Politics 115
Post-Soviet Politics

Spring 2010
Stephen Crowley
MWF 3:30-4:20
King 123

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Office Hours: MF 1:30-3:00; or by appointment
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In focusing on “post-Soviet” politics, this course will concentrate on the dramatic political (and social and economic) events that have occurred with the fall of the Soviet empire. However, we will make sense of the present through an understanding of the history on which it is built. In so doing, the course will explore some of the major political themes of the twentieth century -- the Russian revolution, Stalinism, the nature of the Soviet political system, Gorbachev's perestroika, nationalism, the Soviet collapse, as well as Russia's rather tentative steps towards capitalism and democracy.

By the end of the course, you should have a good understanding about what the Soviet Union was, and about how the attempts to reform it led to its demise; you should also know a good deal about the problems confronting Russia and the former Soviet republics, including their attempts to create new political and economic systems and to find their place in the international political and economic order.

Course Requirements

You are expected to complete the reading before class. Lectures will assume knowledge of the reading, and will often lead to discussion of the reading. In order to facilitate class discussion and to insure that students stay on pace with the reading, you will be asked to post regular comments on the reading to the Blackboard on-line discussion forum. Comments will be posted about once a week during the semester. (Students will be graded not on the quality of their comments, provided they show some level of thoughtfulness and reflection on the readings). In addition, there will be two analytical essays (5-6 pages) during the semester (due March 19 and April 30) and a final exam.

Grades will be determined as follows:

Class participation, including class attendance and Blackboard discussion postings – 20%
2 analytical essays @25% = 50%
Final exam – 30%
Reading:

The following books have been ordered for purchase at the Oberlin Bookstore:


With the exception of these books, all of the assigned readings will be accessible via Blackboard. Additional copies of some of the reading will also be available on regular reserve.

You are also strongly encouraged to follow current events regarding Russia and the former Soviet republics, such as by reading *The New York Times*. (More in-depth coverage of the region can be found in the daily *Financial Times* and the weekly *Economist*, both available in Mudd Library. There are other sources I will gladly point out to you upon request.)

I will ask that you not use laptop computers (or other electronic devices) during class time. While many may use laptops solely to take notes, the temptation to do otherwise is unavoidable, and potentially distracting for others as well.

Class Schedule

**February 8-15: The Russian Revolution and Stalinism**

- McAuley, *Soviet Politics*, intro. and chpts. 1-4
- Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, chapter 2
- John Scott, *Beyond the Urals*, parts 1-3

**February 17-22: Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and the Soviet Political Economy**

- McAuley, chapters 5-6
- Nikita Khrushchev, "The Secret Speech" [read for main points]
Vladimir Shlapentokh, “Public Opinion: Acceptance of the Regime,” in _A Normal Totalitarian Society_

**February 24-26: Gorbachev’s Perestroika**

McAuley, chapter 7

Mikhail Gorbachev, "Speech to the Khabarovsk Party Conference," in Dallin and Lapidus, _The Soviet System: From Crisis to Collapse_

Nina Andreyeva, "I Cannot Forgo My Principles," in _The Soviet System_

Stephen Kotkin, _Steeltown, USSR_, chapter 2

**March 1: Nationalist mobilizations**


Mark Beissinger, “The Persistent Ambiguity of Empire,” _Post-Soviet Affairs_, no.11, 1995

**March 3-5: Coup and Collapse**

McAuley, chapter 8 and conclusion

Martin Malia, “To the Stalin Mausoleum,” in _The Soviet System_


Mikhail Gorbachev, "Resignation Speech," in _The Soviet System_

[March 5: first essay assignment distributed]

**March 8-15: Building Capitalism, Post-Communist Style**

David Kotz with Fred Weir, _Revolution From Above_, chaps. 9-10


Richard Sakwa, _Putin: Russia’s Choice_, Introduction, chaps. 1, 9
March 19: First Essay Due

March 17-24: Building Democracy, Post-Communist Style

Catherine Danks, *Politics Russia*, chapt. 12

George Breslauer, “Boris Yeltsin as Patriarch,” in Archie Brown, ed., *Contemporary Russian Politics*

Sakwa, *Putin: Russia’s Choice*, chapt. 2-4


[March 27-April 4: Spring Break]

March 26-April 16: End of Empire, New States

Artis Pabriks and Aldis Purs, *Latvia: The Challenge of Change*, chapt. 3


Graeme Herd, “Colorful revolutions and the CIS,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, 52: 2, Mar 2005


Michael Klare, *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet*, chapt. 5


Cullen Murphy, “Get in Touch with Your Inner Turkmenbashi,” *Atlantic*, Nov. 02

Sakwa, *Putin: Russia’s Choice*, chapt. 10

[April 16: second essay assignment distributed]

**April 19-26: Finding the Russian State**


Sakwa, *Putin: Russia’s Choice*, chaps. 5-8


Vadim Volkov, "Violent Entrepreneurship in Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 55, no. 5, 1999

**April 28-May 5: Society, Class and Gender**


Anders Aslund, *Building Capitalism*, chapt. 8


Sue Bridger, Rebecca Kay, and Kathryn Pinnich, *No More Heroines?: Russia, Women and the Market*, chapters 2-3; 8


Stephen Crowley, “Comprehending the Weakness of Russia’s Unions,” *Demokratizatsiya*, Spring 2002

**April 30: Second Essay Due**

**May 7-14: Is Russia headed West or South?**
Shleifer and Treisman, "A Normal Country: Russia After Communism," pp. 16-26


Sakwa, Putin: Russia’s Choice, chapt. 11

Vladimir Putin, “Russia at the Turn of the Millennium,” appendix in Sakwa, Putin: Russia’s Choice


**Friday, May 21, 9 am: Final Exam**

**Honor Code:**
The Honor Code is a serious commitment. You should all be familiar with the honor code (available at http://www.oberlin.edu/~stlife/Honor_Code/Honor_Code.html). In general, you are encouraged to share your work with other students, and to seek their input, comments and corrections. However, the work you submit must be substantively your own. If you are unsure how the Honor Code applies to a particular assignment, please ask me. It is essential that you write and sign the honor code on all work you hand in for this class. (You do not need to write this on Blackboard discussion postings.) The Honor Code reads: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code on this assignment.”