This course introduces students to the unprecedented, fascinating, and sometimes tumultuous journey of political transformation upon which Russia has embarked. Is Russia in the process of creating a unique model of governance, will Russia become a democracy, or is it fated to be an authoritarian regime? How do ordinary people experience political and economic transition? What kind of political system do ordinary Russians want? Why is Russia more democratic than some states of the former Soviet Union and less democratic than others?

The study of the political transformation in Russia is a complex undertaking because political change is inextricably linked with economic, social, and cultural changes. We will emphasize comparative approaches and concepts that should enable students to make sense of political developments occurring in Russia. To guide our investigation, we will pay particular attention to the changing nature of mass-elite relations and how history and political culture in Russia shape the choices that elites and ordinary people make about politics. Because the states of the former Soviet Union did not launch their processes of political development with a blank slate, this course begins with a brief discussion of the politics and society of the Soviet state. We then analyze competing explanations for the collapse of the USSR. For the bulk of the class, we will examine the process of political change in post-communist Russia and factors that influence this process. We will briefly look at several other post-Soviet states to understand why Russia has developed a more open political system than some post-Soviet states and a less open one than others. By the end of the course, students should be able to use their understanding of factors that influence political dynamics in Russia to interpret current political events and anticipate future political developments.

Required texts:


Readings with urls are available for students logged onto the W&M network. (If students are using the proxy server or in the event that the URL has been changed, please locate the readings using the bibliographic information listed. I suggest using taking these steps: Go to the Swem library page. Underneath the search space, click on "advanced search." Then in the "search for" space, type in the name of the Journal –e.g.- "Slavic Review" and in the "in" space, select "journal title." This will lead you to the electronic link to this journal and you can search or browse to find the specific article listed. Readings not from the books and without urls (indicated by *) are posted on blackboard.

Requirements: In addition to lectures, class time will include critical discussion of arguments made in readings and lectures. Students are required to attend class, as well as to participate actively and in an informed way in discussion. Students should come to class having completed, and having thought critically about, the assigned readings. The syllabus contains discussion questions to help focus reading for class and study for exams. Students should bring readings to class and be ready also to discuss the following questions: “What is/are the author’s argument(s)?” “Do the theoretical concepts introduced help us better understand the issues discussed? “Is the supporting evidence convincing?” “How does the reading relate to other course readings?” “How does the argument hold up against alternative arguments?”

A student's course grade will be calculated as follows:

- Attendance & Informed Participation 12%
- Midterm 28%
- Analytical paper 28%
- Final 32%
• **Participation.** Students are expected to participate regularly in discussions by providing informed comments and/or questions that incorporate readings and/or discussion. Students’ contributions to class discussion will be evaluated on the level of critical thought of assigned reading and our dialogue in class, rather than on the frequency, *per se*, of their comments. If student engagement in class discussion is inadequate, pop quizzes on the readings may be administered. Extra credit towards participation can be earned by participating in a collaborative subject pool for survey & experimental research run by Government faculty. The total time required will be approximately 1 hour.

• **Midterm.** This exam will consist of a short answer section and an essay section. It will cover all readings and lectures through Feb. 25. It will be on Feb. 27.

• **Analytical paper.** Students must draw on a diverse range of materials from the course and several outside source of high scholarly quality (books from academic presses or articles from academic journals) to write an approximately 6-paged paper on one of two topics. Topics will be distributed after the midterm. Due Apr. 10. No electronic copies will be accepted.

• **Final.** This exam will be cumulative, though it will emphasize material covered after the midterm. Essays will be emphasized, though there will also be a section on short answers. Finals: 9:30 a.m. Section: Tues., May 6 @ 9 a.m.; 11 a.m. Section: Thurs., May 1 @ 2 p.m.

**Other policies:** No student can pass this course without passing all segments of this course specified above. All students are responsible for saving a copy of their papers; no late papers will be accepted. Please read and follow the Honor Code. I reserve the right to make minor adjustments to the syllabus. During class, all cell phones/PDAs need to be turned off completely. Laptops may be used only for class purposes; laptops may NOT be used by students sitting beside the walls of the classroom.


**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:**

**Week 1**

Jan. 16

• Introduction to the course

**Week 2**

**PRE-COMMUNIST AND COMMUNIST APPROACHES TO GOVERNING AND REACTIONS TO THEM**

Jan. 21

• Examining elite-mass relations during The Revolutions 1917 and the first years of the Soviet Union: Why did the provisional government fail? Why did the Bolsheviks succeed in fomenting a revolution?

  • Remington, pp. 31-33.


  • Familiarize yourself with maps of the republics of the USSR and the republics of present-day Russia
Jan. 23
• How did Lenin and Stalin approach state-building and governing in the USSR? Where is political power located? How and why was terror used?
  • Remington, “Close-up 2.1: Socialism, Communism, Marxism, & Leninism,” pp. 35-36.

Week 3
Jan. 28
• Modernization, Muddling Through, Reform…or Revolution of the State-socialist Model? What were the USSR’s sources of stability? Describe the social contract. What was the relationship between economic and political reform in the 1980s? What were obstacles to reform?
  • Remington, pp. 42 (first full para.)-49.

Jan. 30
• Why did the USSR collapse? Why did it collapse when it did? Was it inevitable?
  • Remington, "The Soviet System and its Demise" p. 39 (1st full para.)-p. 42 (top); p. 49 (bottom) -53.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE POST-SOCIALIST RUSSIA'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Week 4.
Feb. 4
• Designing political institutions: What constraints and opportunities do the rules of Russia’s 1993 Constitution pose for post-socialist Russian politics? What are the pluses and minuses of a strong presidency? What are the checks and balances on power in the Russian political system?
  • Remington, “The State and Regime in Russia” and "Russia’s Constitutional Order," pp. 1-25; 56-73.

Feb. 6
• Political (non)Participation: Who participates in politics? Why does Putin win? How do we explain many citizens' alienation with politics? What are the consequences for democracy?
  • Remington, "Political Participation and Recruitment," pp. 87-112.

Week 5
Feb. 11
• The Straightjacket of Superpresidentialism: How does a strong presidency and a weak parliament impact political competition?
  • Fish, “Introduction,” and Ch. 7, “The Institutional Problem: Superpresidentialism,” pp. 1-top 6; 193-245. (THIS IS OUR SECOND REQUIRED TEXT)

Feb. 13
• Political culture: What are Russians' views of good government and their political institutions? Does political culture influence the political institutions, vice-versa, or is the relationship reciprocal?
Week 6

Feb. 18
- What kind of political system do ordinary Russians prefer? An authoritarian, a democratic, or a hybrid regime? Why?

Feb. 20
- Political parties: What roles do political parties play in Russia? What is a Party of Power? What do the outcomes of Russian elections tell us about political competition and citizens’ political preferences?
  - Zagorodnov, Artem, “United Russia Takes First, but loses its constitutional majority,” Russia Now, December 5, 2011, [http://rbth.ru/articles/2011/12/05/united_russia_takes_first_but_loses_constitutional_majority_13894.html](http://rbth.ru/articles/2011/12/05/united_russia_takes_first_but_loses_constitutional_majority_13894.html).

Week 7

Feb. 25
- Interest groups: Which groups have the most influence over politics? Why? Does Russia have a space for voluntary associations that is independent of the state? What are the implications of grass-roots protest against the December 2011 parliamentary elections?
  - Remington, "Interest Articulation…..," pp. 150-71.

Feb. 27
- **MIDTERM**

Spring Break!

Week 8

Mar. 11
**MOVIE NIGHT, 7-9 p.m., place: McGlothlin-Street 20**
- What is the best way to view the youth group Nashi: Why are young people are attracted to it? Why do Masha’s views about Nashi evolve? What social and political purposes does Nashi play?

Mar. 13
- Social Media and Grassroots activism in post-Soviet Russia: What roles have social media played in grass-roots activism in today’s Russia? Why have these roles differed in Russia and Finland? Has social media been an effective mechanism for ordinary Russians to influence policy?
  - Soldatov, Andrei and Irina Borogan,“Russia’s Digital Underground: How the Kremlin is Waging War against Information Freedom, Foreign Policy, April 2013, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/05/russia_war_on_internet_freedom#sthash.ffc6SX9h.dp](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/05/russia_war_on_internet_freedom#sthash.ffc6SX9h.dpbs);
Week 9
Mar. 18
- Economic reform: How have Russia’s post-communist leaders varied in their approaches to economic reform? What is partial reform? What have been the social consequences of economic reform— who are more likely to be winners or losers?

Mar. 20
- What is the political impact of the Russian state role in the economy?
  - Fish, Ch. 6, “The Policy Problem: Economic Statism,” pp. 139-192.

Week 10
Mar. 25
- Rule of Law or Rule by Law? What are the obstacles to the establishment of the rule of law in Russia? How can they be overcome?

Mar. 27
- The impact of Russia’s abundance of natural resources: What is a resource curse? How does it impact economic growth in the short and long terms? What is the connection between resources and corruption in Russia?

MARCH 28: STEVEN FISH LECTURE, 5:30 P.M. IN ANDREWS 101

Week 11
Apr. 1
- Federalism: What is the best balance between the center and the periphery for: 1) democracy? 2) stability, and 3) ethnic autonomy? Under what conditions do non-Russians threaten the state?
  - King, Charles and Rajan Menon, “Russia’s Invisible Civil War: The Kremlin’s Crisis in the Caucasus,” Foreign Affairs, July/August, 2010, pp. 20-34, (use Hein online database)

EXPLAINING VARIATION IN THE POLITICAL TRANSITIONS OF POST-SOVIET STATES
Week 12
Apr. 3
- Russia’s role in Eurasia: How does Russia view its role toward the former Soviet Republics? What are Russia’s interests in the former Soviet Republics and how does it pursue them? What is the impact of Russia’s policy on the domestic politics of the states of the “near abroad?”
• Western CIS: How does Ukraine’s post-socialist political development differ from Russia’s? What is the impact of Ukraine’s semi-presidential system? What factors contributed to the “Orange Revolution?” What were the consequences of this revolution for Ukrainian political development?

Apr. 10

Paper Due

Week 13
Apr. 15
• Central Asia: How different is Uzbekistan’s political system from Russia’s? Do the Central Asian states, such as Uzbekistan, offer an alternative model of governance to democracy? What role do Islamic groups play in civil society?

Apr. 17
• What are the most important factors—domestic and international—in bringing about the varying levels of democratization and authoritarianism of the post-Soviet states? What explains the level of stability of competitive authoritarian regimes?

UNDERSTANDING RUSSIA AND HER FUTURE
Week 15
Apr. 22
• Understanding the bases of legitimacy for Russia’s political system: What is Plebiscitarian Patrimonialism and how stable is it? What are its implications for developments in Russian politics? (Guest lecture by Prof. Hanson, W&M’s Vice Provost for International Affairs.)

Apr. 24
• Is Putin creating a unique model of governance or is it on a normal path of political development? How stable is the Russian political system? What kind of political system do Russians want?
  • TBA. Short Analysis of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi and its implications for Russia.