**POLS 459: “Government and Politics of Post-Communist Countries”**

CRN: 51030-001

Fall Semester 2015

Class meets: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 1:25 pm - 2:15 pm., Bailey Education Complex 202

**Instructor:** Dr. Oleg Manaev, Professor of Sociology

Office: McClung Tower 1014, room 1016

Office hours: 3.00 pm – 4.30 pm

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***“Russia is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma”***

***Sir Winston Churchill, radio speech, 1939***

*Scared by a century of upheaval and radical change, Russia remains a paradox. Petrodollars fuel an economy boom, national projects target health care, education and housing, while TB and HIV/Aids rates skyrocket and a third of the population sinks into poverty. Casinos and sushi bars dot the urban landscape as family life deteriorates, the population declines and rural communities die. Corruption abounds as contract killers stalk opposition politicians, journalists and human rights advocates. “Managed democracy” has become the political mantra of Vladimir Putin, possible the most powerful Russian leader since Stalin ruled the USSR from 1928-1953. Crimea annexation, bloody conflict at the Eastern Ukraine, and aggressive promotion of “The Russian World” challenged the world international order, strengthening a new rise of revanchist and economic crisis in Russia.*

**Course Description:**

The course provides an introduction to the issues that arise in the analysis of the politics of the Post-Communist Countries mainly world’s largest country – Russia, and its transition from communist to Post-Communist rule. Why Russia's and Post-Communist countries politics matters? What is the distribution of power in the contemporary political system? How significant are the checks on central power that are represented by elections, political parties, and ‘civil society’? Why authoritarianism in Post-Communist Countries rise again? How to deal with Russia and other post-Communist countries from US Perspective? Following a brief review of the country’s history under Soviet rule, the course will focus on the dramatic changes of the last 25 years and how Russia has attempted to democratize its political system and create an economy based on free markets. The course provides a background unto the major political and economic events of recent years – the Soviet collapse, attempts at economic reform, foreign policy, parliamentary and presidential elections, and political crisis. The course also analyzes the problems of Russia’s transition using concepts of comparative politics, international politics, and political economy. Russian control/influence over its Eastern European neighbors will be considered throughout the course.

**Course aims and objectives**

**Aims:** The course’s main aim is to provide students with a critical understanding of:

* The socio-political processes which led to the demise of the world Communist System and the Soviet Union
* The nature of post-Soviet political change and the evolution of the Russian state
* The major institutions of the Russian state (e.g. Presidency, Duma, Federation Council, judiciary)
* Political and civil society (e.g. parties, ‘clans’, interest groups)
* The role of these institutions and actors in the formulation of domestic and foreign policy (particularly as regards the other post-Soviet states)

**Objectives:** By the end of the course, it is expected that students will be able to:

* To have a good understanding of the reasons for the demise of the Soviet system
* To have a good understanding of the main features of the contemporary Russian political system
* To have a good understanding of the sources of stability and change in the contemporary Russian political system
* To have a good understanding of the ways in which political scientists have conceptualized the contemporary Russian political system
* To have a good understanding of how to deal with Russia and other post-Communist countries from US Perspective.

**Assessment**

Students will be assessed on the basis of unseen examination, and will also be expected to complete two term papers of approximately 2500-3000 words. The mid-term paper will be due not later than the Fall Break *Wednesday October 14, 2015*. The final paper will be due not later than the class end *Monday December 1, 2015.* Papers topics should be chosen from the topics that will be covered in the weekly classes, including the questions considered in class discussions/small group exercises; or may be on other topics, with the agreement of the course tutor. A final exam will be given during the regular exam time (December 4).

Regular participation is a requirement of the course and will also be taken into account when the grade for the course is otherwise in doubt. A formal record of attendance will be taken each week and passed to the undergraduate office.

**University/College/Departmental Curricular Requirements Met.** This class supports the undergraduate major in Political Science

**Program-level learning objectives that the course supports:**

BA program: Students will demonstrate basic knowledge of, understanding of and the ability to apply political science principles.

**Required Textbook**: White, Stephen. Understanding Russian Politics. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

**Required instructional technology:** None.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

All texts listed in the reading lists are available in the library or accessible as e-journals. These lists are indicative not exhaustive and you may wish to conduct further independent research for mid-term and final essays and final exam. You may find the following journals particularly useful for sourcing additional material:

*• Communist and Post-Communist Studies*

*• Europe-Asia Studies*

*• Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* (now *East European Politics)*

*• Post-Soviet Affairs*

*• Demokratizatsiya: the journal of post-Soviet democratization*

*• Problems of Post-Communism*

*• East European Politics & Societies*

Stratfor (US), <https://www.stratfor.com/regions/former-soviet-union>

Pew Research (US), <http://www.pewglobal.org/>

Gallup (US). <http://www.gallup.com/topic/europe.aspx>

Levada Center (Russia), <http://www.levada.ru/eng/>

Wciom (Russia), <http://www.wciom.com/>

IISEPS (Belarus), <http://www.iiseps.org/lang/en>

Carnegie Moscow Center, *Pro et Contra*, <http://carnegie.ru/proetcontra/?fa=archive&lang=en>

Carnegie Moscow Center, *New Eastern Europe*, <http://carnegie.ru/issues/?fa=59>

Carnegie Moscow Center, *Putinology*, <http://carnegie.ru/issues/?fa=754>

Russia Votes, <http://www.russiavotes.org/>

Eurasianet, http://www.eurasianet.org/

The Jamestown Monitor (US), http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/

Johnson’s Russia List (US), http://www.russialist.org/

The large and rapidly changing world of internet sources is perhaps best approached through the portals that are maintained by larger academic institutions, such as British Library in London (<http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/webres/slavonicinternetresources/slavoniclinks.html>), the Bodleian Library at Oxford ([www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/slavonic/guide.htm](http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/slavonic/guide.htm)), or the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London (<http://www.ssees.ucl.ac.uk/dirctory.htm>). The daily paper Moscow Times is lively, independent, and freely available on its date of publication ([www.themoscowtimes.com](http://www.themoscowtimes.com)). The Russian State Statistical Committee provides a mass of data (in English as well as Russian) at [www.gks/ru/eng/](http://www.gks/ru/eng/). Comprehensive data on social questions of all kinds, including demography, income distribution and crime, are available in English at the website of the State Statistical Committee [www.gks.ru/eng](http://www.gks.ru/eng). The Human Development Report is available online at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/search/node/Russia>, it covers living standards, health and income, and develops a ‘gender empowerment index’. The widely used Freedom House scoring system may be consulted online at <https://freedomhouse.org/country/russia#.Vcpemk2Dpdg>. See also the annual reports of Amnesty International ([www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)), and of Human Rights Watch ([www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)). *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* provides summaries of the main news stories from the region if you sign up to their mailing list, see <http://www.rferl.org/subscribe.html>.

**Course time frame:**

This course is taught through one 50 minute lecture, and two 50 minutes seminars – one watching documentaries/films/photos and talks by guest speakers, another class discussions/small group exercises – per week:

* Lectures on Mondays
* Watching documentaries/films/photos or talks by guest speakers on Wednesdays
* Class discussions/Small group exercises on Fridays

Questions/Issues for class discussions will be provided a week prior to debates. Additional reading for class discussions will be provided at previous week.

**Guest speakers**

Prof. Michael Fitzgerald, Department of Political Science, UTK

#### Prof. Natalia Pervukhina, Department of Modern Foreign Languages & Literatures, UTK

Marina Bogdanovich, Belarusian politician and Russian political technologist

Prof. Grigory Ioffe, Department of Geospatial Science, University of Redford, VA

Natalie Rice, Graduate Research Assistant, Institute for Nuclear Security, UTK

Prof. Sam Swan, Director for Internationalization and Outreach, School for Journalism and Electronic Media, UTK

**Student Assessment and Evaluation Methods**. Grades will be based on the following elements:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Regular attendance and participation | 25% |
| Mid-term paper | 25% |
| Final paper | 25% |
| Final exam | 25% |

**Attendance and Participation.** Students are expected to attend every class session and to come prepared to discuss the assigned readings and cases. The roll will be taken each session and attendance will be evaluated based on the proportion of classes missed. That score will then be adjusted up or down (+/- 10 percentage points to a maximum of 100%) based on class participation. If students must miss class, they should email the instructor immediately and provide an explanation for the absence. Absences will be excused only for legitimate medical, legal or emergency reasons.

**Examination Policy:** There will be one examination, a mid-term and final papers (see course schedule for dates). Exams will contain both closed-ended and open-ended items. Make-up exams will not be provided. All students must take the final exam. Failure to do so for any reason will result in a grade of “Incomplete.”

**Grading Scale**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A | 93 – 100% |
| A - | 90 – 92% |
| B + | 87 – 89% |
| B | 83 – 86% |
| B - | 80 – 82% |
| C + | 77 – 79% |
| C | 73 – 76% |
| C - | 70 – 72% |
| D + | 67 – 69% |
| D | 63 – 66% |
| D - | 60 – 62% |
| F | Less than 60% |

**Course Calendar with Chapter and Assignments:**

Week 1 August 19 Introduction

August 21 Why Russia's and Post-Communist countries politics matters

Readings:

[Peter Pomerantsev](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/8035579.Peter_Pomerantsev). Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia. Public Affairs, 2014, pp. 239

<http://www.amazon.com/Nothing-Is-True-Everything-Possible/dp/1610394550>

# [Peter Pomerantsev](http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/users/peter-pomerantsev). Yes, Russia Matters: Putin’s Guerrilla Strategy.

# *World Affairs*, October 2014

# <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/yes-russia-matters-putin%E2%80%99s-guerrilla-strategy>

# Freedom in the World 2015. Freedom House Report, 2015

# <https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/01152015_FIW_2015_final.pdf>

# Graham Allison & Robert D. Blackwill. 10 reasons why Russia still matters. *Politico*, October 2011, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1011/67178.html>

# James F. Collins, Matthew Rojansky. [Why Russia Matters](http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/08/18/why-russia-matters/). Ten reasons why Washington must engage Moscow. *Foreign Policy*, August 2010, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/08/18/why-russia-matters/>

# Week 2 August 24 The Rise and fall of the World Communist System: 1917-1991

# Readings: Archie Brown. The Rise and Fall of Communism. 2009, <http://www.usislam.org/pdf/The-Rise-and-Fall-of-Communism.pdf> pp. 9-101, 481-619

# Nations in Transit- 2015. Freedom House report, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/nations-transit-2015>

August 26 Documentary/Film/Photos tbc

August 28 Class discussion/Small group exercise

Week 3 August 31 Gorbachev and Perestroika

Readings: White, Stephen. Understanding Russian Politics, pp. 1-26

September 2The Political Parties

Readings: White, Stephen. Understanding Russian Politics, pp. 42-62

September 4 Documentary/Film/Photos tbc

Week 4 September 7 Labor day – no classes

September 9Class discussion/Small group exercise (on Gorbachev and Perestroika)

September 12 Class discussion/Small group exercise (on The Political Parties)

Week 5 September 14 Elections and the Electoral Process

Readings: White, Stephen. Understanding Russian Politics, pp. 27-42 and 62-69

September 16 Guest speaker: Marina Bogdanovich

September 18 Class discussion/Small group exercise

Week 6 September 21 The Presidential Executive

Readings: White, Stephen. Understanding Russian Politics, Ch. 3

September 23 Documentary/Film/Photos tbc

September 25 Class discussion/Small group exercise

Week 7 September 28 The Politics of Economic Management

Readings: White, Stephen. Understanding Russian Politics, Ch. 4

September 30 Documentary/Film/Photos tbc

October 2 Class discussion/Small group exercise

Week 8 October 5 Rich and Poor in Post-Communist Russia

Readings: White, Stephen. Understanding Russian Politics, pp. 163-191

October 7 Guest speaker: Prof. Natalia Pervukhina

October 9 Class discussion/Small group exercise

Week 9 October 12 Patterns of Public Opinion

Readings: Understanding Russian Politics, pp. 219-236

October 14 Class discussion/Small group exercise

**Mid-term paper due**

October 16 Fall break – no classes

Week 10 October 19 Media and Communication Evolution

Readings: Understanding Russian Politics, pp. 236-250

October 21 Guest Speaker: Dr. Sam Swan

October 23 Class discussion/Small group exercise

Week 11 October 26 Protest and Opposition

Readings: Vladimir Gel’man. Political Opposition in Russia: A Troubled Transformation, Europe-Asia Studies, [Volume 67](http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ceas20?open=67#vol_67), [Issue 2](http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/ceas20/67/2), 2015, pp. 177-191 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ap6CdMuvzOs>

# Vladimir Gel’man. The Troubled Rebirth of Political Opposition in Russia. *PONARS Eurasia Policy* Memo No. 341 September 2014

# <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Pepm341_Gelman_September2014.pdf>

# The Huffington Post, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/russia-anti-putin-protests/>

# Vladimir Gel’man. Political Opposition in Russia: A Dying Species? Post-Soviet Affairs, 2005, 21, 3, pp. 226–246 <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.468.4611&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

October 28 Guest Speaker: Natalie Rice

October 30 Class discussion/Small group exercise

Week 12 November 2 Russia and the West

Readings: Understanding Russian Politics, pp. 263-288

November 4 Guest speaker: Prof. Michael Fitzgerald

November 6 Class discussion/Small group exercise

Week 13 November 9 Russia and the Post-Soviet Space

Readings: Understanding Russian Politics, pp. 289-318

November 11 Guest speaker: Prof. Grigory Ioffe

November 13 Class discussion/Small group exercise

Week 14 November 16 The Russian “Transition”

Readings: Understanding Russian Politics, Ch. 8

November 18 Documentary/Film/Photos tbc

November 20 Class discussion/Small group exercise

Week 15 November 23 How to deal with Russia and other post-Communist countries from US Perspective

Readings:

<https://vimeo.com/51904258>

Doing Business in Russia. US Embassy Moscow <http://moscow.usembassy.gov/business-russia.html>

# Western Businesses in Russia, Watchful and Wary. *The New York Times*, March, 2014 <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/08/business/international/western-businesses-in-russia-are-watchful-and-wary.html?_r=1>

November 25 Documentary/Film/Photos tbc

November 27 Thanksgiving – no classes

Week 16 November 30 Class discussion/Small group exercise

December 1 **Final term paper due**

December 4 **Final exam**: 10:15am - 12:15pm

**Electronic Devices** **Prohibited.** The use of cell phones prohibitedduring class is strictly prohibited. Devices should be turned off.

**Academic Integrity**. All rules concerning academic honesty as set out in the current edition of *Hilltopics* will be enforced. Particular attention should be paid to the section on plagiarism. Students are reminded of their obligation to abide by the UTK Honor Code: “An essential feature of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the university, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity.”

**Disabilities that Constrain Learning.** Any student who believes that he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 865-974-6087 in 2227 Dunford Hall to document their eligibility for services. ODS will work with students and faculty to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

**The Student’s Role in Improving Teaching and Learning through Course Assessment.** At UTK, it is our collective responsibility to improve the state of teaching and learning. At the end of the semester, you will be requested to assess aspects of this course through completion of an online questionnaire. You are encouraged to respond to this request as a means of continuing to improve the quality of the UT learning experience.

**University Civility Statement.** Civility is genuine respect and regard for others: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness. Civility enhances academic freedom and integrity, and is a prerequisite to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge in the learning community. Our community consists of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and campus visitors. Community members affect each other’s well-being and have a shared interest in creating and sustaining an environment where all community members and their points of view are valued and respected. Affirming the value of each member of the university community, the campus asks that all its members adhere to the principles of civility and community adopted by the campus: <http://civility.utk.edu/>.

**Communication of Announcements**. Announcements will be sent via e-mail to students’ official UTK e-mail address and/or posted on Blackboard. Reminder: Students are responsible for monitoring their UTK e-mail address account and the course Blackboard site.

**Alteration of this Syllabus.** The instructor reserves the right to revise, alter and/or amend this syllabus, as necessary. Students will be notified by email and/or Blackboard of any such revisions, alterations and/or amendments.