

IAFS4500/GEOG4742

Senior Seminar: Putin's Russia and its neighbors

Spring Semester 2008

Instructor: John O'Loughlin

Office: Guggenheim 201h

Office Hours: 2-4pm Tues or by appt.

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The emphasis in this critical thinking class is the development of contemporary politics in Putin's Russia and neighboring states. Specific sections will cover nationalist identities and mobilizations within Russia (e.g in the Muslim republics of the North Caucasus); Russia's re-assertive geopolitics with respect to arms agreements and oil routes, Iran, Kosovo, and relations with the US/NATO; Putin's pursuit of "controlled democracy" at home; human rights, political movements, and suppression of dissent; and Russia's relations with the states of the "Near Abroad" especially Ukraine and Central Asia.

The readings will be a mix of current accounts of developments (from news websites) as well as academic articles about each subject. Typical weekly readings will be a couple of academic articles or book chapters plus an overview of the current situation from news sources. All students are expected to read Orlando Figes, **Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia** (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005) before the class starts or finish it within the first 2 weeks. There will be discussions about it in the first 2 weeks.

Students will prepare weekly questions from the readings before each session and the collated questions will be the basis for the discussion, organized each week by two students. We will also view and discuss important videos/news stories in class. Students will also write a term paper of 15-20 pages on a topic connected to the class themes; details on this including the proposal will be distributed early in the semester.

Student presentations of their papers will take up the last 3 weeks; each presenter will have a rapporteur and the class will be conducted like an academic meeting panel. Details later on formats.

Each week's readings can be accessed online via Chinook or from the class folder (see website). A few key questions and concepts to help focus your reading will be distributed in the previous week's class.

The paper topic must be approved by the instructor by March 4. Individual 10 minute meetings with all students will be scheduled at the end of February. The paper must be an examination of a contemporary (post-1991) topic within the boundaries of the former Soviet Union (or external relations between a FSU state and abroad). A detailed outline will be collected at the time of the class presentation. **The final paper is due by 5pm on Monday May 5, 2008. It should also be submitted to turnitin.com by that deadline.**

Obviously, a seminar like this is successful only if the participants are present and have completed the weekly assignment. Therefore, the instructor will take attendance and note participation.

Grade distribution:

Weekly attendance and participation	10%
Weekly written responses	20%
Figes book quiz	10%
Presentation (individual and rapporteur)	10%
Paper	50%

Course Syllabus

Week 1 (15 Jan) – Introduction, and Russian traditions

Readings: Figes, especially chapters 6 (Genghiz Khan) and 8 (Russia abroad)

Week 2 (22 Jan) - Historical legacies – The “Russian soul” and external orientations

Readings: Figes, especially chapters 5 (Russian soul) and 7(Soviet legacy)

Week 3 (27 Jan) - Post Communist elites – politics, cabals, de-democratization, etc

Quiz on Figes

Readings: 1) Lilia Shevtsova “ Post-communist Russia: A historic opportunity missed”
International Affairs, Vol. 83, No 5, September 2007, pp. 891-912

2) Anders Aslund “Purge or coup” **Moscow Times**, Jan. 9, 2008 (website)

3) Dmitri Treinin “The legacy of Vladimir Putin” Carnegie International Center Moscow
<http://www.carnegie.ru/en/pubs/media/76874.htm>

Week 4 (5 Feb) - The Russian economy in transition – winners and losers

Readings: 1) Michael McFaul and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss “The myth of the authoritarian model: How Putin’s crackdown holds Russia back” **Foreign Affairs**, Jan-Feb, 2008 (website)

2) Anders Aslund “Russia’s economic transformation under Putin” **Eurasian Geography and Economics**, 2004, 45, No. 6, pp. 397-420

3) Marshall Goldman “Anders in wonderland: Comments on ‘Russia’s economic performance under Putin”” **Eurasian Geography and Economics**, 45, No. 6, 2004,pp. 429-434.

Week 5 (12 Feb) – Geopolitics of oil and resources in Eurasia-Caspian-Caucasus

Readings: 1) ICG report “Central Asia’s energy risks 2007” (website)

2) Lutz Kleveman “oil and the new ‘great game”” **Nation** Feb 16, 2004, pp.11-14 (website)

3) **Economist** “Not quite the pact that was: Central Asia” 23 August 2007 (website)

4) **Economist** “Caucasus: Hanging together” 8 February 2007 (website)

Week 6 (19 Feb) –Central Asia – transitions and challenges

Readings: 1) Nick Megoran “On researching ethnic conflict: Epistemology, politics, and a central Asian boundary dispute” **Europe-Asia Studies** Vol. 59, no.2, 2007, pp. 253-277.

2) ICG report on “Central Asia: Is radical Islam inevitable?” (website)

3) ICG report on “Uzbekistan – stagnation and uncertainty” (website)

Week 7 (26 Feb) – no class; meet individually with the instructor to discuss paper topic

Reading: background reading for individual paper topic

Week 8: (4 March) – Russia’s internal diversity – religions and nations

Readings; 1) Dmitry Gorenburg “Nationalism for the masses: Popular support for nationalism in Russia’s ethnic republics” **Europe-Asia Studies** Vol 53, no. 1, 2001, pp. 73-104.

2) **Economist** “Russia and Chechnya: The warlord and the spook” 31 May, 2007 (website)

3) **Economist** “Russia’s Muslims: A benign growth” 4 April 2007

4) Daniel Pipes weblog “Predicting a majority Muslim Russia” available from

<http://www.danielpipes.org/blog/495>

Week 9: (11 March) – Russia -Internal tensions – regional autonomies

Readings: 1) Edward Holland and John O’Loughlin “Nationalism enframed: Aspirations of territorial homelands amongst Dagestani populations” (website)

2) Vladimir Kolossov and Gearoid O Tuathail “An empire’s fraying edge? The North Caucasus instability in contemporary Russia’s geopolitical culture” **Eurasian Geography and Economics** Vol. 48, no.2, 2007, pp. 202-225

Week 10: (18 March) – North Caucasus – ethnic maelstrom or just a mosaic?

Readings: 1) John Dunlop “Beslan: Russia’s 9-11” available from

<http://www.peaceinthecaucasus.org/reports/Beslan.pdf>

2) John O’Loughlin, Frank Witmer, Thomas Dickinson, Nancy Thorwardson and Edward Holland, “Preface to the Special Issue and Map Supplement” **Eurasian Geography and Economics** Vol. 48, no.2, 2007, pp. 127-134

3) John O’Loughlin, Vladimir Kolossov, and Jean Radvanyi, “The Caucasus in a Time of Conflict, Demographic Transition, and Economic Change” **Eurasian Geography and Economics** Vol 48, no. 2, 2007, pp. 135-156

Week 11: (1 April) – Russia, Ukraine and the West – foreign affairs

Readings: 1) Dmitri Simes “Losing Russia: The costs of renewed confrontation”. **Foreign Affairs**, Nov-Dec, 2007 (website)

2) John O’Loughlin, Gearoid O Tuathail and Vladimir Kolossov “Russian geopolitical culture in the post-9/11 era: The masks of Proteus revisited”. **Transactions, Institute of British Geographers** NS Vol.30, no. 3, 2005, pp.322-335.

3) Adrian Karatnycky “Ukraine’s Orange Revolution” **Foreign Affairs** March-April 2005 (website)

Week 12: (8 April) Patron Russia – quasi-states and future conflicts in Eurasia

Readings: 1) Pal Kolstoe “The sustainability and future of unrecognized quasi-states” **Journal of Peace Research**, vol. 43, no. 6, 2006, pp. 723-740

2) Georgi Derlugian “The scramble for Soviet spoils” chapter 7 from his book **Bourdieu’s Secret Admirer in the Caucasus**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 219-286. (website)

Weeks 13-15: (15-29 April) Individual student presentations in a mock academic setting