PS 351: Government and Politics of the Post Soviet States
●Fall 2007●

3:30pm—4:50pm, Mondays & Wednesdays, 145 Armory

Dr. Mark Lawrence Schrad
E-mail: mlschrad@uiuc.edu
Office: 409 Lincoln Hall
Office Hours: 1:00pm—3:30pm Tuesdays & Thursdays, or by appointment
O.H.O.I: 11:15am—12:45pm Tuesdays & Thursdays

Course Description:

Twentieth century world history was profoundly shaped by political events in Eurasia—the rise of Russian communism, the Soviet Union’s subsequent ascent to superpower status after World War II, and the largely peaceful end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet system. Yet, while the Soviet Union is no more, it has left an indelible mark on the politics, economics, and societies of the fifteen successor states. Some former republics, such as the Baltic states, have prospered, even joining the European Union, while others have stagnated both economically and politically. What are the prospects for each of the former Soviet states to overcome the unique legacies of the Soviet past to achieve liberal democracy and productive economies? How should United States foreign policy deal with the diversity of issues, political promise, and potential threats emanating from the former Soviet space?

This course is designed to foster a greater understanding of the history of the Soviet Union, and the post-Soviet states of Eurasia. In consideration of the Soviet past and post-Soviet realities, the lion’s share of the course is dedicated to examining political, social, and economic developments in Russia, as the keystone to understanding the politics of Eurasia. However, we will also look at relevant political developments in the other post-Soviet states, from the Baltic and Eastern Europe to the Caucasus and Central Asia. In addition to understanding contemporary regional issues in their historical context, this course will also introduce students to major debates and positions within the broader comparative politics literature, and facilitate a greater understanding of how the post-Soviet experience fits within such broader contours.

Course Website:

This syllabus, along with relevant class announcements, review materials, reading assignments, and other relevant information will be available on the course website, located at http://compass.uiuc.edu.
Assigned Readings:
In addition to the reading packet—which will be available for purchase, as well as on electronic reserve through the University of Illinois Library—the following books are available for purchase at your local, neighborhood university bookstores.


Assignments and Grading
Grading will be based upon participation in class as well as three in-class assignments: one geography quiz, two mid-term examinations (the form of which will be announced later), as well as a choice of taking the final examination or writing a research paper.

The grade breakdown is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation:</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geography quiz:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>First mid-term exam:</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second mid-term exam:</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam:</td>
<td>35%</td>
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</tbody>
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Grading Scale:

- 100—93%: A
- 92.9—90%: A-
- 89.9—87%: B+
- 86.9—83%: B
- 82.9—80%: B-
- 79.9—77%: C+
- 76.9—73%: C
- 72.9—70%: C-
- 69.9—60%: D
- Below 60%: F

Class Participation: (5%)
Due to the nature of the materials to be covered, most classes will begin with a brief lecture to establish the foundation for subsequent class discussions. Attendance in class is necessary, as is involvement in the discussions. Of course, missing a class does not exempt you from the materials covered on that day. You may want to exchange e-mail addresses with some of your classmates to get notes and other materials you might have missed. Just showing up to class will not ensure that you receive a satisfactory class participation grade. You will be expected to come to class having read all of the assigned readings for that day, and had time to think critically about them. Ensuring that everyone is familiar with the arguments put forth in the various readings is the minimum condition for developing an effective classroom environment. Attendance will not be tabulated daily, however if I don’t know who you are by the end of the semester—do not expect a passing class participation grade.

Geography Quiz: (10%)
On Monday, September 10, 2007, there will be a brief, in-class quiz on the basic geography of the post-Soviet region. This quiz will comprise 10% of the course grade.
Mid-Term Exams: (2 x 25%)

Two mid-term exams will be held during the semester, the first on Wednesday, September 26, 2007, and Monday, October 22, 2007. Each will contribute 25% of the course grade. The exams will be cumulative in that there will be a continuity of historical legacies, topics, and concepts from earlier materials, but the focus of each exam will primarily concern the topics covered in the period immediately preceding the exam. Lecture and discussion materials, as well as topics covered in the assigned readings—whether addressed directly in lecture—are all fair game for exam questions.

Note: Make-up exams will only be granted under extreme circumstances, resulting either from 1) genuine family emergencies, 2) travel associated with university obligations (academic or athletic), or 3) severe illness or injury. If you are traveling due to university obligations, you must inform us at least two weeks prior to the event. If you are genuinely ill or injured, you will need proper documentation from your physician. These regulations will be rigorously enforced!!!

Questions on Exams

Invariably throughout the semester, students have questions about the grade they received on a particular assignment that goes beyond the given comments on the paper or exam. If you feel that you did not deserve the grade you received on a given assignment, I am certainly open to discussing the matter. However, I will insist upon the following:

1) A 24-hour “cooling off” period. Please do not approach me with questions about “why did I receive this grade” within 24-hours of having your assignment returned to you. This will allow you time to re-read the comments, and understand whatever shortcomings may be in question.

2) Come to office hours. I will not discuss individual grades during, before or after either discussion section or lecture. Questions about grades will only be considered in face-to-face discussions. In the end, it is exceedingly rare that a grade will be altered—but if you can persuade me that the evaluation was in error, I am not opposed to re-evaluating the grade.

Final Exam/Research Paper (35%)

For the final assignment, students have a choice between two options. The first (default) option is to take the final exam, which will be similar in form to the two midterm exams, and will be held during the final exam period, 7:00pm—10:00pm, Wednesday, December 12, 2007. The second option is to write a research paper of about 12-15 pages, concerning some ongoing issue, struggle, or topic of concern in Russia or one of the countries of Eurasia—or a comparison of a similar political phenomenon in two or more post-Soviet states—under my advisement with the professor. This option requires additional outside research, but may be ultimately more rewarding for students who wish to further their interests in a particular aspect of post-Soviet politics.

Deadlines for Research Paper Option

The research paper will be due on the same time as the final exam: 7:00pm, Wednesday, December 12, 2007, however, to ensure that you are making progress in your research, it is necessary to establish additional deadlines. First, if you chose the research paper, you must submit to me—either in hard-copy form or via e-mail—a statement of your preliminary research topic and thesis question, by Wednesday, October 31, 2007. Vague
topic declarations such as “I want to study Chechnya” are too vague—a concrete topic question is required, and can be worked-out in conjunction with the professor. Usually addressing topics with “how” or “why” questions can help: asking instead “why did ethnic conflict break-out only in Chechnya, and not (say) Tatarstan.” Supplementing such questions with some notion of how your research question “matters”—in terms of furthering our understanding of post-Soviet politics or how it may guide approaches to similar incidents in the future—is also a plus.

Second, if your research question has been approved, you will need to submit a brief bibliography and conceptual outline of your paper by no later than Wednesday, November 14, 2007. This should help keep you on schedule, and prevent the sudden appearance of last-minute (and usually highly dubious) research papers. Finally, I cannot stress this enough: if you miss either of these deadlines, it will be assumed that you are no longer engaged in the research paper project, and will be defaulted into taking the final exam.

Periodicals and Resources:

There are many useful resources that can be used to stay current with political developments in Russia and Eurasia. The New York Times and the British magazine The Economist generally have very good coverage of international politics. More specific to Eurasia, the following English-language sources are even more useful:

1) The Moscow Times (www.moscowtimes.ru)
2) Johnson’s Russia List (www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/)
3) Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (www.rferl.org)
4) Russia Today (www.russiatoday.com)
5) Eurasia Daily Monitor (www.jamestown.org/edm/)

Policy on Academic Integrity

Breaches of the University of Illinois Student Code, especially Article 1, Part 4 concerning breaches of Academic Integrity (such as cheating on exams and plagiarism) are serious business. Not only are such activities contrary to your entire purpose in attending college and official university policy, I also consider such breaches a personal affront to me as both an instructor and a competent human being—so consider this your prior warning: blatant breaches of academic integrity are discovered, I will prosecute them to the fullest extent.

Please take a moment to familiarize yourself with the Student Code, available online at: http://www.admin.uiuc.edu/policy/code/.

The Penalties for Infractions of Academic Integrity (§ 1-403) are steep, and you should be aware of them: at a minimum, you will flunk the assignment or test, and likely, the entire class. Moreover, you may be brought before an ethics review tribunal, where it will be recommended that you be suspended not only from UIUC, but the entire University of Illinois system. Note will be made of your transgressions in your university file—which will be made known to any other college that you may look to enroll in. Needless to say, most universities would be reluctant to accept a known cheater or plagiarizer to their institutions, and many employers would be reluctant to hire someone with such marks in their file. So, long story short: don’t waste my time, don’t waste your time—just don’t do it. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have on this issue so that they can be easily resolved before the assignments are completed!
Course Outline and Topics:

Week 1: Course Introduction
Wednesday, August 22

I. Historical Background: The Soviet Experience and Its Legacies

Week 2: Autocracy, Revolution, and the Rise of Lenin’s Soviet Union
Monday, August 27
Wednesday, August 29

Week 3: Soviet Totalitarianism under Stalin
Monday, September 3—Labor Day, No Class
Wednesday, September 5

Week 4: The Soviet Gilded Age from Thaw to Stagnation under Khrushchev and Brezhnev
Monday, September 10—in-Class Geography Quiz
Wednesday, September 12

Week 5: Gorbachev and the Dilemma of Soviet Reform
Monday, September 17
Wednesday, September 19


**Week 6: Into the Abyss: Yeltsin, Putin, and the Challenges of the Quadruple Transition**

**Monday, September 24**

**Wednesday, September 26—First Midterm Exam**


**II. Political Trajectories in Post-Soviet Eurasia**

**Week 7: Institutional Variety: Parliaments, Presidents, Semipresidents and Superpresidents**

**Monday, October 1: Russian Federation**


**Wednesday, October 3: Elsewhere in the Former Soviet Union**

Week 8: Regional Authority, Separatism and Ethnic Conflict: Chechnya and Beyond

Monday, October 8
Wednesday, October 10


Week 9: New Revolutionary Challenges in the “Near Abroad” and Russia’s Regional Role

Monday, October 15: The Color Revolutions


Wednesday, October 17: Post-9/11 Foreign Policy: Near and Far Abroad

Week 10:
Monday, October 22—**Second Midterm Exam**

**III: From Communism to Capitalism in Eurasia**

Wednesday, October 24: **The Soviet Legacy (Gorbachev’s Reforms)**

Week 11:
Monday, October 29: **Privatization and the Rise of the Economic Oligarchs**

Wednesday, October 31: **Surviving Economic Freefall: The Virtual Economy**
—**Thesis Statement Due for Research Paper Option**

Week 12: **Economic Recovery after 1998: Is It Sustainable?**
Monday, November 5
Wednesday, November 7
IV: Contemporary Social and Political Challenges

Week 13:
Monday, November 12: The Demographic Implosion

Wednesday, November 14: Ecocide in the (Former) USSR
—Conceptual Outline and Bibliography Due for the Research Paper Option

Week 14: Thanksgiving Break—No Class!
Monday, November 19
Wednesday, November 21

Week 15:
Monday, November 26: Proliferation

Wednesday, November 28: Corruption and the Rule of Law
Week 16: **Looking Forward**
Monday, December 3

Wednesday, December 5


**Final Exam: 7:00pm — 10:00pm, Wednesday, December 12, 2007**