**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. 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.

PSC 4401 also meets the criteria for writing-enriched course, with assignments that focus on the process of effective composition, rhetoric and persuasive written argumentation as part of the Villanova curriculum.

**Assignments and Grading:**

Grading of all assignments will be done according to a standard 100-point scale. The final course grade will be determined based on in-class participation, as well as the assignments to be described momentarily, with the grade breakdown as follows:

- **Class participation:** 10%
- **Geography quiz:** 5%
- **Micro-paper draft:** 10%
- **Micro-paper revision:** 10%
- **Mid-term exam:** 20%
- **Term paper:** 20%
- **Final exam:** 25%

**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—67%: D+
- 66.9—63%: D
- 62.9—60%: D-
- Below 60%: F
Class Participation: (10%)  
Classroom attendance and involvement in discussions are critical components to this course. 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 the assigned readings, and thought 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.

Geography Quiz: (5%)  
On Thursday, January 24 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.

Micro-Paper (First Draft, 10%)  
During the first section of the course, you will be expected to write a very concise paper to thoughtfully address an enduring debate in Soviet historiography, based on a question I will provide to you. While very short, this paper may be the hardest one that you will have to write for this class, since you will have a lot of ground and information to cover in a very brief space. This exercise is intended to help you organize your thoughts by focusing on what you feel are the most important arguments, as well as helping you to learn to economize on your words. Like all other types of writing, this style takes skill.

The paper is to be exactly two pages in length (not 1¼ of a page, not two pages and two lines; exactly two pages), double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides. Use 12-point, Times New Roman font. For this assignment (and only for this assignment), don’t worry about extensively footnoting your sources—all it does is waste valuable space. We all know what you have read, and if you want to use direct quotations (which I would encourage), there is no need to write everything out. For instance, if you want to quote or cite the abolition of serfdom and the establishment of the zemstvo was done by Tsar Alexander II in 1861 from Peter Kenez, A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End, 2nd edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 6; after the quote or supporting information, simply write (Kenez, 6) or even just (6). Again for the purposes of this assignment your emphasis should be on argumentation and persuasion. Space is of the essence. The formatting rules for this assignment seem rather draconian, which is by design. I know it is tempting to adjust the fonts or the margins or the spacing to make your words accommodate the required space—we’ve all been guilty of the same thing at one time or another. However, part of the point of this assignment is to economize on words in order to say the most with the least. So, in order to get full credit, don’t fall victim to the temptation to fidget with the format.

Like any good paper in the social sciences, your paper should have a clear thesis (main point or assertion of the paper), have well thought-out supporting arguments and evidence for those arguments. It should be clearly organized (signposting) and be written succinctly. This means that you should provide a very brief introduction stating your thesis and how you are going to address it. It is important that you can, if possible, recognize and anticipate counter-arguments—though the size of this paper may preclude this from entering into your paper. Most importantly, it is essential that you answer the question, rather than skirting the issue. This assignment is not intended to simply be an exercise in summarizing what you have read, but rather it allows you to exhibit that you have thought thoroughly about the issues and the questions, and can make an authoritative and persuasive response.

The micro-paper should have a cover sheet stapled to the front that includes your name, title, and a paragraph on your honest impressions of the writing experience and product. This should also save you space, so that your two-page assignment can be two full pages, not cluttered with titles and other stuff. The draft of the micro-paper will be due in class on Tuesday, February 12, and will be worth 10% of your final course grade.
Revision of Micro-Paper (10%)

Any course in writing is necessarily a course in re-writing. Therefore, after receiving the comments from the first draft of the micro-paper, you will be expected to revise the paper to address such criticisms and deficiencies. The idea here is to be able to accept and incorporate constructive criticism into your writing to make a fundamentally better final product. This does not mean just making cosmetic changes! I want to see that you can re-structure arguments and paragraphs for their effectiveness; re-formulate ideas that may not have been in line with your argument; clarify ambiguous points; re-write sentences that may be awkward or confusing, and then make cosmetic changes. That said, the end result does not have to be a completely different paper, but rather a better paper.

The same formatting standards apply as with the first draft in terms of length, font size, spacing, margins and so on. You should again add a cover sheet—this time with your reflections and responses to the re-writing process. So that I can more easily judge your progress on the re-write, I will have made a photocopy of your previous draft, along with comments. The successful paper will be one that not only meets the criteria mentioned earlier, it will be a paper that is far and away better than the previous draft. The re-write of the micro-paper will be due on Thursday, February 21, and is worth 10% of your final course grade.

Mid-Term Exam: (20%)

A mid-term exam will be held in class on Thursday, February 28, and is worth 20% of the course grade. Lecture and discussion materials, as well as topics covered in the assigned readings—whether addressed directly in class or not—are all fair game for questions.

Term Paper (20%)

In part to fulfill the standards of a writing-enriched course, there will be a term paper of 10-12 pages due during the next-to-last week of class, Tuesday, April 21. This paper will be written on an open-ended question I will provide to you which (hopefully) synthesizes your insights and perspectives along with the information learned in this class into a persuasive argument about the enduring legacies of the Soviet Union on the post-Soviet political landscape. A good paper will be both persuasive and informative—meaning that not only should the facts be correct, but also your argument should be comprehensive (meaningfully addressing potential rival explanations), balanced, well-organized and well-written, making appropriate use of a wide range of supporting information and evidence.

Final Exam (25%)

In addition to the term paper, there will be a final exam during finals week: Saturday, May 4, 2013, 8:00--10:30am. The final will be similar to the midterm exam in terms of structure, and will focus predominantly on the information covered since the midterm.

Research Paper Option (45%)

For those with a keen interest in studying a particular question or topic relevant to the politics of the former Soviet Union, I also offer the option to undertake a longer research project, under my advisement, of about 18-20 pages in lieu of the term paper and final exam. The research paper would be due during the final exam period: Saturday, May 4, 2013, 8:00--10:30am. 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

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 Thursday, March 14. Broad 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 Tuesday, April 2. 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 and term paper, without any sort of penalty.

**Class Policies:**

**Grading**
All assignments will be assessed 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 course 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 me 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**
Cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, assisting dishonesty and other breaches of the University Policy on Academic Integrity, as outlined in the Enchiridion (http://www.villanova.edu/vpaa/office/studentservices/policies/integrity/), are serious business. Not only are such activities contrary to your entire purpose in attending college and official university policy, but are also a personal affront to me as an instructor and competent human being. So, consider this your prior warning: if blatant breaches of academic integrity are discovered, I will prosecute them to the fullest extent.
Fortunately, when it comes to plagiarism, the Villanova Writing Center has a handy guide to effective citation and how to avoid plagiarism (http://www.villanova.edu/artsci/vcle/writingcenter/guide/citing.htm), I suggest looking it over. If you have additional citation, formatting, or any other questions throughout the semester, please feel free to discuss them with me so that we might clarify any ambiguities and prevent ethical problems before they develop.

The Penalties for Infractions of Academic Integrity 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, an official report of the transgression will be made to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Board of Academic Integrity, and you will be required to complete a program on academic ethics. If a student is twice found responsible for such transgressions of academic integrity, the Dean may expel or suspend you from the University. So, long story short: don’t waste my time, don’t waste your time—just don’t do it. Again, 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 me 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 more effective study groups, as they have since well before the advent of the internet.

**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 course 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 WebCT course site: [https://elearning.villanova.edu/webct](https://elearning.villanova.edu/webct).

**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](http://www.moscowtimes.ru))
4. Russia Today ([www.russiatoday.com](http://www.russiatoday.com))
7. Anatoly Karlin’s “Da Russophile” Blog ([http://darussophile.com](http://darussophile.com))
8. Sean Guillory’s Russia Blog ([http://seansrussiablog.org](http://seansrussiablog.org))
**Assigned Readings:**
The following books are available for purchase at the Villanova University Shop, as well as through online retailers. Just be aware that ordering books online may be a great way to save money, but that must be balanced by the risk that the books may not arrive in a timely manner, which may in turn put you behind in your studies.


In addition to these books, there are a large number of **required** readings (articles and book chapters) that will be posted electronically through the course site on WebCT (https://elearning.villanova.edu/webct). These readings should be read before the appropriate class session, and should be considered fair game for examination purposes. Additional recommended readings will also be posted online for those with an interest in additional reading for a more nuanced understanding of the various topics and themes discussed throughout the semester. All readings marked “required” should be read before the appropriate class session, and should be considered fair game for examination purposes. Recommended readings will also be posted online for those with an interest in additional reading for a more nuanced understanding of the various topics discussed throughout the semester.

**Course Outline and Topics:**

- ★ = Reading from assigned books.
- ☭ = Reading from online reserves.

**Week 1: Course Introduction**

**Tuesday, January 15: Why Vodka Matters**

*Required Readings:*

**Thursday, January 17: The “Greats” of Imperial Russia**

*Required Readings:*
- ★ Schrad, Mark Lawrence. *Vodka Politics*, Chapter 3: “Cruel Liquor–Ivan the Terrible and Alcohol in the Muscovite Court.”
- ★ Schrad, Mark Lawrence. *Vodka Politics*, Chapter 4: “The Weird World of Peter the Great.”

**Week 2: Pre-revolutionary Russia**

**Tuesday, January 22: Deep Roots**

*Required Readings:*
Thursday, January 24: The Imperial System Strained — **In-Class Geography Quiz**

**Required Readings:**
- ★ Schrad, Mark Lawrence. *Vodka Politics*, Chapter 12: “Nicholas the Drunk, Nicholas the Sober.”

**Week 3: War and Revolution and War and Revolution and War and Famine and War**

**Tuesday, January 29: Lenin and the Bolsheviks**

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Readings:**

**Thursday, January 31: NEP**

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Readings:**

**Week 4: The Horrors of Stalinism**

**Tuesday, February 5: The Rise of Stalin**

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Readings:**

**Thursday, February 7: Totalitarianism and War**

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Readings:**
Week 5: The Soviet Gilded Age

Tuesday, February 12: Khrushchev and De-Stalinization — Micro-Paper Due (First Draft)

Required Readings:
★ Schrad, Mark Lawrence. Vodka Politics, Chapter 16: “Vodka and Dissent in the Soviet Union.”

Recommended Readings:

Thursday, February 14: Brezhnev and Zastoi

Required Readings:
★ Schrad, Mark Lawrence. Vodka Politics, Chapter 17: “Gorbachev and the (Vodka) Politics of Reform.”

Recommended Readings:

Week 6: Gorbachev and the Dilemmas of Reform

Tuesday, February 19: Communism Reformed?

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Thursday, February 21: The Collapse — Micro-Paper Due (Final Draft)

Required Readings:
★ Schrad, Mark Lawrence. Vodka Politics, Chapter 18: “How Vodka Politics Killed the USSR, and Why That’s Not Funny.”

Recommended Readings:
☞ Aron, Leon, “Everything You Think You Know About the Collapse of the Soviet Union is Wrong,” Foreign Policy, Vol. 187 (July/August 2011), pp. 64-70.
Week 7: The Sun Sets on the Soviet Union
Tuesday, February 26: 1991
Required Readings:

Thursday, February 28: — MIDTERM EXAM

Week 8: Mid-semester break (No class.)
Tuesday, March 5 and Thursday, March 7

Week 9: Into the Abyss: Boris Yeltsin and the Challenges of the Quadruple Transition
Tuesday, March 12: Yeltsin and the CIS
Required Readings:
Recommended Readings:

Thursday, March 14: The Challenges of Political Transformation
Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Week 10: Economic Transition
Tuesday, March 19: Confronting the Communist Legacy
Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:
Thursday, March 21: Shock Therapy vs. Gradualism

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Week 11: Chechnya and Federalism in the Russia

Tuesday, March 26: Devolution to Recentralization

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Thursday, March 28: (No Class--Easter Recess!)
Week 12: Environmental and Health Challenges

Tuesday, April 2: The Environment — Outline & Bibliography Due for Research Option

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Thursday, April 4: Health and Demographic Challenges

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:

Week 13: Putinism
Tuesday, April 9: The Rise of Vladimir Putin

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Thursday, April 11: Democracy? Dictatorship? Understanding the Political System

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Week 14: Medvedev and the Dual Leadership
Tuesday, April 16: The Anointed Successor

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Thursday, April 18: A New Path?

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:
Week 15: Contemporary Challenges

Tuesday, April 23: Corruption and the Rule of Law

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Thursday, April 25: Foreign Policy Challenges

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:
Week 16: Return to Putin--What’s Next?

Tuesday, April 30 (No Class--follows a Friday schedule.)

Thursday, May 2

Required Readings:


**Final Exam: Saturday, May 4, 2013, 8:00--10:30am**