

POLI 629: Eurasian Politics

Fall 2024

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This course covers political developments in the Russian Federation, Belarus, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. It explores formal and informal political institutions, political economy, identity and nationalism, civil society and social movements, conflict and cooperation, and geopolitical relationships across the region in comparative perspective.

Course Obligations *in Sum*

Requirements include weekly written reviews of the readings (20% of your grade), active seminar participation (10%), and one of these three options:

Option 1: A 10-12 minute mini-lecture (20%), a 2,500-3,000 word analytic essay (25%), and a 1,250-1,500 word policy brief (25%) *Recommended for students with little background on the region*

Option 2: A 12-15 minute research presentation (10%) and a 7,500-10,000 word research paper (60%) *Recommended for students with a more extensive background on the region*

Option 3: Three 1,800-2,200 word essays answering PhD comp exam-style prompts (20% each) plus an 8-10 minute discussant presentation or mini-lecture (10%). *Open only to PhD students planning to focus on the region for their comparative comp exams*

You must decide which option you will take by **September 26**, although sooner is better. All assignments must be submitted through MyCourses.

Course Obligations *in Detail*

For Everyone:

Weekly Reviews

For every week from Week Two onwards, you will submit a written review of up to one page that briefly addresses the following for each of the week's reading:

- 1) Sum up the most important argument(s) in **one or two sentences**
- 2) Identify the main theoretical approach and methods used in **one or two sentences each**
- 3) In **one sentence**, discuss how it relates to one or more reading(s) from this week or earlier
- 4) Give one important insight that you gained from this reading **in one sentence**.
- 5) Give one thoughtful critique, **in one or two sentences**
- 6) Identify **one big question** to discuss in class

Reviews are due by *2pm on Thursdays* via MyCourses each week, beginning on Week 2. Reviews are not graded, but to earn credit you must address all six points for each reading in a thoughtful way. These reviews

are meant to encourage you to think about the readings *before* class, so late reviews are generally not accepted. That said, you may submit one review late (up to the last day of class) without penalty. Submitting ten credit-earning reviews will result in an A for this part of the course. Further missing reviews will each lower your final weekly review mark by one step (i.e., A to A-, A- to B+, etc.).

Participation

Please plan to participate actively and regularly in class discussions. This means you should be prepared to discuss the authors' main arguments, make comparisons, raise critiques, and ask questions. We will call on students randomly to discuss answers to the weekly review questions. Informed engagement is vital in a weekly seminar that depends upon thoughtful, respectful, and inclusive class discussion. Coming to class unprepared or missing class will affect your participation grade. That noted, you can miss one class without penalty or explanation (save this skip for when you are sick!).

The Three Options:

Option 1: Analytic Essay, Policy Brief, and Mini-Lecture

Analytic Essay

You will write one 2,500-3,000 word analytic essays during the semester. It should explore and/or critique *one aspect* of our readings in greater depth. Your essay should have a clear, defensible thesis and use the readings to support it. There are many ways to accomplish this task. You might, for example, compare/contrast two or more authors' approaches to a particular issue, carefully specifying the grounds for your comparison. You may focus on the readings from one particular week or to engage readings across different weeks. The papers should minimize summary, be clearly argued, and should not wander from one unrelated point to the next. Spelling, grammar, and style count. Use a consistent reference system (your choice) and include a complete bibliography. References and notes do not count in the word limit.

Policy Brief

You will write a 1,200-1,500 word policy brief recommending the adoption of a particular policy relevant to the course. Your policy brief should clearly describe the proposed recommendation, the rationale for adopting it, and the primary evidence supporting it. Indicate the intended audience as well; it will vary depending upon the policy (e.g., a proposal related to Canadian sanctions on Russia might be directed towards the Prime Minister). The emphasis is on tight, persuasive writing. Please attach a separate bibliography, not included in the 1,200-1,500 words. You may also attach relevant tables, charts, pictures, or figures, but be selective.

Mini-Lecture

Choose a relevant *alternative* reading (i.e., not one of the required readings) with instructor permission and present it to the class as a 10-12 minute mini-lecture with PowerPoint. Think of this as an extended lecture version of a weekly review, presented to a knowledgeable group who has not done this particular reading. Please e-mail us your PowerPoint slides by 10am on the day of your presentation and submit your lecture notes (outline form is fine) via MyCourses by 2pm. First-come, first-serve on the readings, as each can only be presented once. Ideally the readings will be presented in the week that they are most relevant. Please do not choose a reading that you centrally focus on in the analytic essay as well.

Please complete *at least one* of these assignments (one essay or the mini-lecture) before the October break and complete all three by December 4 at 5pm. If the first is not completed before October 31, the highest grade you can receive on it will be an A-. If all three are not completed by December 4 the highest grade you can earn on the third assignment will be an A-. No assignment will be accepted after December 18 except under extraordinary circumstances.

Option 2: Research Paper

Research Proposal

Research paper proposals must be submitted via MyCourses *no later than November 1*, although earlier is better. These proposals should be 500-1,000 words long. They should describe both the proposed topic and argument (i.e., thesis) of the paper, and briefly summarize the kinds of evidence you plan to use to support your argument. Please attach a preliminary bibliography with *at least* 10 scholarly sources to your proposal. Late proposals will lower the mark on your final research paper by one step (i.e., A to A-, etc.).

Research Presentation

You will present the main points of your research paper-in-progress *in class on November 28*. Think of this as a practice conference paper presentation. Present your main research question and your answer to it, situate your work briefly in the literature, explain your methods and evidence, and let your audience know why they should care about your question and answer – all in 12-15 minutes.

Research Paper

Your research paper must be 7,500-10,000 words long (excluding the bibliography) on a relevant topic approved by the instructor. The papers are due by December 4 at 5pm via myCourses; students serving as teaching assistants may have a two-week extension without penalty; otherwise, if the paper is not on time, the highest grade it can earn will be a A-. No paper will be accepted after December 18.

Option 3: PhD Comps Preparation

Practice Comp Essays

You will write three 1,800-2,200 word essays, each responding to a substantively different question on the region as agreed upon with the instructors; these may be drawn [from earlier PhD comprehensive examinations](#). They should include appropriate readings from beyond the syllabus, particularly from the books/journals noted in the [Regional](#) reading list. The essays should have a clear thesis that answers the question and uses the readings to support it. Spelling, grammar, and style count. Use a consistent reference system (your choice) and include a complete bibliography. References and notes do not count in the word limit. Please complete *at least one* essay before the October break and *complete all three by December 4*. If the first is not completed before the October break the highest grade you can receive on it will be an A-. If all three are not completed by December 4 the highest grade you can earn on the third essay will be an A-. No paper will be accepted after December 18 except under extraordinary circumstances.

Mini-Lecture or Discussant Presentation

Option A: You will serve as the discussant for one of our guest speakers (Magdalena Dembinska or Erica Marat). Your discussant presentation should last 8-10 minutes. Think of this as if you were a discussant at a conference. What is the key takeaway from the speaker's paper/presentation? What are its strengths and weaknesses? How does it relate to other literatures and issues? What important questions does it raise? Where could it go from here? Being a good discussant is an important and underappreciated skill. Here are two websites ([here](#) and [here](#)) discussing how to do it well. There can be only one discussant for each of our guest speakers this semester, so this is first-come, first-served.

Option B: Choose a relevant *alternative* reading (i.e., not one of the required readings) with instructor permission and present it to the class as a 10-12 minute mini-lecture with PowerPoint. Think of this as an extended lecture version of a weekly review, presented to a knowledgeable group who has not done this particular reading. Please e-mail us your PowerPoint slides by 10am on the day of your presentation and submit your lecture notes (outline form is fine) via MyCourses by 2pm. First-come, first-served on the readings, as each can only be presented once.

Course Outline

Week 1 (Aug 29) Introduction and Background

Ironside, Kristy. "Russian and Soviet History," in Hale, Johnson, and Lankina, ed., [*Developments in Russian Politics 10*](#) (Bloomsbury and Duke 2024): 19-46. Available on MyCourses.

Ericson, Richard E. "[The classical Soviet-type economy: Nature of the system and implications for reform.](#)" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5, no. 4 (1991): 11-27.

Bernhard, Michael, Venelin I. Ganey, Anna Grzymała-Busse, Stephen E. Hanson, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Dmitrii Kofanov, and Anton Shirikov. "[Weasel words and the analysis of "postcommunist" politics: A symposium.](#)" *East European Politics and Societies* 34:2 (2020): 283-325.

Week 2 (Sept 5) The Soviet Collapse

Z (Martin Malia), "[To the Stalin Mausoleum.](#)" *Daedalus* 119:1 (1990)

Dallin, Alexander. "[Causes of the Collapse of the USSR.](#)" *Post-Soviet Affairs* 8, no. 4 (1992): 279-302.

Bunce, Valerie. "[Subversive institutions: The end of the Soviet state in comparative perspective.](#)" *Post-Soviet Affairs* 14, no. 4 (1998): 323-354.

Beissinger, Mark R. "[Nationalism and the collapse of Soviet communism.](#)" *Contemporary European History* 18, no. 3 (2009): 331-347.

Cohen, Stephen. "[Was the Soviet System Reformable?](#)" and responses from [Kramer](#) and [Hanson](#), *Slavic Review* 63:3 (2004).

Week 3 (Sept 12) Regimes and Patronal Politics

Easter, Gerald. "[Preference for presidentialism: Postcommunist regime change in Russia and the NIS.](#)" *World Politics* 49, no. 02 (1997): 184-211.

Hale, Henry E. "[Regime cycles: democracy, autocracy, and revolution in post-Soviet Eurasia.](#)" *World politics* 58, no. 1 (2005): 133-165.

Rosenfeld, Bryn. "[State dependency and the limits of middle-class support for democracy.](#)" *Comparative Political Studies* 54, no. 3-4 (2021): 411-444.

Junisbai, Barbara, and Azamat Junisbai. "[Regime type versus patronal politics: a comparison of "ardent democrats" in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.](#)" *Post-Soviet Affairs* 35, no. 3 (2019): 240-257.

Week 4 (Sept 19) De Facto States and Conflict

Guest Speaker: Prof. Magdalena Dembinska (University of Montreal), "The Life and Death of Eurasian de facto States during the Russo-Ukrainian War"

King, Charles. "[The benefits of ethnic war: Understanding Eurasia's unrecognized states.](#)" *World Politics* 53, no. 4 (2001): 524-552.

Florea, Adrian. "[De facto states: Survival and disappearance \(1945–2011\).](#)" *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2017): 337-351.

Nilsson, Niklas, Johan Engvall and Mikael Weissmann (2024), "Russia's utilization of unresolved conflicts and proxy regimes", in Nilsson and Weissmann (eds), [Russian Warfare and Influence. Small States in the Intersection Between East and West](#), Bloomsbury Academic, ch. 8, p. 153-181

Blakkisrud, Helge, Tamta Gelashvili, Nino Kemoklidze, and Pål Kolstø. "[Does recognition matter? Exploring patron penetration of de-facto state structures.](#)" *Territory, Politics, Governance* (2024): 1-22.

Demińska, Magdalena. "[Legitimizing the Separatist Cause: Nation-building in the Eurasian de facto States.](#)" *Nationalities Papers* 51, no. 1 (2023): 80-97.

Week 5 (Sept. 26) Political Economy

Hellman, Joel. "[Winners take all: the politics of partial reform in postcommunist transitions.](#)" *World Politics* 50, no. 02 (1998): 203-234.

Johnson, Juliet. "[Path contingency in postcommunist transformations.](#)" *Comparative Politics* (2001): 253-74.

Gould, John A., and Carl Sickner. "[Making market democracies? The contingent loyalties of post-privatization elites in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Serbia.](#)" *Review of International Political Economy* 15, no. 5 (2008): 740-769.

Åslund, Anders. "[Ten lessons from a quarter of a century of post-communist economic transformation.](#)" *Economics of Transition* 26, no. 4 (2018): 851-862.

Roberts, Sean. "[The Eurasian Economic Union: the geopolitics of authoritarian cooperation.](#)" In *Political Geographies of the Post-Soviet Union*, pp. 40-63. Routledge, 2020.

Balmaceda, Margarita, and Andreas Heinrich, '[The Energy Politics of Russia and Eurasia](#)', in Kathleen J. Hancock, and Juliann Emmons Allison (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Energy Politics* (2018).

Week 6 (Oct 3) Rule of Law and Constitutionalism

Field trip to University of Montreal for a talk by Prof. Will Partlett (U of Melbourne) on his forthcoming book [Why the Russian Constitution Matters: The Constitutional Dark Arts](#) (Bloomsbury 2024)

Wilson, Sophia. "[Majoritarian values and women's rights: police and judicial behavior in Tajikistan and Azerbaijan.](#)" *Post-Soviet Affairs* 33, no. 4 (2017): 298-312.

Trochev, Alexei, and Alisher Juzgenbayev. "[Instrumentalization of constitutional law in Central Asia.](#)" In *Research Handbook on Law and Political Systems*, pp. 139-168. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023.

Popova, Maria. 2017. "[Putin-style "rule of law" & the prospects for change.](#)" *Daedalus*, 146(2), pp.64-75.

Week 7 (Oct 10) Russian Domestic Politics

Fish, M. Steven. [Democracy derailed in Russia: The failure of open politics.](#) Cambridge, 2005.

Sharafutdinova, Gulnaz. [The Red Mirror: Putin's Leadership and Russia's Insecure Identity.](#) Oxford, 2020. Chapters 1 and 2.

Snegovaya, Maria, & Jade McGlynn. "[Dissecting Putin's regime ideology.](#)" *Post-Soviet Affairs* (2024): 1-22.

Smyth, Regina. "[Plus ça change: getting real about the evolution of Russian studies after 1991.](#)" *Post-Soviet Affairs* (2023) 39: 1–2, 10–26.

Week 8 (Oct 24) Social Movements and the Color Revolutions

Tucker, Joshua. "[Enough! Electoral fraud, collective action problems, and post-communist colored revolutions.](#)" *Perspectives on Politics*, 5, no. 3, (2007): 535-551.

Beissinger, Mark. "[Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions.](#)" *Perspectives on Politics*, 5, no. 3 (2007): 259-276

Nikolayenko, Olena. "[The revolt of the post-Soviet generation: Youth movements in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine.](#)" *Comparative Politics* (2007): 169-188.

Lindberg, Staffan I. "[Democratization by elections? A mixed record.](#)" *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 3 (2009): 86-92.

Carnaghan, Ellen. "[From Balcony to Barricade: Nationalism and Popular Mobilisation in Georgia, Ukraine, and Russia.](#)" *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, No. 9 (2016): 1579-1607.

Lankina, Tomila, and Katerina Tertychnaya. "[Protest in electoral autocracies: a new dataset.](#)" *Post-Soviet Affairs* 36, no. 1 (2020): 20-36.

Week 9 (Oct 31) Politics in Central Asia
Guest Speaker: Prof. Erica Marat, National Defense University

TBD

Schatz, Edward. "[The soft authoritarian tool kit: Agenda-setting power in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan](#)," *Comparative Politics* 41, no. 2 (2009): 203-222.

Week 10 (Nov 7) Memory and the Nation

Forest, Benjamin, and Juliet Johnson. "[Unraveling the threads of history: Soviet–Era monuments and Post–Soviet national identity in Moscow](#)." *Annals of the Association of American geographers* 92, no. 3 (2002): 524-547.

McGlynn, Jade. "[Historical framing of the Ukraine Crisis through the Great Patriotic War: Performativity, cultural consciousness and shared remembering](#)." *Memory Studies* 13, no. 6 (2020): 1058-1080.

Bakke, Kristin M., Kit Rickard, and John O'Loughlin. "[Perceptions of the past in the post-Soviet space](#)." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 39, no. 4 (2023): 223-256.

Kaufman, Stuart. [Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War](#). Cornell University Press, 2001. Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 1-48), plus either Chapter 3, 4, or 5.

Week 11 (Nov 14) War, Empire, and Foreign Policy

Popova, Maria and Oxana Shevel, [Russia and Ukraine: Entangled Histories, Diverging States](#) (Polity, 2024)

Week 12 (Nov 21) ASEES Reading Week

Week 13 (Nov 28) Presentations

Important Course Information

Course Grading Scale

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Grade Points</i>	<i>Grade Range</i>
A	4.0	>3.85
A-	3.7	3.50-3.85
B+	3.3	3.15-3.49
B	3.0	2.85-3.14
B-	2.7	2.50-2.84
C+	2.3	2.15-2.49
C	2.0	1.85-2.14
D	1.0	1.0-1.84
F	0.0	<1.0

This course uses the 4.0 system for all assignments. An A is worth 4 points, an A- is 3.7 points, etc. To calculate your final grade, I will multiply the grade points on each assignment by the weight of that assignment and then add them to get your final average. That average determines your course letter grade. For example, if your overall average is a 3.4, you would earn a B+ in the course. Note that in graduate courses, overall averages below B- (2.5) will be recorded as F grades.

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