POLS 3123:
The Politics of Russia and Eurasia
Fall 2018
9:30-10:20 am MWF
CLB 114

Dr. Holley E. Hansen  Office Hours: 9am-noon & 2-3pm Th,¹
Murray Hall 203     10:30am-12:30 pm F,
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Course Description
The Soviet Union was a major force in international politics during the 20th Century…until its sudden collapse fractured the region into 15 new countries. Russia remains a regional hegemon with global aspirations, re-emerging as a geopolitical energy power and often dominating this region’s politics. But Eurasia includes 14 other republics who are a highly diverse; they may share a common history, but have followed very distinct paths post-independence, often under the shadow of Russia. From the Baltic Republics (now consolidated democracies and members of the EU and NATO) to the Central Asian states (energy rich but with weakly institutionalized dictatorships), students will gain a better understanding of the major issues and challenges facing this diverse region.

Required Reading
The following book is required for the course, and is available for purchase from the university bookstore:

- Solzhenitsyn, Alexander. (2009 reprint edition). *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.* (listed as “Solzhenitsyn” in the reading list)

All other readings are posted on the course’s webpage. Readings should be done by class time on the day it is assigned.

Students are also encouraged to keep up with recent events by consulting newspapers or news websites that offer detailed coverage of this region. Some good sources include BBC News (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (http://www.rferl.org/), the Moscow Times (http://www.themoscowtimes.com/),² or even Al-Jazeera (http://english.aljazeera.net/).

Class Expectations
This course is NOT...

…easy. Expect to read – A LOT! – and study for quizzes and exams.

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¹ I am one of the volunteers for the Pete’s Pet Posse Therapy Dogs program along with my dog, Cooper. As part of my volunteer activities, Cooper will be present during my Thursday office hours. If you need to meet during this time and would prefer not to have a dog around, just let me know and I will make alternative arrangements.
² Be careful using the Moscow Times, as in recent years, the Russian government has used malicious ads and malware to target their readers.
…a current events course. This is a class about teaching you how to think like a foreign policy/regional analyst, which means we cover a lot of history, theories, and concepts.

…somewhere you get to talk about your feelings. In the social sciences, strong arguments are made with evidence, not opinion or ideology, and we judge the quality of our readings, my lectures, and your work based on what facts we can bring to bear.

I do expect…

…manners. College is a stepping stone to your professional career, and you should conduct yourself as a professional in the classroom. No need for you to wear a suit and tie, but these things will help make the classroom experience more fulfilling for all students:

- No food. Drinks (especially those with caffeine!) are welcome.
- No sleeping in class, and especially, no snoring!
- Cell phones can be distracting to fellow students – please make sure to mute yours and avoid checking your messages during class.
- Keep computer use off the games and/or social networks and on academic content.

…regular attendance. While I do not take daily attendance (see “Participation” in the grading section for more details), you will not do very well in this course if you regularly miss lecture.

…assignments to be completed in a timely manner. Any assignments for the class handed in after the due date will be penalized 1/2 of a letter grade for every day it is late (beginning at the end of class time). Assignments will not be accepted for grading 1 week after the due date.

…academic integrity. Any work submitted by the student must reflect the student’s own work. Plagiarism is theft of another’s work or ideas, and is a violation both of the student handbook and academic ethics. Not only that, it’s a felony that violates US copyright laws.

In case you are wondering, plagiarism includes:
1) Claiming someone else’s work as your own.
2) Copying the exact phrase from another source without giving the author(s) credit.
3) Using data from another source without giving author(s) credit.
4) Failing to put a quotation in quotation marks.
5) Using an idea or concept from an author without giving credit to the source.
6) Giving incorrect information about the citation source.
7) Changing the words or phrasing of the sentence but still keeping the original meaning without giving credit to the source.

From this list, you might notice that most of the time, all it takes to NOT plagiarize is to properly cite and give credit to the people from whom you are borrowing information or ideas. When in doubt, cite it!
For more information, see the OSU Syllabus attachment at the end of this syllabus.

**Grading**

Following university guidelines, our grading scale is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Exceptional &amp; outstanding work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Very good work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Adequate work; superficial grasp on concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Very poor work; poor understanding of the material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 60</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failing; unacceptable work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember, “A” is a rare grade reserved for projects that demonstrate outstanding skill and effort.

Our class work includes:

- **Participation.** I will not be taking attendance, but will grade you for in-class participation. Participation is 20% of your final grade, and it will be divided into the following ways:
  - The first 15%: Participate in our weekly discussions at least once each week. To receive your weekly point, you need to contribute something of substance; one word answers will not net you any points.
  - The remaining 5%: At the end of the semester, I’ll judge the overall quality of your participation. Students who regularly attend the course and actively participate will receive full points here…other students, not so much!

- **Regular reading quizzes.** We’ll be taking 12 short (5 questions, multiple choice) reading quizzes during the semester. You can use flashcards or paper notes while taking the quiz, but NO books and electronics. To cover times when you are sick or unable to attend, I’ll drop your lowest 2 scores – only your top 10 quizzes will count towards your final grade. 10% of the final grade.

- **A final exam.** The exam will feature multiple choice questions from the entire semester, with each quiz contributing at least one question. No makeups will be allowed without a 24-hour prior notice of your absence or a written medical excuse. 10% of final grade.

- **A final paper.** A short (3-4 pages) paper based on the themes from the second half of the semester. The prompt will be given two weeks before your final exam, and the paper will be due the same day as the final. 10% of final grade.

- **Country Specialist Assignments.** Throughout the semester, you will help expand our class information by becoming a country “specialist” in one of the 14 other countries (not Russia) who were once part of the Soviet Union. More details are found on the next page, but to give the basic breakdown of each assignment:

  - **Country History Paper.** A short (3-4 pages) paper describing how the independence period shapes your country today. 10% of your final grade.
2 Country Blog Posts. Students will choose to complete any 2 out of 3 possible blog prompts on your country’s politics or economy, with each blog post no more than 2 pages. 5% of your final grade for each (10% for both).

Country Photoessay. You will complete a short research essay (2-3 pages) which will serve as the script for a 5 minute maximum video. More details on this assignment will be handed out later in the semester, and we will be holding 2 lab sessions so you can familiarize yourself with the software required to complete the assignment. 30% of your final grade.
Country Specialist Assignments

Country History Paper.
Write a short (3-4 pages) paper describing the movement towards your country’s independence from the USSR. This paper should focus on social science analysis rather than just being a strict history paper. Begin with a clear (and specific) thesis on how your country’s independence movement has shaped its modern politics, economics, or society (you don’t have a lot of space, so do NOT write on all 3!). In the body of your paper, use the history of the independence movement to support this thesis, then conclude with where your country is today.

Some possible political topics:
- Did your country see widespread protest that helped promote a nascent democracy (e.g. the Baltic Republics)?
- Did underlying tensions devolve into ethnic violence…perhaps with a little Russian meddling (e.g. the Caucus countries & Tajikstan)?
- Did the old communist dictators maintain their hold on power (e.g. Central Asia & Ukraine to some extent)?
- Did new autocrats/populists emerge and take advantage of the power vacuum (e.g. Belarus)?

Some possible economic and/or social topics:
- Did your country choose to align with certain foreign actors? How did these actors impact their social and/or economic development?
- How did your country seek to assert its independence from Russia, and how were they successful?
- What did your country due to try to reclaim their national identity after decades of forced “Russification”?

2 Country Blog Posts
One of the goals of this class is to move you from being “consumers” to “producers” of information. Through the semester, we will have short assignment prompts that will ask you to research and write-up information about your country. These write-ups should each be 2 pages (not counting the reference list), and you are encouraged to use visuals to help present the information.

I expect these blogs to present accurate and detailed information, to be well-written, and to be visually appealing. If you write an excellent blog, your work will be posted to the Eurobloggers page (http://eurobloggers.wordpress.com/). I will keep these posts anonymous, but as they will be going public (and permanent!), please let me know early in the semester if you would prefer NOT to have your work online.

A description of each blog prompt can be found on our class website.
Course Schedule and Readings

**Topic 1: A (VERY!) Brief Introduction to Past Empires**

**Mon, Aug 20 – First Day of Class**
- Check out the online syllabus quiz.
- Optional Reading (and a bit silly):

**Wed, Aug 22 – Empire(s) Rising**
- **Readings**
- **Optional Reading**

**Fri, Aug 24 – The Fall of the Russians and Rise of the Soviets**
- **Readings**
- **Lecture/Assignments**
  - Begin watching *The People’s Century* (Episode “1917: Red Flag”).
  - Students should also be ready to sign-up for the country they will be specializing in this semester.

**Mon, Aug 27 – The Transition to Communism**
- **Readings**
- **Optional Reading**
- **Lecture/Assignments**
  - Finish watching *The People’s Century* (Episode “1917: Red Flag”).
Wed, Aug 29 – The Basics of the Soviet Political System

Readings
- Solzhenitsyn, pp. 1-25

Optional Reading

Fri, Aug 31-Mon, Sept 3 – No class

*I will be away at a conference on Friday, and Monday is Labor Day. Use class time to continue reading Solzhenitsyn’s One Day in the Life… We will start Monday’s class discussing your initial impression of the book.*
- Solzhenitsyn, pp. 25-75

Wed, Sept 5 – Life Under Communism

Readings
- Solzhenitsyn, pp. 75-100

Fri, Sept 7 – Flaws within the System

Readings

Lecture/Assignments
- In-class discussion of Solzhenitsyn’s book

Mon, Sept 10 – The Fall of Communism: Eastern European Dominos

Readings

Optional Readings

Wed, Sept 12 – Regime Collapse: The Soviet Transition

Readings

Optional Reading
**Topic 2: The Triple Transition**

**Fri, Sept 14 – Transitions 101**

**Readings**

**Optional Readings**

**Mon, Sept 17 – Democratic Transitions: What Path to Success or Failure?**

**Readings**

**Optional Reading**

**Wed, Sept 19 – How to Design a Democracy…and How Not To**

**Readings**

**Optional Readings**

**Lecture/Assignments**
- **Blog Assignment: Comparative Constitutions** (upload final paper to online Dropbox)
Fri, Sept 21 – Democracy Failed: Russia’s 1993 Constitutional Crisis
Readings

Mon, Sept 24 – Shock Therapy & Economic Collapse
Readings
Optional Reading

Wed, Sept 26 – Discussion: How the Independence Period Shapes Modern Politics
Readings
  o No readings; be prepared to discuss your history papers today in class!
Lecture/Assignments
  o Country History Paper Due (Upload to D2L and bring a paper copy to class).

Fri, Sept 28 – The Rise of Oligarch Politics
Readings
Optional Reading

Mon, Oct 1 – Oligarchs in Cinema, part I
Readings
Optional Reading
Lecture/Assignments
  o Begin watching Tycoon: A New Russian (in Russian, Олигарх). It’s sort of a Russian-style Godfather, and is based on a biography of real-life oligarch Boris Berezovsky.
Wed, Oct 3 – Oligarchs in Cinema, part II

Reading

Lecture/Assignments
  o We will continue watching & discussing the film Tycoon.

Fri, Oct 5 – Oligarchs in Cinema, part III

Reading

Lecture/Assignments
  o We will finish watching & discussing the film Tycoon.

Topic 3: Modern Russia & Eurasia

Mon, Oct 8 – What’s Wrong with Russia’s Democracy?

Readings

Optional Readings

Wed, Oct 10 – Putin’s Rise to Power

“Reading”
  o Watch the PBS Frontline episode “Putin’s Way” – we will discuss it in class
Fri, Oct 12 – How to Run a Modern Nondemocracy

Readings

Lecture/Assignments
- Watch a *Frontline* clip “Russia: Putin’s Plan” (part 2)

Mon, Oct 15 – Putin’s Media (Semi-) Monopoly

Readings

Optional Reading

Lecture/Assignments
- Blog Assignment: Media Freedom (upload to online Dropbox)

Wed, Oct 17 – Propaganda in Putin’s “Managed Democracy”

Readings

Optional Readings

Lecture/Assignments

Fri, Oct 19 – Fall Break

No class
Mon, Oct 22 – Russia’s Mercantilist Economy
Readings

Lecture/Assignments
  o **Blog Assignment: Post-Soviet Political Economies**

Readings

Fri, Oct 26 – Despotism, Central Asian Style
No readings

Lecture/Assignments
  o In class: watch Journeyman Picture’s *Turkmenbashi’s Reign of Terror* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNJS2-Zv-Tc)

Mon, Oct 29 – The Future of Putin’s Russia
Readings

Optional Readings

Readings
  o Eberstadt, Nicholas. 2011. The Dying Bear. *Foreign Affairs*, 90, 6, 95-108. Read pp. 95-104 only!

Optional Readings
Fri, Nov 2 – The Consequences of Lost Demographics

Readings

Optional Readings

Topic 4: Russia’s Regional & Global Ambitions

Mon, Nov. 5 – Russian Grand Strategy

Readings

Wed, Nov. 7 – Russia’s Global Goals

Readings

Fri, Nov 9 & Mon, Nov 12 – Training & Work Sessions

I’m still waiting on IT to finalize this schedule, so the info below is subject to change:

*We will be spending class in 407 Classroom Building, learning how to use PowerPoints advanced features to create a photoessay. To prepare for this tech session, by today you should have 1) finished your research paper and 2) collected several images to use in your presentation.*

Wed, Nov. 14 & Fri, Nov. 16 – Understanding the Kremlin Mindset

Reading

Lecture/Assignments
- I’ll be away at a conference these days, so in lieu of class, watch the *Frontline* episode “Putin’s Revenge: Part I” and complete the reading & video quiz
- Upload a roughdraft of your Photo-essay (video only) to our class discussion board by 5pm on Friday, November 16.
Mon, Nov 19 – The Old Tools are Back

Readings

Lecture/Assignments
- Post your comments on your classmate’s photoessay drafts no later than 5pm today. You will be graded on the quantity and quality of these comments!

Wed, Nov 21 & Fri, Nov 23 – Thanksgiving Break

No class or readings

Mon, Nov 26 – A Brief Intro to Russian Irredentism

Readings

Wed, Nov 28 – Russia and the Ukraine Crisis

Reading

Optional “Readings”

Lecture/Assignments
- Final Photo-essay Presentation and Paper due, Upload to Final Photoessay Assignment Dropbox
Fri, Nov 30 – Russia Meddles in Further West

Readings

Optional Reading

Lecture/Assignments
- Begin watching & discuss the Frontline episode “Putin’s Revenge: Part II”

Mon, Dec. 3 – Russia intervenes in the US Election

Readings

Optional Reading

Lecture/Assignments
- Watch & discuss the Frontline episode “Putin’s Revenge: Part II”

Wed, Dec. 5 – Discussion: Putin’s Game Plan

Reading

Fri, Dec. 7 – The Best of the Photo-essays

Lecture/Assignments
- We’ll be watching the Top 5 photoessays and voting for a winner.

Wed, Dec 12 (8-9:50 am) – Final Exam
- In class: Multiple Choice Exam
- Also Due: Final Paper (upload to online dropbox and bring a paper copy to class)