007," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 25, no.2, 2009 pp. 93-112
(ID Quiz #1)

Russia's Parliament and Political Parties

Readings: Remington, "Parliament and the Dominant Party Regime," in *After Putin's Russia*, 39-58.
Whitmore, "Parliamentary Oversight in Putin's Neo-patrimonial State. Watchdogs or Show-dogs?" *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 62, no. 6, 2010, pp. 999-1025.
Rose and Mishler, "How Do Electors Respond to an 'Unfair' Election? The Experience of Russians," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2009 pp. 118-32
Levy, "In Siberia Race, Ruling Party Uses Clenched Fist," *New York Times*, December 11, 2010.
(bibliography due)

Society in Putin's Russia, Regional Autonomy and Freedom of Media.

Readings: Petrov and Slider, "The Regions under Putin and After," in *After Putin's Russia*, 59-82.
Lipman and McFaul, "The Media and Political Developments," in *After Putin's Russia*, 109-132.
Levy, "Governor in Russia is Ousted by Kremlin," *New York Times*, March 22, 2009.
(Midterm exam due)

Russian Economy

Readings: Rutland, "The Oligarchs and Economic Development," in *After Putin's Russia*, 159-182.
Wegren, "Agriculture in the Late Putin Period and Beyond," in *After Putin's Russia*, 199-222.

Law, Crime, and Corruption in Putin's Russia

Readings: Hendley, "The Law in Post-Putin Russia," in *After Putin's Russia*, 83-108.
Shelly, "Crime, Organized Crime, and Corruption," in *After Putin's Russia*, 183-198.

Russia's Military

Readings: Herspring, "Putin, Medvedev, and the Russian Military," in *After Putin's Russia*, 265-290.
(ID Quiz #2)

The Treat of Extremism and Terrorism

Readings: [TBA]

Russian Foreign Policy

Readings: Tsygankov, "Russia's Foreign Policy," in *After Putin's Russia*, 223-242.

Gleason, "Russia and Central Asia's Multivector Foreign Policies," in *After Putin's Russia*, 243-264.

(Research papers due)

General discussion: Continuity and Change in Russian Politics

Readings: Wegren and Herspring, "Whither Putinism?" In *After Putin's Russia*, 291-306.

Heleniak, "Russia's Population Perils," in *After Putin's Russia*, 133-158.

(Final Exam)