In focusing on “post-Soviet” politics, this course will concentrate on the dramatic political (and social and economic) events that have occurred since the fall of the Soviet empire. However, we can only 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 sometimes traumatic 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 what 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 global 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. There are three additional requirements:

- **Blackboard discussion forum:** 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 a sufficient level of thoughtfulness and reflection on the readings. Note however that completing the Blackboard postings is a significant part of the final grade.)

- **Analytical essays:** There will be two analytical essays (5-6 pages) during the semester (due March 19 and May 4). In these essays you will develop your own argument regarding questions I will pose to you ahead of time; they will not require any additional reading.
Final exam or research paper: Students will have the option of either taking a final exam during the regular exam time, or writing a research paper (about 10-12 pages). The research paper should analyze a particular region, social group, economic sector, or political issue in Russia or another former Soviet republic. Those choosing this option must meet with me to discuss their topic by April 16.

Grades will be determined as follows:

Blackboard discussion postings – 25%
2 analytical essays @25% = 50%
Final exam – 25%

[Note: Regular class attendance is expected. You will not get extra points for attending class regularly, but those students who miss a significant amount of class sessions will find their grade lowered.]

I ask that you not use laptop computers or other electronic devices during class time. While some use laptops solely to take notes, the temptation to do otherwise is great and it distracts other students. If you have a particular need for an exception, please let me know.

Confused? Have questions about the course, or simply curious to learn more? Take advantage of attending a liberal arts college rather than a big university, and stop by office hours.

Reading:

The following book 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. Since events in the region are changing quickly, I reserve the right to exchange (replace, not add) additional readings as the semester goes on.

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 a number of online sources of information about the region; I will gladly provide some suggestions to anyone interested.
Class Schedule

February 6-13: The Russian Revolution and Stalinism

McAuley, *Soviet Politics*, intro. and chaps. 1-4

Stephen F. Cohen, “Bolshevism and Stalinism,” in *Rethinking the Soviet Experience*

John Scott, *Behind the Urals*, parts 1-3

February 15-20: 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 22-24: 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

February 27: Nationalist mobilizations


**February 29-March 3: 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 9: first essay assignment distributed]

**March 5-March 9: Yeltsin and “Shock Therapy”**

Stephen White, *Understanding Russian Politics*, pp. 115-146

David Kotz with Fred Weir, *Revolution From Above*, chapt. 9-10

Joseph Stiglitz, “Who Lost Russia?” in *Globalization and its Discontents*


**March 12-March 16: Yeltsin and Russian Democracy**

White, *Understanding Russian Politics*, pp. 27-36; 71-91;

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


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

Anatol Lieven, “The Masque of Democracy: Russia’s Liberal Capitalist Revolution and the Collapse of State Power,” chapter 4 in *Chechnya*

**March 19: First Essay Due**

**March 19-23: Putin and “the Power Vertical”**

Richad Sakwa, *Putin: Russia’s Choice*, chapter 1
Vladimir Putin, “Russia at the Turn of the Millennium,” appendix in Sakwa, Putin: Russia’s Choice

White, Understanding Russian Politics, pp. 36-70; 91-112; 147-162


[March 26-30: Spring Break]

April 2-6: Putin and “Managed Democracy”


Nikolai Petrov, Masha Lipman and Henry E. Hale, “Overmanaged Democracy in Russia,” Carnegie Papers, Russia and Eurasia Program, Number 106, February 2010

Shliefer and Treisman, "A Normal Country: Russia After Communism," pp. 16-26


Alena V. Ledeneva. How Russia Really Works, chapt. 1


Check out the videos of Russian social activists:
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDFDD5C6146E1F29B&feature=plcp

[April 16: deadline for confirming a topic for the research paper option]

April 9-23: End of Empire, New States

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


Keith Gessen, “The Orange and the Blue,” The New Yorker, March 1, 2010

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


Pauline Jones Luong, “Competing Views of Central Asian States and Societies,” in The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence


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


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

White, Understanding Russian Politics, chapter 7

[April 25: second essay assignment distributed]

April 25-May2: Society: Class, Gender and Youth

White, Understanding Russian Politics, chapt. 5


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

Stephen Crowley, “Russia’s Labor Legacy,” draft chapter for the volume Working Through the Past: Labor and Authoritarian Legacies in Comparative Perspective

Born in 1989 (selections to be assigned)

Film Screening: My Perestroika [time and place TBA]

May 4: Second Essay Due

May 4-11: Is Russia headed West or South?

White, Understanding Russian Politics, chaps. 6, 8


May 16: Final Exam [optional research paper due]

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 substantively be 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.”