PSC 381.01: Post Soviet-Russia

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The Politics of Post-Soviet Russia in a Comparative Context

"Democracy cannot be exported to some other place. This must be a product of internal domestic development in a society." — Russian President Vladimir Putin

"I looked the man in the eye. I found him to be very straight forward and trustworthy ... I was able to get a sense of his soul." — George W. Bush on Vladimir Putin

COURSE DESCRIPTION

More than 15 years after the sudden and peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union, scholars continue to disagree about its causes and the long-term consequences for its 15 successor states. Nowhere are these consequences felt more profoundly than in Russia, where birthrates and male life expectancy have suffered sharp declines and where the early promise of its transition to democracy is disappearing. This course explores the government and politics of post-Soviet Russia in an attempt to evaluate the state of Russian democracy under Russian President Vladimir Putin. It begins with an examination of Russia's Communist past, then delves into the current state of affairs in Russia, and finally concludes with an examination of the political transitions in other post-Soviet countries. Ultimately, this course will develop students' ability to evaluate the success or failure of Russian democracy since 1992 in comparison to other post-Soviet states.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, students should:

- Have a knowledge of the history and institutions of Russia and other post-Soviet regions.
- Understand different theoretical approaches to explaining post-Soviet political development.
- Understand the issues and challenges confronting modern Russia.
- Be able to evaluate Russian democracy using different normative standards.

TEXTBOOK

There are two required textbooks for this course available for purchase at the UC Bookstore:


Any additional readings will be made available on electronic reserve at the library and on Blackboard.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Students have the responsibility to attend class regularly and complete all assigned readings before coming to class.
2. Students have the responsibility to inform the instructor beforehand of any reasons why they are unable to attend class or complete an assignment on time.
3. Students have the responsibility to complete all assignments by the deadline given by the instructor.
4. Students have the responsibility to complete the requirements of this course within the time framework of the semester. University policy on incompletes will be adhered to strictly.
Instructor Responsibilities

1. The instructor will provide an environment where all students' opinions are encouraged and respected.
2. The instructor will provide information in a way that is accessible and relevant to students.
3. The instructor will design assessments that accurately reflect the objectives of this course.
4. The instructor will make all necessary and reasonable efforts to facilitate student learning.
5. The instructor will provide opportunities for students to anonymously provide feedback regarding his success at meeting these responsibilities.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICY

The University requires that this statement be placed on all syllabi at the University of Montana:

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University.

All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at: http://www.umt.edu/SANPS/index.cfm/page/1321.

STATEMENT ON DISABILITIES:

I strongly encourage students with documented disabilities to discuss with me appropriate accommodations that might be helpful to them. However, I am not qualified to make an assessment of your need for an accommodation or what accommodations are needed. If you have a disability and feel you need accommodations in this course, you must present a letter to me from Disability Services for Students (DSS), Lommasson Center 154 (243-2243), indicating the existence of a disability and the suggested accommodations.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

This is primarily a lecture course. Lecture slides and outlines, and other course material will be available from the University's Blackboard shell for this course (http://coursware.umt.edu).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Films

Students are responsible for viewing two films during the course of the semester, *Burnt by the Sun* (1995) and *Brother* (*Brat*, 1997). Students will have an opportunity to view both films during an evening screening at a time to be determined later. Students may also view the films on their own in the library. A question comparing the two films in the context of the class will appear on the final exam.

Question Time

We will frequently hold a Q&A session in which students submit questions for a class discussion. Questions must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. the class day prior to each “question time.” The class will rate the questions and then discuss the answers to the top-rated questions. In addition, students will be sent an article via email on a current event related to the course. The class will discuss how the material covered in the course helps to explain the events in the article. Complete guidelines for questions are posted on Blackboard.

Final Paper

The final assignment for this course is a 6-10 page paper on the problems facing modern Russia. Students will assume the role of Putin's successor and draft a “State of the Russian Federation Address.” In their address, students will have to identify the three most significant problems facing Russia, explain why these are the most pressing issues faced by Russia, and explain what their solutions are to these issues. The full guidelines for the final paper will be distributed in class. The papers will be due in class Friday, May 4.

Student Assessment and Exams

Students will be assessed on how well they are achieving the four course objectives. The first midterm will assess your knowledge of Russian history and the different theories we will use to understand post-soviet
political development. The second midterm will assess your knowledge of political institutions in post-Soviet Russia and your understanding of the challenges faced by post-Soviet Russia. The final exam will assess your ability to evaluate Russian democracy in comparison to other post-Soviet states.

**FINAL GRADE**

The final grade will be based on a 1000 points distributed across five different areas as follows:

- Participation: 100 points [Including Question Time and in-class participation]
- First Midterm: 200 points
- Second Midterm: 200 points
- Final Paper: 300 points
- Final Exam: 200 points

The plus/minus grading system will be used based on the following percent scale:

- 93-100 A
- 90-93 A-
- 87-90 B+
- 83-87 B
- 80-83 B-
- 77-80 C+
- 73-77 C
- 70-73 C-
- 67-70 D+
- 63-67 D
- 60-63 D-
- 0-60 F

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

I reserve the right to make changes to this schedule as the semester develops.

I. Introduction

January 22 Introduction Hesli, Chapter 2, pgs. 1-12
January 24 Theories of Democratization
January 26 Historical-Cultural Theories
January 29 Library Research Strategies (No Class) Blackboard Tutorial — No Class

II. The History of the Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union

Three Ideologies

January 31 Marxism, Leninism, and Stalinism Hesli, Chapter 2, pgs. 13-38
February 2 Question Time
The Legacy of the Past
February 5 A Brief History of Russia Hesli, Chapter 4, pgs. 39-73
February 7 Question Time Film: Burnt by the Sun
February 9 First Midterm

III. Politics and Government in the Russian Federation

Nationalism in the Russian Federation

February 12 The Russian Federation Hesli, Chapter 4, pgs. 74-107
February 14 Putin and the Regions Hesli, Chapter 4, pgs. 108-111
February 16 Question Time
February 19 President’s Day (No Class) Herspring, Chapter 5

Political Culture and Democracy in the Russian Federation

February 21 Russian Political Culture Hesli, Chapter 5, pgs. 111-122
February 23 Putin’s Leadership Herspring, Chapter 2
February 26  Putin and Russian Democracy  Herspring, Chapter 3
February 28  Question Time

  Russia’s Institutions
March 2  Russia’s Governing Institutions  Hesli, Chapter 6, pgs. 123-153
March 5  Russian Political Parties  Hesli, Chapter 8, pgs. 184-207
March 7  Putin and the Opposition  Herspring, Chapter 4
March 9  No Class

  The Russian People
March 12  Russian Political Participation and Public Opinion  Hesli, Chapter 7, pgs. 154-183
March 14  Russian Civil Society  Hesli, Chapter 9, pgs. 208-221
March 16  Question Time

  The Russian Economy and Public Policy
March 19  Public Policy Issues in Russia  Hesli, Chapter 10, pgs. 232-264
March 21  Putin and the Economy  Herspring, Chapter 7
March 23  Question Time

Film: Brother
March 25-30  Spring Break
April 2  Second Midterm

IV. Politics and Government in the Post-Soviet Realm

  The Baltic States
April 4  Government and Politics of Lithuania  Hesli, Chapter 11, pgs. 265-307
April 6  Question Time

  The Slavic States
April 9  Government and Politics of Ukraine  Hesli, Chapter 12, pgs. 308-343
April 11  Evaluating the Success of the Orange Revolution
April 13  Question Time

  The Transcaucasian Region
April 16  Government and Politics of Georgia  Hesli, Chapter 13, pgs. 344-378
April 18  Evaluating the Success of the Rose Revolution
April 20  Question Time

  Central Asian Republics
April 23  Government and Politics of Uzbekistan  Hesli, Chapter 14, pgs. 379-412
April 25  The Cult of Personality in Turkmenistan
April 27  Question Time

V. Conclusion
April 30  Putin and the World  Herspring, Chapter 9
May 2  Concluding Thoughts and Question Time  Hesli, Epilogue
Herspring, Chapter 11

May 4  “Snow Day” — An extra day for when we get behind.  Final Papers Due

Final Exam May 7, 2006 10:10-12:10 PM