RUSSIAN POLITICS

This course presents a broad introduction to contemporary politics and society in Russia. What was the Soviet Union, and why did democracy fail in Russia after the USSR fell apart? What kind of regime has Vladimir Putin constructed? What do we know about public opinion and the lives and values of ordinary Russians? Does the recent rise in social protest and state repression portend major political change? How does the Russian economy work? How may we understand the nature of Russian nationalism and the quest for a secure national identity? How did Russia reemerge as a global power and how does it challenge the West and democracy around the world? The course is recommended for juniors and seniors but is open to all students.

Requirements consist of three exams and attendance at all lectures and discussion sections. Students are expected to do the readings for the week in their entirety by the time of their discussion section on Wednesday. There will be a short quiz on the readings for the week each Thursday at the beginning of lecture, with the exception of weeks 1, 6, and 11, when there will not be a quiz. The ten top quiz grades (and only the ten top grades) will count toward the course grade. No quizzes may be made up for any reason.

The first preliminary exam is on September 30; the second preliminary exam is on November 4; and the final exam is on December 17.

Grades will be determined on the basis of a 100-point scale. Each preliminary exam counts for 20 points; the final exam counts for 30 points; the quizzes count for 2 points each (for 20 points in total); and 10 points will be determined by attendance at lectures and attendance and participation in discussion sections. The third and final exam will be cumulative in coverage of course material and will run for two hours.

All correspondence regarding the course should be carried out with your GSI. Students who wish to consult with Professor Fish should do so during office hours. All administrative and logistical questions should be directed to your GSI.

Use of laptop computers, cell phones, and any other communications or internet devices in lecture is prohibited. Phones and laptops must be placed in backpacks or otherwise out of sight during lecture. Use of such devices will result in a ten-point reduction (roughly one letter grade) in the final course grade for each infraction.

Course readings are in the assigned books and the course reader. The pieces that appear in the reader are marked with an asterisk (*); all other readings are in the books. The books and the reader are available electronically on the bcourses site. Our books for the course are:
Syllabus

PART I: RUSSIA IN THE 20\textsuperscript{TH} CENTURY

Week 1 (Aug 26): Studying Russia


Sharafutdinova, \textit{The Red Mirror}, preface and Ch. 1.

Week 2 (Aug 31 & Sept 2): What Was the Soviet Union?


Colton, \textit{Russia}, ch. 3.

Sharafutdinova, \textit{The Red Mirror}, ch. 3.

Week 3 (Sept 7 & 9): Collapse, Crisis, and the Struggle for Power

McAuley, \textit{Soviet Politics}, pp. 89-123.

Colton, \textit{Russia}, ch. 4.

Hill and Gaddy, \textit{Mr. Putin}, chs. 2-3.

Sharafutdinova, \textit{The Red Mirror}, ch. 4.

PART II: THE REGIME AND THE RULER

Week 4 (Sept 14 & 16): Forging Autocracy

Colton, \textit{Russia}, ch. 5.

**Week 5 (Sept 21 & 23): The Autocrat**

Hill and Gaddy, *Mr. Putin*, chs. 1, 4-9.

**Week 6 (Sept 28 & 30): Putinism**


M. Steven Fish, “What Has Russia Become?,” *Comparative Politics* 50, 3 (April 2018), pp. 327-346.*

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30: FIRST PRELIMINARY EXAM (COVERS MATERIAL WEEKS 1-6)**

**Week 7 (Oct 5 & 7): How the Government Works**


Yaffa, *Between Two Fires*, ch. 1.

**PART III: ECONOMY AND SOCIETY**

**Week 8 (Oct 12 & 14): The Economy and Its Owners**


**Week 9 (Oct 19 & 21): How Russian Think about and Engage in Politics**

Hill and Gaddy, *Mr. Putin*, ch. 10.


Yaffa, *Between Two Fires*, prologue.


Julia Ioffe, “‘These Bastards Will Never See Our Tears’: How Yulia Navalnya Became Russia’s Real First Lady,” *Vanity Fair*, September 2021.*

**Week 10 (Oct 26 & 28): Society and the State I**

Yaffa, *Between Two Fires*, chs. 2, 3, & 5.


Alexei Navalny’s conversation with his would-be assassin, December 14, 2020, YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeQXct82t1A.

**Week 11 (Nov 2 & 4): Society and the State II**

Yaffa, *Between Two Fires*, chs. 6-7.

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4: SECOND PRELIMINARY EXAM (COVERS MATERIAL WEEKS 7-10)**
PART IV: RUSSIA AND THE WORLD

Week 12 (Nov 9): The View from Moscow

Angela E. Stent, Putin’s World: Russia against the West and with the Rest (New York: Twelve, 2019), pp. 1-53.*


Week 13 (Nov 16 & 18): The Operative in the World

Hill and Gaddy, Mr. Putin, chs. 11-14.

Week 14 (Nov 23): Russia and America

Angela E. Stent, Putin’s World: Russia against the West and with the Rest (New York: Twelve, 2019), pp. 293-343.*


Thomas Graham, “Let Russia Be Russia: The Case for a More Pragmatic Approach to Moscow,” Foreign Affairs 98, 6 (November-December 2019).*

Victoria Nuland, “Pinning Down Putin: How a Confident America Should Deal with Russia,” Foreign Affairs 99, 4 (July-August 2020).*

Week 15 (Nov 30 & Dec 2): Reflections and Prospects

Hill and Gaddy, Mr. Putin, coda.

Angela E. Stent, Putin’s World: Russia against the West and with the Rest (New York: Twelve, 2019), pp. 344-362.*

Colton, Russia, ch. 6.

Yaffa, *Between Two Fires*, epilogue.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17, 7:00-9:00 pm: FINAL EXAM, LOCATION TBD (COVERS ENTIRE COURSE)