Contemporary Russian Politics

Course Syllabus

Syllabus developed by Anna Veretevskaya, 2018

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The course syllabus developed at the Department of Comparative Politics, 2018

The Course "Contemporary Russian Politics" has been elaborated in accordance with the MGIMO Educational Standard for the Bachelor’s Program in International Relations (track "Government and international relations")

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Director of the MGIMO library ________________ M.V. Reshetnikova.

The syllabus has been approved by the Department of Comparative politics on 2018.
Head of Department __________________ prof. O.V. Gaman-Golutvina

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PART 1:
INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION, COURSE DESCRIPTION
AND TEACHING METHODS

1.1 General information
- Full course title: Contemporary Russian Politics
- Type of course: Elective
- Level of course: B.A.
- Year of study: 2nd
- Number of ECTS credits allocated:
- Name of lecturer(s) and office hours:
  Dr. A.V. Veretevskaya, Lecturer, Department of Comparative politics
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1.2 Course aims and learning outcomes
The course aims at introducing students to the principles and practices of contemporary Russian politics. The course familiarizes students with the institutional structure of the political system of contemporary Russia (starting with socioeconomic, political and cultural preconditions of its birth), its evolution and the political culture of Russian society. Classical structural functionalist approach of D.Easton and T.Parsons is used together with evolutionary approach to political development elaborated by G.Modelsky, K.Polanyi and M.Ilyin in order to avoid static representation of political reality. Comparative approach is used moderately to help students place Russia on the political map of the world.

Learning outcomes:
By the end of this course students should:
- understand the nature of power, authority, legitimacy and leadership in contemporary Russia;
- assess structural, cultural and institutional factors determining political outcomes in Russian politics;
- have sound knowledge of the institutional structure of Russian political system;
- be able to explain the institutional design of Russian political system;
- apply adequate terminology, theories, and concepts to political events and specific cases in Russian political reality;
- critically interpret Russia’s domestic and international political events;
- be able to reasonably compare Russia to other countries avoiding stereotypes and clichés;
- be able to analyze international political processes involving Russia and critically evaluate political evidence and produce well-reasoned arguments about politics using evidence to support conclusions in a coherent way.

1.3 Course requirements and grading plan

Course requirements
Students will be required to attend not less than 90% of classes and be prepared for class discussions. Reading of the assigned materials and active engagement in class discussions is compulsory.
Grading plan

- Class participation – 30%
  Students are expected to attend all the lectures and seminars and participate in class discussions; since the course is highly interactive, it is essential that students attend the seminars having read the materials for that day’s class.
  Students are expected to critically assess compulsory readings as well as the lecturer’s position on every topic and be ready to share their opinions in class supported by arguments. All students are strongly recommended to read the materials from the further reading sections for each seminar topic to avoid having one-sided vision on the problems discussed.

- In-class tests – 70%
  Students will write three tests during the semester. Dates of test classes are defined by the instructor and communicated to the students at the first class of the respective course.
PART 2. COURSE CONTENT

2.1 Types of work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of work</th>
<th>Academic hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for classwork</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homework</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for lectures, seminars, written or oral tests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course assessment</td>
<td>Homework, tests, participation in class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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2.2 Course outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section and topic</th>
<th><strong>Full-time course</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic hours taken (or credits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lectures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction to the course. Main questions about Russian politics</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The routes of Russia’s present in the past. The outline of Russian political history.</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Soviet and post-soviet legacy in contemporary Russian politics.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Institutions and policies of contemporary Russia (1): the legislative.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Institutions and policies of contemporary Russia (2): the executive.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Russian foreign policy and public diplomacy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Russia’s path to modernity: traditional and modern in Russian political culture.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3 Course content and readings by topic

Schedule and Assignments
Topic 1. The main questions about Russian politics.
Topic 2. The routes of Russia’s past in the present.
Topic 4. Institutions and policies of contemporary Russia (1): the legislative
Topic 5. Institutions and policies of contemporary Russia (2): the executive
Topic 6. Russian foreign policy and public diplomacy
Topic 7. Russia’s path to modernity: traditional and modern in Russian political culture.

Topic 1. Main questions about Russian politics.

Lecture
Introduction to the course. Course format. Goals, objectives and assessment. Course content: outline of main topics. Presentation of the course books and other readings.
Main questions about Russian political reality of today. What is Russia? Is it part of the West, part of the East or neither? Existing approaches in Russian and Western political thought. What is contemporary (modern) Russia? Concepts of modernity in political thought and country political realities. Democracy and Russia. Russia in the world: stereotypical vs critical assessment.

Seminar
Themes for discussion:
1. Is Russia part of the West or part of the East? Why?
2. What is Russia’s image in the world? Is Russia different/scary/unknown/attractive?
3. What are the peculiarities of Russian politics? Is there a way to understand them?

Compulsory readings:
- Democracy in a Russian Mirror/ Adam Przeworski (ed.) (2015), New York University Press, NY. Ch.1

Further readings:

Internet resources:
- Freedom House: http://www.freedomhouse.org/
- World values survey. URL: http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/

Topic 2. The routes of Russia’s present in the past. 2 Lectures, 2 seminars.

Choosing the relevant scientific approaches: system approach, historic approach, developmental and evolutionary approaches. The concepts of social and political development in the works of P. Teilhard de Chardin, G. Modelski, K. Polanyi and M. Ilyin. The uses of analyzing the past for better understanding the present.
Benefits and limits of the comparative approach in country and civilization studies.
The outline of Russian history. The timeline of the most meaningful events that ‘canalized’
economic, social and political development in premodern Russia.
Periods in Russian history: Ancient Russia (approx. 800-1200), The Mongols and the
Emergence of Moscow (1237 – 1613), The Romanovs (1613-1825), Path to the Revolution (1825-
1920).
‘Acquirements’ and ‘keep-sakes’ for the political system.

Seminar

Themes for discussion:
- In what way does past help in understanding the present? (The use of historic approach in
  political science)
- M. Ilyin’s approach to analyzing political reality.
- What ‘moments of freedom and periods of self-inflicted restraint and subjugation’ M. Ilyin is
  referring to as defining Russia’s political development path?
- What is the ‘Russian system’ and what are its components?

Seminar 2 Student conference: revolutions and revolutionaries in Russia
- Russian revolutionaries and their fate: Peter the Great’s reforms and popular reaction, Pushkin
  and the Decembrists, revolutionary movements in the 19th and 20th century.
  Political opposition and regime changes in modern Russia.
- What events in Russian history may be called attempted/ successful political revolutions?
- Why a revolution, why not a reform? Political preconditions of revolutionary events.
- Who were the revolutionaries in Russia? What do they have in common?
- The fate of revolutionary ideas in Russian politics.

Compulsory readings:
- Democracy in a Russian Mirror/ Adam Przeworski (ed.) (2015), New York University
  Press, NY. Chapter 3.

Further readings:
  and 3.


Lecture

Building up a Soviet state in the international context of the time. Bolshevik and menshevik
visions of state design. Soviet federalism. Stalinism. Russia in World War II. The role of ideology, its
evolution from Lenin to Brezhnev.
The Cold War. Regime evolution in the Soviet Union, the inner reasons for perestroyka. Soviet society (the generation of the 60s) and soviet culture.
Symbolic revival of the USSR in contemporary political and social reality.
The political unrest of the early 1990s. Privatization and new capitalism in Russia. Russia under
Russian foreign policy of Yeltsin period.
The legacy of the 1990’s in Russian contemporary politics.
Seminar
Themes for discussion:
1. Soviet Union – a nation-state or an Empire? Soviet federalism.
2. Stalinism
3. Reasons for perestroika.
4. What was the reaction of the elites and the society to the dissolution of the Soviet Union?
5. The institutional design of the new state in Russia and the “Yeltsin” model of federalism.
7. Soviet Union and contemporary Russia in International Relations – a comparison.
8. The traces of Soviet legacy in contemporary Russian politics (domestic and foreign).

Compulsory readings:

Further readings:

Internet resources:
- Centre for Studies on Federalism: http://www.csfederalismo.it
- Forum on Federations: http://www.forumfed.org/

Topic 4. Institutions and policies of contemporary Russia (1): the executive.
Lecture
The first election of President Putin, his background and the reasons for his winning the election. Early years of Putin’s presidency.
Administrative reforms of 2010s and their consequences. Russian federalism and the vertical of power.

Themes for discussion:
2. Evolution of the executive in Russia. Peculiarities of the regime.
3. President Putin: the type of leadership, reasons for popularity.
4. Russian political elite and its evolution.

Compulsory readings:
- Democracy in a Russian Mirror/ Adam Przeworski (ed.) (2015), New York University

Further readings:

Internet resources:
- President of Russia: http://eng.kremlin.ru/

Topic 5. Institutions and policies of contemporary Russia (2): the legislative.

Lecture
The legislative branch of power in Russia. Political functions of State Duma and its influence on the political process. Reform of the Federation Council. Political centralization.
- Parties and party system in contemporary Russia.
- Parliamentary elections in Russia, its evolution. The ‘authority party’. The concept of electoral authoritarianism. State Duma elections of 2016.
- The specificity of hybrid regime in Russia. The role of political institutions and their substitutes.

Seminar
Themes for discussion:
1. The legislative branch in the constitution. Its transformation.
3. The role of political institutions in Russia.
4. Political regime of contemporary Russia.

Compulsory readings:

Further readings:
• “King of the Mountain”, or Why Postcommunist Autocracies Have Bad Institutions (with Denis Stukal and Mikhail Mironyuk) // Russian Politics and Law, 2014, Vol. 52, No. 2.
  https://docviewer.yandex.ru/view/0/?*=0TCxJ7SvbCCtD2Cczv5vj8Ob5Z7InVybCl6Imh0dHA6Ly9jYXJuZwpdZWVuZG93bWVuYmVydC5vcmcvZmlsZXVmb3ZlcmlhbmdWZWRtZGVtb2NyYW5N5XzIwIiwiOj0xMjI1MywicG9ja1wiOjE1MDQzNjYwNmIwZjYlMi4yMDE4MzcxODE0Mjl1MlJxMjgiLCI1NTI3NTZ9&pt=8&lang=en

Internet resources:
• Parties and elections: www.parties-and-elections.de
• Election world: www.electionworld.org
• International IDEAs Voting Turnout Around the World: www.idea.int
• Lijphart Elections Archive http://libraries.ucsd.edu/locations/sshldata-gov-info-gis/lijphartsdsguides/lij/
• Administration and Cost of Elections Project: www.aceproject.org
• Inter-Parliamentary Union: http://www.ipu.org/english/home.htm

Topic 6. Russian foreign policy: hard and soft power.
Russia’s geopolitical placing. Theorizing Russian foreign policy: the main concepts of foreign policy. Schools of foreign policy in Russia: the ‘Westerners’, Eurasianism, Globalism, ‘Derzhavniki’ etc.
Military and foreign policy doctrines of Russia since 1990s. The military and national security doctrines of contemporary Russia. Putin and Medvedev eras.
The Russian ministry of foreign affairs, the principles of work and mission. Russian education in International relations. MGIMO-university and its role in Russia’s foreign policy.
Russian public diplomacy.

Themes for discussion:
1. Russian foreign policy and security doctrines in the international context.
2. Russia seen from abroad: mythical and real aspects of Russian political culture.
3. Russian public diplomacy.

Compulsory readings:

Further readings:

Topic 7. Russia’s path to modernity: traditional and modern in Russian political culture.
Lecture

Concepts of political change and political development in Russian political philosophy and history. Russia as a developing society and an evolving political system. The main ‘stops’ on Russia’s political development path.

- The question of democratic transit and Russia.
- Russian society and its political culture.
- Civil society in Russia.
- The future of Russia.

Seminar

Themes for discussion:

1. Are tradition and modernity entirely antagonistic in the case of Russia (and other countries)?
2. The milestones of Russian modernity.
3. Russian political culture: how to categorize?

Compulsory readings:


Further readings:


Internet resources:

- Russian Political science association:  http://rapn.ru/
- Eldis (an online information service providing free access to relevant, up-to-date and diverse research on international development issues): http://www.eldis.org/
  Europe 2020:  http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

1.5. Exam Questions (for students who have gained less than 70% average during the semester)

1. Existing approaches in Russian and Western political thought.
2. What is contemporary (modern) Russia?
3. The uses of analyzing the past for better understanding the present (concepts of social and political development in the works of P. Teilhard de Chardin, G. Modelski, K. Polanyi and M. Ilyin)
5. Periods in Russian history and their influence in contemporary politics: Ancient Russia (approx. 800-1200)
6. Periods in Russian history and their influence in contemporary politics: The Mongols and the Emergence of Moscow (1237 – 1613)
9. Russian revolutionaries and their fate: political opposition and regime changes in Russia.
10. Regime evolution in the Soviet Union.
11. Privatization and new capitalism in Russia. Russia under Boris Yeltsin’s presidency.
13. The structure of the executive branch of power in Russia.
14. The political and economic elites of Russia.
15. The legislative branch of power in Russia. Parties and party system in contemporary Russia.
16. The specificity of hybrid regime in Russia. The role of political institutions and their substitutes.
17. National security doctrines of Russia since 1990s.
18. Concepts of political change and political development in Russian political philosophy and history. Russia as a developing society and an evolving political system. The main ‘stops’ on Russia’s political development path.
20. Civil society in Russia.

2.6 Exam timing
Oral examination 15 minutes per student

2.7 Consolidated reading list (in alphabetic order)

Textbooks

Further Readings
Plagiarism is considered as a severe violation and as an indication of incompetence in the course. Plagiarism is understood as making of one’s text using compilation method for other people’s publications, even connected with own phrases and sentences. Collective performance of individual tasks is also unacceptable. Proved plagiarism an F-mark is given regardless of the fulfillment of all other requirements.

Assignments are to be handed in on the due date. Late submissions will translate into the lowering of the grade by 1/3 of a grade for each day of delay.

Students are asked to keep a copy of all work submitted for evaluation.