“How can we be more democratic than we really are?” –Vladislav Surkov

“Both optimists and pessimists will find arguments to support their point of view on Russia. Both will be right—and wrong.” –Lilia Shevtsova

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Russia is caught between two worlds. One, oppressive and autocratic, is rooted in the country’s tsarist and Soviet pasts. The other, liberal and democratic, provides an alternative vision of Russia’s future, bringing with it radically different conceptions of leadership, legitimacy, and accountability. This conflict between old and new lies at the heart of contemporary Russian politics. An understanding of Russian politics today, however, requires close consideration of the country’s communist past, especially the last two decades of Soviet rule. Only after completing this survey will we turn our full attention to the politics of the post-communist era. Although some aspects of today’s Russia seem to resemble the Soviet past, much has changed in the country since the USSR’s dissolution, making a complete return to Soviet-era practices unlikely. The ongoing battle between the old world and the new, however, means that the eventual consolidation of liberal democracy in Russia still remains a distant prospect. Understanding the nature of this conflict between the old and the new, beginning with efforts to transform the Soviet system nearly thirty years ago, is the primary aim of this course.

REQUIRED READINGS FOR PURCHASE


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your grade for the course will be based on the following:

* Thought-piece papers (4) 50% (200 points)
* Midterm exam 25% (100 points)
* Final exam 25% (100 points)

Total: 100% (400 points)

ASSIGNMENTS

Exams: Each exam will draw upon information from the required readings, course lectures, and discussions.
The midterm will be given **in class, Friday, October 25.**
The final exam will be given at its scheduled time, **Wednesday, December 18, 8:30-11:00 am.** This exam is cumulative. Please note that December 18th is the last day of exams. **Plan for this now.**

**Thought-piece papers:** You will write four thought-piece papers during the term on topics assigned by the instructor. The purpose of these assignments is to help you gain a mastery of the readings and to get you thinking about the nature of political change in Russia. You will receive your topics two weeks before each paper is due. Rely on the course’s readings, lectures, and documentaries in crafting your responses. Your papers should be well written and properly cited, following APSA style (see the APSA style guides on Moodle). Poorly written and/or improperly cited work will earn a lower grade on the assignment. Length: **1000 to 1200 words.**

Please submit your thought pieces as Word documents via e-mail by **11:30 p.m.** on the dates they are due (see schedule below). **Late thought-piece papers will be penalized a letter grade for each day they are late.** You are responsible for making sure your papers are submitted on time. Double check to make sure you have attached the paper to your e-mail. Make sure that it can be opened and read. E-mails without your attached paper (as well as e-mails with attachments that cannot be opened and read) do not qualify as papers having been submitted on time. In such instances the late-grade penalty will apply.

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**A note on plagiarism:** When you borrow someone else’s ideas (which we all do when writing papers; this is part of the creative process), you are required to use in-text citations, giving credit where credit is due. **Presenting another author’s work as your own is plagiarism.** This includes paraphrasing another author’s ideas without attribution. Plagiarism is the academic equivalent of stealing and will result in severe penalties up to and including a failing grade for the course as well as university disciplinary action. If you have any doubts at any time as to when you should cite someone else’s work, please see me. I will be happy to provide guidance. See also the university’s pamphlet, “Plagiarism & Academic Integrity” ([http://www2.furman.edu/sites/integrity/students/Documents/plagiarism.pdf](http://www2.furman.edu/sites/integrity/students/Documents/plagiarism.pdf)) for additional guidance. I have also included materials on Moodle that provide guidance on when and how to cite sources.

**Class attendance:** Expected. If missing class or coming late to class becomes a problem, offenders can expect severe penalties that will affect their overall course grade.

**Electronic devices in class:** As a courtesy to the class, cell phones and other PDAs should be turned off and put away as soon as students walk into the classroom. Before exams, students should put their cell phones and other PDAs in their book bags or purses. If I see a cell phone or PDA in a student’s hand or on a desktop once an exam begins (regardless of the reason), the student will fail the exam.

Also, please note that audio or video recording of class lectures and discussions is prohibited.

**Please note:** Failure to complete any of the assignments listed above for reasons other than providential will result in an “F” for the course.

**Disabilities Services at Furman:** Students with disabilities who think they may need an accommodation in this course should **immediately** make an appointment to see Gina Parris, Furman’s Disability Services
Coordinator. Her office is in room 002, in the lower level of the Earle Infirmary. She may be reached at 294-2320.

**A note on classroom decorum:** Once class begins no one is to leave the room until class ends, except for a medical emergency. This includes times when we are viewing documentaries or any other multimedia materials. Failure to abide by this standard will mean a lower grade in the course.

**COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS**

**Part 1—Introduction**

A. *Setting the Stage*
   * Shaw, Denis J. B. “Geographic Preface.” [Moodle]
   * Marks, Steven G. “The Historical Context.” [Moodle]

B. *Russian Politics: the Challenge of Change and the Challenge of Leadership*
   * Kotkin, preface and introduction.
   * Breslauer, preface and chapter 1.

**Part 2—The Soviet Experience**

A. *Pathologies of the Soviet System (political, economic, and social)*
   * Kotkin, chapter 1.
   * Millar, James R. “The Economy.” [Moodle]

B. *Enter Gorbachev: the socialist ideal vs. Soviet reality*
   * Kotkin, chapter 2.
   * Breslauer, chapters 2-3.

C. *Reform, Rebellion, and Reaction*
   * Kotkin, chapters 3-4.
   * Breslauer, chapters 4-6, 13.

D. *Explaining the Soviet Union’s Peaceful Demise*
   * Kotkin, chapter 7.

**Part 3—Post-Soviet Russia**

A. *High Hopes and Harsh Realities: politics and reform in the “new” Russia*
   * Bressler, Michael L. “Politics,” 91-105.
   * Kotkin, chapters 5-6.
   * Breslauer, chapters 7-8.

B. *Yeltsin’s Conditional Democracy: struggling for power and manipulating processes*
   * Breslauer, chapters 9-12, and 14.
* Yeltsin’s resignation speech. [Moodle]

**Part 4—Political Power and Politics Under Putin**

**A. Taking Control of the System: the search for stability and identity**
* Bressler, Michael L. “Politics,” 105-127. [Moodle]
* Kotkin, epilogue (“The End of the Collapse”).

**B. Legislatures, Parties, and Elections**

**C. Russian Society: attitudes and beliefs**

**D. Civil Society and the State**
PSC 222 (Fall 2013) Course Schedule:

Week 1 (August 27-31)  Classes begin:  Tuesday, August 27

Week 2 (September 1-7)
   No class Monday, September 2

Week 3 (September 8-14)

Week 4 (September 15-21)
   Thought-piece 1  due 11:30 p.m., Thursday, September 19

Week 5 (September 22-28)

Week 6 (September 29-October 5)
   Thought-piece 2  due 11:30 p.m., Thursday, October 3

Week 7 (October 6-12)

Week 8 (October 13-19)
   No class Monday, October 14

Week 9 (October 20-26)
   Midterm exam, Friday, October 25

Week 10 (October 27-November 2)

Week 11 (November 3-9)

Week 12 (November 10-16)
   Briefing 3  due 11:30 p.m., Thursday, November 14

Week 13 (November 17-23)

Week 14 (November 24-30)
   No class Wednesday, November 27 and Friday, November 29

Week 15 (December 1-7)
   Briefing 4  due 11:30 p.m., Thursday, December 5

Week 16 (December 8-14)  Classes end:  Tuesday, December 10

Final exam:  Wednesday, December 18, 8:30-11:00 am