Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:30pm--3:50pm
226 Wohlers Hall

Professor: Mark Lawrence Schrad, Ph.D.
E-mail: mlschrad@illinois.edu
Office: 496 Lincoln Hall
Office Hours: 10:00am—11:00am and 12:00pm—2:15pm Tuesdays & Thursdays, or by appointment

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.

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:
- Class participation: 10%
- Geography quiz: 5%
- First mid-term exam: 25%
- Second mid-term exam: 25%
- Final exam/paper: 35%
Class Participation: (10%)  
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: (5%)  
On Tuesday, February 3, 2009 there will be a brief, in-class quiz on the basic geography of the post-Soviet region. This quiz will comprise 5% of the course grade.

Mid-Term Exams: (2 x 25%)  
Two mid-term exams will be held during the semester, the first on Thursday, February 26, 2009, and Thursday, March 19, 2009. Each will contribute 25% of the course grade. The exams will be cumulative in the 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 or not—are all fair game for questions.

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, 8:00–11:00am, Friday, May 15, 2009. The second option is to write a research paper of about 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. 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: 8:00–11:00am, Friday, May 15, 2009, 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 Tuesday, April 7, 2009. 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 Thursday, April 16, 2009. This should help keep you on schedule, and prevent the sudden appearance of last-minute (and usually highly dubious) research papers. Finally: 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.
Class Policies:

Grading
All assignments will be graded on a 100-point scale which can be used to translate your number grade into a letter grade. At the end of the semester, your final grade will be calculated by adding-up the grades on each assignment in proportion to the weights assigned to them above.

Make-Up Exams
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 documentation from your physician. These regulations will be rigorously enforced!!!

Late Assignments
Written assignments turned-in after the due date and time indicated will be penalized one full letter grade (ten points) for each full day that it is late. Therefore, an otherwise “100” quality paper turned-in one day late would become at best a “90” two days late would become at best an “80,” and so forth, all the way down to zero. As all of the deadlines are clearly articulated here in the syllabus from day one so they should come as no surprise, no extensions will be granted, based in part on the same premise as the policy on extra credit (see below).

Questions on Grading
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 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 test or 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 class. Questions about grades will only be considered in face-to-face discussions during office hours. 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 generally not opposed to re-evaluating the grade, though I do, of course, reserve the right to revise the score upward or downward as the re-evaluation warrants it.

Plagiarism and 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, but we also consider such breaches to be a personal affront as both instructors and a competent human beings—so consider this your prior warning: if blatant breaches of academic integrity are discovered, I will prosecute them to the fullest extent.

Please 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!

**Extra Credit?**

No. Let me clarify that: if there comes a situation where extra credit would be appropriate, it would be offered on an equal-opportunity basis to all students, and that would be exceptionally rare. Individual extra-credit opportunities distort the baseline of evaluating every student by the same standard (as do requests for extensions). This is to say, please do not approach us at the end of the semester asking for some extra-credit opportunity to make-up for a poor performance on an earlier assignment. While you might think that such a request conveys a notion of additional dedication to achievement in the course, in reality, the message received is quite different: such requests are based on two implicit assumptions: 1) that the student in question wishes to be held to a different (lower) standard than the rest of the class, and 2) that the professor is willing to bend the rules and sacrifice objective standards of evaluation. As a result, I tend to find such requests to be rather off-putting, even though that was surely not the student’s intent, which is subsequently why I feel compelled to spell-out the justifications for this policy here in the syllabus.

**Online Lectures and Materials?**

No. Let me clarify that: lecture notes or slides will not be posted online, so please do not ask for them to be. Similarly, review sheets are not used in this class. It is not my duty to provide notes to you: I cannot do the learning for you. I suggest that you exchange your e-mail and contact information with the people seated next to you (or other friends in the class) to obtain notes if you happen to miss lecture on a given day. This interpersonal contact may stimulate the development of study groups, and has generally been the way courses have been conducted since time immemorial.

**Why not?** Here are my reasons, in order of ascending importance: 1) Technical issues: the huge file size precludes uploading. 2) Legal issues: effectively “publishing” lectures online violates the “fair use” doctrine of intellectual property rights protections, by which we may utilize many of the copyright-protected images and other lecture materials. 3) Negative effects on attendance and grades: pedagogical studies have shown that online materials, notes, and review sheets lead not only to dramatic drops in attendance, but also grades. Students tend to become overly-reliant on the printed word, which is often just a stepping-off point for a more important discussion (which in turn is missed if all you focus on is the content written on the power-point slides). These studies demonstrate that students become passive observers rather than active participants in learning, leading to worse correspondingly worse grades. 4) Finally, there is the more existential aspect: if the entire learning experience boils-down to an instructor writing outlines and students reading them, what is the point? What is my raison-d’être at this university: professor, or outline-writer? For that matter, what is yours: student, or outline-consumer? To that end, why not just get an online degree? The answer to all of these questions is in the mix: the traditional dynamic of classroom lectures, discussions, and the exchange between instructors and students that is the hallmark of the university learning experience, which prepares you to become a well-rounded and competent individual, and ultimately prepares you for life outside of academia, where very little is scripted in advance, and available on-demand.

All of these elements are damaged, rather than helped, by posting lectures, notes, slides, and other review materials online. I heartily suggest that, in lieu of such aids, that you take responsibility for your own education. Come to class. Raise questions in class or during office hours. Use e-mail. Post questions on the online review website. Create your own study groups. It is my responsibility to teach, it is your responsibility to learn; and while I will do my best to help you in that endeavor, you likewise have an important role to play.
Living in the Computer Age

Computers are great. Ever more, computers are an integral part of the learning experience. Much of the readings are available online, you’ll probably do a great deal of research online, and write a paper or two on your computer. But as we all know, networks and computers are not always reliable—computers crash, networks fail, printers jam and run out of ink—these are the realities, and we must all confront them. Experience has shown that computers disproportionately tend to crash the night before an exam or assignment is due. As a competent adult, it is up to you to take responsibility and plan ahead for such eventualities. Back-up your files to the web or an external drive. As an excuse for not being able to access online materials or being able to complete an assignment on time, “my computer crashed” will garner little sympathy.

Respect

A key aspect of maintaining an interesting and energetic classroom environment is to ensure that all participants in discussions feel free to express their ideas and opinions without fear of scoffs or condescension. To that end, it is incumbent upon everyone to treat everyone—and their ideas—with respect, especially when another student’s perceptions may not align with your own. Of course when speaking of politically charged topics disagreements will surely arise, yet please be aware of and show respect for others’ ideas and feelings. If at any time you feel offended, please try to raise your concerns in a constructive, level-headed manner—either in class, with me directly, or even anonymously—to amicably resolve the situation. Many times, interpersonal conflicts are rooted in simple misunderstandings, other times they reflect serious issues that need to be resolved before continuing.

Accessibility

Generally speaking, I am a fairly easy person to get in contact with. I encourage you to e-mail me with questions, clarifications, and concerns as they appear throughout the semester, and I especially encourage you to come speak with me face-to-face during my office hours, or by appointment: nothing beats old fashioned interpersonal interaction. Additionally, preceding the exams, I will open-up a discussion tab on the Compass website for review where you can feel free to post questions and build upon the concerns of others. For questions asked of me personally on the review thread, I will try to answer them as quickly as possible, given my other duties and obligations.

Course Website:

This syllabus, along with relevant class announcements, review materials, reading assignments, and other information will be available on the course website, located at http://compass.uiuc.edu.

Assigned Readings:

The following books are available for purchase at your local, neighborhood university bookstores.


In addition to these books, a course reading packet that will be available for purchase at Notes & Quotes (502 East John Street. http://www.notes-n-quotes.com/), as well as being available on electronic reserve through the Undergraduate Library website.
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/)

Course Outline and Topics:

✵ = Reading from assigned books.
☭ = Reading from online reserves/reading packet.

Week 1: Course Introduction
Tuesday, January 20
Thursday, January 22

I. Historical Background: The Soviet Experience and Its Legacies

Week 2: Autocracy, Revolution, and the Rise of Lenin’s Soviet Union
Tuesday, January 27
Thursday, January 29
✵ Lynch, Allen C. How Russia is Not Ruled, Chapter 1, “Historical Patterns of Russian Political Development,” pp. 18-46.

Week 3: Soviet Totalitarianism under Stalin
Tuesday, February 3 — In-Class Geography Quiz
Thursday, February 5
Week 4: The Soviet Gilded Age from Thaw to Stagnation under Khrushchev and Brezhnev
Tuesday, February 10
Thursday, February 12

Week 5: Gorbachev and the Dilemma of Soviet Reform
Tuesday, February 17
Thursday, February 19

Week 6: Into the Abyss: Yeltsin, Putin, and the Challenges of the Quadruple Transition
Tuesday, February 24
Thursday, February 26 — **First Midterm Exam**  

II. Political Trajectories in Post-Soviet Eurasia

Week 7: Institutional Variety: Parliaments, Presidents, Semipresidents and Superpresidents
Tuesday, March 3: The Russian Federation
Thursday, March 5: Elsewhere in the Former Soviet Union


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

Tuesday, March 10
Thursday, March 12


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

Tuesday, March 17: The Color Revolutions


Thursday, March 19—Second Midterm Exam

Week 10: No Class—Spring Break!!!

Tuesday, March 24
Thursday, March 26
III: From Communism to Capitalism in Eurasia

Week 11:
Tuesday, March 31: The Soviet Legacy (Gorbachev’s Reforms)

Thursday, April 2: Privatization and the Rise of the Economic Oligarchs
— Thesis Statement Due for Research Paper Option

Week 12: Surviving Economic Freefall: The Virtual Economy
Tuesday, April 7
Thursday April 9

Tuesday April 14 — Conceptual Outline & Bibliography Due for the Research Paper Option
IV: Contemporary Social and Political Challenges

Thursday, April 16: The Demographic Implosion

Week 14:
Tuesday, April 21: Ecocide in the (Former) USSR

Thursday, April 23: Foreign Policy Challenges

Week 15: Political and Economic Challenges
Tuesday, April 28: The Rule of Law?

Thursday, April 30: From Boom to Bust?

Week 16: Looking Forward
Tuesday, May 5

Final Exam: 8:00-11:00AM, Friday, May 15, 2009.