RUSSIAN POLITICS

Instructor: Peter Rutland; tel. 2483; email <prutland>, office PAC 203; office hours TTh 10.30-12.00.

ASSESSMENT: Out of 100 points, as follows:

1) Three short papers, 3-4 pages in length, due on Sept 21, Oct 16 and Nov 11. [15 points each]
2) Role playing exercise: player nomination due Oct 1; 3-4 page biographical essay due Oct 28 [5 points]; group declarations due Nov 30; 3-4 page policy memo due Dec 9. [15 points].
3) Weekly quizzes on the required reading. Each quiz will earn 1 point for a correct answer; exceptionally, 2 points may be given. [10 points]
4) Class participation, extra credit reports on campus lectures (4 maximum, one point each). [5 points]
5) Final exam on Tuesday Dec 15 at 7.00 pm. [20 points]

Email your papers to <prutland@wesleyan.edu> by 4.00 pm on the due day as attached documents in Word.

READINGS

Books for the course, available for purchase in Broad Street Books:

Fiona Hill & Cliff Gaddy  Mr. Putin. Operative in the Kremlin (2014)
Vladimir Gellman  Authoritarian Russia (2015)

The following book is out of print, but I have copies that I will lend you:


All the articles listed on the syllabus are available on the course’s Wesfiles page through the hyperlinks. I only use Moodle to report grades.

Students must attend every class and complete the required reading each week, marked with *. All the other readings are optional, mainly for use when writing papers. Unexplained absence from three classes will be treated as withdrawal from the course. Plagiarism i.e. using material not written by yourself without clear attribution to the source will be punished. You are welcome to bring laptops to class but you must NOT use them for email or web surfing.

Power and policy in the Kremlin: a role playing exercise

We will also be running a role-playing exercise, borrowed from Juliet Johnson at McGill University. The basic schema is as follows (more detailed instructions will follow):

1) Each student takes on the identity of a leading Russian political actor.
2) Prepare a biographical profile, and a policy proposal.
3) Negotiate (outside of class) with other actors to form coalitions in support of one or other proposal.
4) An expanded government meeting will take place in class on Dec, where proposals will be presented to Putin, and he picks the winner.
INTRODUCTION

THE WEIGHT OF RUSSIAN HISTORY

Is there such a thing as ‘Russian political culture,’ and what does it consist of? How great an influence does the pre-1917 Russian past have on the present? Does Russia’s history set it apart from the rest of Europe? Why Lenin? Why Stalin?

* Richard Hellie  
  ‘The structure of Russian imperial history’ History and Theory  

* Peter Rutland  
  ‘The past as prolog’ ch. 1

Graham Allison  
‘10 reasons why Russia still matters,” Politico, 30 Oct 2011

Igor Fedyukin  
‘Russia’s modernization project’ New Republic, 14 July 2014

Stephen Kotkin  
‘Stalinism as civilization’ from David Hoffman (ed.) Stalinism

THE SOVIET POLITICAL SYSTEM

How was the Soviet Union ruled? What was it like to live under the Soviet system? What was the nomenklatura? What role did the Communist Party play in Soviet society? Why was the USSR so stable in the 1960s-70s? Why did it survive in the absence of mass terror?

* Hedrick Smith  
  The Russians, whole book, but esp. chs 10-11

Ilya Utekhin  
Kommunalka Video tour of life in a Soviet-era communal apartment.

Peter Rutland & Victoria  
‘What was the Soviet Union? Looking back at Brezhnev,’ Russian History, 41 (2014) 299-306

FIRST ASSIGNMENT

The Soviet system

Email the paper to prutland by 4.00 pm on Mon. Sept 21. Write a 3-4 page paper on Smith’s The Russians. How did the Soviet system work? How did people adapt to life within the system?

Don’t just summarize Smith’s observations. You should try to read/skim the whole book, but your essay should focus on a specific topic. What struck you as most interesting in Smith’s account? Did it confirm or refute your prior stereotypes of life in the ‘Evil Empire’? How does life in the USSR compare with life in other societies, such as the US? Is Smith’s reporting reliable?

Extra credit opportunity

Talk by Doug Foyle and Peter Rutland  
11.50 am  
‘Gorbachev, Bush and German Unification’ Location: Fisk 210

GORBACHEV’S REFORMS (1985-89)

How did Gorbachev rise to power? What were Gorbachev’s goals in introducing glasnost and perestroika? Why did he fail? Is Gorbachev a hero, a villain, or a fool?

* Stephen Kotkin  
  Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse ch 1-5

* Peter Rutland  
  ‘The Soviet collapse’ ch. 2.

Yegor Gaidar  
‘The Soviet collapse: grain and oil’ (2007)

David Kotz & Fred Weir  
‘Why did the USSR fall?’ Dollars and Sense, July 1997

Stephen Cohen  
‘Was the Soviet system reformable?’ Slavic Review, 63: 3, 2004
### Sept 24  

- Why did the Soviet Union collapse – and was its collapse inevitable?  
- Who launched the August 1991 coup, and why did it fail?

* Stephen Kotkin  
  *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse*  
  ch 6-7

* John Dunlop  
  *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Union*  
  ch 2-5  
  [This is an ebook, which you can read online through the Olin catalog]

* Leon Aron  
  *Everything you think you know about the Soviet collapse,*  
  *Foreign Affairs,* July 2011

### Sept 29  
**YELTSIN IN POWER (1991-93)**

- What were Yeltsin’s goals, and what was the political coalition supporting him?  
- How were the economic and military assets of the Soviet Union divided among the new states?

* Peter Rutland  
  *‘From Soviet Union to CIS’*  
  ch. 3.

* History Channel  
  *Boris Yeltsin: The People’s Choice*  
  (1998 documentary)

* Boris Yeltsin  
  *The Struggle for Russia*  
  chs. 1-5

* Lilia Shevtsova  
  *Yeltsin’s Russia: Myths and Reality*  
  chs 1-3

* Leon Aron  
  *Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life*  
  (Yeltsin GOOD)

* Peter Reddaway  
  *The Tragedy of Russia’s Reforms*  
  (Yeltsin BAD)

### Sept 30  
**Extra credit opportunity**  
Emma Sky (Yale University) 7.00 pm, PAC 001  
‘The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq’

### Oct 1  
**Nominations due for role playing exercise.**

### Oct 1  
**SHOCK THERAPY**

- Why was shock therapy launched in 1992?  
- Who benefited from those reforms?  
- Was there any alternative to that radical reform package?  
- How else could the transition to capitalism have been managed?

* Peter Murrell  
  *‘What is shock therapy? What did it do in Poland and Russia?’*  
  *Post-Soviet Affairs,* April-June 1993.

* Peter Rutland  
  *‘Russia’s transition to a market economy’*  
  ch. 5, pt 1 (thru 1996)

* David Kotz & Fred Weir  
  *Revolution from Above: the Demise of the Soviet System*  
  chs. 9-12

### Oct 6  
**THE YELTSIN YEARS (1993-99)**

- In Oct 1993 Yeltsin suppressed a parliamentary rebellion and consolidated presidential rule, but he managed to win re-election in 1996.  
- Was Yeltsin the father of Russian democracy, or its gravedigger?

* Peter Rutland  
  *‘Politics under Yeltsin,’*  
  ch. 4

* Vladimir Gelman  
  *Authoritarian Russia*  
  ch 3

* Peter Rutland  
  *‘Has democracy failed Russia?’,*  
  *National Interest*  
  (Dec. 1994)

* Lilia Shevtsova  
  *Yeltsin’s Russia: Myths and Reality*  
  chs. 6-9

* Stephen Fish  
  *Democracy Derailed in Russia*
Boris Yeltsin  
*The Struggle for Russia*  chs. 7-9

**Oct 8**

**THE MAFIA**

Why did organized crime and bureaucratic corruption rise so rapidly in Russia and the other post-soviet states? Can the state do anything to get either of these evils under control? We take the 'rule of law' for granted – but where does it come from, and under what conditions does it take root and develop?

* Paul Klebnikov  
* Godfather of the Kremlin,’ *Forbes*, 30 December 1996

* Peter Rutland  
* Crime and corruption,’ ch. 8

* Vadim Volkov  
* ‘Violent entrepreneurship in post-Communist Russia,’  
  *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51: 5 (July 1999) 741-754

Robert Sharlet  
* ‘In search of the rule of law,’ in S. White, *Developments* 7, ch. 8

Federico Varese  
* The Russian Mafia

Alena Ledenova  
* Russia’s Economy of Favors

**Oct 13**

**THE RISE OF THE OLIGARCHS**

By the late 1990s it became clear that a new class of oligarchs had emerged to seize control of large segments of the Russian economy. Who were these men, and how did they get so rich so quickly?

* Peter Rutland  
* ‘Russia’s transition to a market economy,’ ch. 5, pt 2

* Joseph Stiglitz  
* ‘What I learned,’ *New Republic* 17 May 2000

* Joel Hellman  
* ‘Winners take all: the politics of partial reform’  

Anders Aslund  
* Russia’s Capitalist Revolution

Chrystia Freeland  
* Sale of the Century

David Hoffman  
* The Oligarchs: Wealth and Power in the New Russia

Marshall Goldman  
* The Piratization of Russia

Paul Klebnikov  
* Godfather of the Kremlin: Berezovsky and the Looting of Russia

**Oct 15**

**THE CHECHEN WARS**

Why did Chechnya try to secede from the Russian Federation? Why did Yeltsin invade Chechnya in December 1994, and why did the Russians lose the first war? Why did the second war break out in 1999? How did Putin win the war?

* Peter Rutland  
* ‘The Chechen war,’ ch. 7

Rajan Menon & G. Fuller  
* Russia’s ruinous Chechen war,’ *Foreign Affairs*, 79: 2, Mar 2000

Mark Kramer  
* ‘The perils of counter-insurgency: Russia’s war in Chechnya,’  

Anatol Lieven  
* Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power

Carlotta Gall & Thomas de Waal  
* Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus

Kavkaz Center  
* Chechen rebel web-site

**Friday Oct 16**

**SECOND ASSIGNMENT**  Topic: ‘The Russian transition’

Email the paper to <prutland> by 4.00 pm on Friday 16th. Write a 3-4 page paper on either:

a) Was there ever any chance of democracy taking root in Russia in the 1990s?  OR

b) Was shock therapy a mistake?  OR

c) How and why did power shift so quickly into the hands of the oligarchs?
The birth of the new states

What were the common challenges the new states faced?
Who held power in the new states, and what sorts of political regimes emerged?

* Gerry Easter  ‘Preference for presidentialism: Post-communist regime change’ World Politics, 49: 2, Jan 1997

What was Russia’s role in the post-cold war ‘new world order’?
Could Russia’s leaders – and society – make the mental transition from superpower to nation-state?

* Peter Rutland  ‘Russia’s foreign and security policy’ ch. 6
Vera Tolz  ‘Forging the Nation: National identity and nation-building in post-communist Russia’ Europe-Asia Studies, 50: 6, 993-1022
Valery Tishkov  ‘Consolidating civic nationalism in Russia,’ Foresight, 19 Jun 08

Central Asia

The Central Asian states set about building new nations – but did not take the democratic path.

* Stephen Kotkin  ‘Trashcanistan. A tour through the wreckage of the Soviet Empire,’ New Republic, 4 April 2002
* Pauline Luong Jones & Erika Weinthal  ‘Prelude to the resource curse. Explaining oil and gas development in the Soviet successor states,’ Comparative Political Studies, 34: 4, 2001
Cullen Murphy  ‘Get in touch with your inner Turkmenbashli,’ Atlantic, Nov 2002
Dmitri Trenin  The End of Eurasia

Fall Break – no classes

Third Assignment
Biographical profile for role-play 3-4 page essay.

The Caucasus

What were the causes of the wars that broke out in Azerbaijan and Georgia?
What are Russia’s interests in the region, and what role did Russia play in the 1990s?
What was the US interest in the region, and what role did the US play?
What would a solution to these conflicts look like?

Svante Cornell  ‘Autonomy as a source of conflict. Caucasian conflicts in theoretical perspective,’ World Politics, 54: 2, Jan 2002, 245-76
Thomas de Waal  The Caucasus; An Introduction
## Nov 3

**UKRAINE AND BELARUS**

How was national identity constructed in Belarus and Ukraine after the Soviet collapse? Why did Ukraine turn out to be *more* democratic than Russia – and Belarus *less* democratic?

* Keith Darden  
  ‘Blackmail as a tool of state domination: Ukraine under Kuchma,’ *East European Constitutional Review*, spring 2001

* Lucan Way  

Steven Levitsky & L. Way  
‘The rise of competitive authoritarianism’ *Jrn. of Demcracy* 13: 2, 2002

Adrian Karatnycky  
‘Ukraine at the crossroads,’ *Jour. of Democracy*, 6: 1, Jan 1995, 117-30

Andrew Wilson  
*The Ukrainians. Unexpected Nation*

David Marples  
‘Europe’s last dictatorship: the roots of authoritarianism in “White Russia.”’ *Europe-Asia Studies*, 57: 6, Sept. 2005

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## Nov 5

**THE BALTICS AND MOLDOVA**

Do you agree or disagree with the exclusionary citizenship policies adopted in Estonia and Latvia? How come Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were able to enter NATO and the EU so speedily? What’s the deal in Moldova?

Lowell Barrington  

Shirley Woods  
‘Ethnicity and nationalism in contemporary Estonia,’ in Chris Williams (ed) *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Russia, CIS and Baltic States* (1999)

Aris Jansons  
‘Latvia: Tempest in a textbook,’ *Transitions Online* 22 Feb 2006

Lucan Way  

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## Nov 10

**THE COLOR REVOLUTIONS**

While authoritarianism was strengthening in Russia, a wave of revolutions swept Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005 and again in 2010). Did they represent a breakthrough to genuine democracy? Why did color revolutions *not* take place in Uzbekistan, Belarus and Moldova?

* Charles Fairbanks  
  ‘Georgia’s rose revolution,’ *Journal of Democracy*, 15:2, Apr 2004

* Adrian Karatnycky  
  ‘Ukraine’s orange revolution,’ *Foreign Affairs*, 84: 2, Mar 2005

* Martha Brill Olcott  
  ‘Lessons of the tulip revolution,’ Testimony before OSCE, 7 Apr 2005

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

**The Orange Chronicles**  
Documentary about the 2004 Ukrainian revolution

Lucan Way  
‘Ukraine’s Orange Revolution,’ *Journal of Democracy*, 16:2 Apr 2005

Anders Aslund & Michael McFaul (eds)  
*Revolution in Orange: Ukraine’s Breakthrough*, 2006

David Lane  

Grzegorz Gromadzki et al  
Beyond Colors: Assets and Liabilities of ‘Post-Orange’ Ukraine, 2010

David Marples  

Iurie Rosca  
‘Moldova’s orange evolution,’ *Demokratizatsiya* 13: 4, 2005, 537-542

Roza Otunbayeva  
‘Kyrgyzstan’s tulip revolution,’ *Demokratizatsiya* 13: 4, 2005, 483-489

Eugene Huskey  
‘If you want to understand Kyrgyzstan,’ *Slate*, 9 Apr 2010
Monday, Nov 11

FOURTH ASSIGNMENT

Topic: Birth of a Nation

Email the paper to <prutland> by 4.00 pm on Monday Nov 11. Write a 3-4 page paper on one of the newly independent states (but not Russia). Briefly summarize its key features, including its ethnic make-up and political regime. Then select one challenge that the new state faced, and assess how it went about tackling it.

For information on your country see the readings listed for weeks 9-10, and check out these sites:

**BBC country profiles** Archive of recent stories about each country, plus historical timelines.

**Freedom House** Nations in Transit annual country reports, archive back to 2003.

**Eurasianet** Up-to-date reports on politics in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

**CA-CI Analyst** News and analysis on Central Asia and the Caucasus

**International Crisis Group** Reports on conflict situations in Central Asia and the Caucasus

Nov 12

FROM YELTSIN TO PUTIN

Yeltsin resigned on 31 December 1999 and handed power to Vladimir Putin. Where did Putin come from, and what were his goals? What kind of political system did he create? Topics include his cult of personality; limits on media freedom; and the construction of an administrative ‘power vertical.’

* Fiona Hill & Cliff Gaddy *Mr. Putin. Operative in the Kremlin* (2014)

* Peter Rutland *The rise of Putin,* ch. 12

* Vladimir Putin *First Person* (interviews with Putin) excerpted on the PBS website

Marshall Goldman ‘Putin and the oligarchs,’ *Foreign Affairs,* 83: 6, Nov. 2004

Nov 17

PUTIN IN POWER

The 2003 Yukos affair signaled that Putin was moving towards a more authoritarian system. Was Putin a dictator, or merely the head of a fractious oligarchic elite?

In 2008 Putin handed over the presidency to Medvedev – but stayed on as prime minister. Was authoritarianism the best political system for Russia at this point in its history?

* Peter Rutland ‘From Putin to Medvedev,’ ch. 15

* Vladimir Gellman *Authoritarian Russia* (2015)

Andrei Ryabov ‘How Russia works,’ *Russian Analytical Digest,* 49, 5 Nov 2008


Dmitry Medvedev ‘Go, Russia!’ 10 Sept 2009

CBC ‘The Putin system’ (2008 documentary)

Christiane Amanpour ‘Czar Putin’ (2009 CNN documentary)

Nov 19

NO CLASS

Instead, watch these documentaries about the Ukraine crisis

Vice News ‘Selfie soldiers. Russia checks in to Ukraine’ 06/16/2015 (20 mins)

ABC ‘MH17 Caught in the crossfire’ Australian Broadcast Corporation report on the July 2014 shootdown of MH17 over eastern Ukraine. (45 mins)
Nov 24 \hspace{0.3cm} \textbf{PUTIN RETURNS TO THE PRESIDENCY (2011-14)}

In 2009 Russia was badly hit by the global financial crisis. In Sept 2011 Putin announced that he was returning to the presidency, and this triggered a wave of protests in Dec 2011. In response Putin launched a crackdown on the opposition while promoting a new nationalist ideology. Meanwhile, Russia’s oligarchs continued to flourish – and on the global stage.

* Daniel Treisman \hspace{0.3cm} ‘Can Putin keep his grip on power?’ \textit{Current History}, Oct 2013
* Graeme Robertson \hspace{0.3cm} ‘Protesting Putinism: The election protests of 2011-12,’ \textit{Problems of Post-Communism}, 60: 2 (April 2013), 11-23
* Peter Rutland \hspace{0.3cm} ‘The political economy of Putin 3.0,’ \textit{RAD}, July 2013, 2-5
* Peter Rutland \hspace{0.3cm} ‘Explaining Pussy Riot,’ \textit{Nationalities Papers}, 42 (4) 2014, 575-82
* Neil Robinson \hspace{0.3cm} ‘Russia’s response to crisis,’ \textit{Europe-Asia Studies}, 65: 3 2013 450-72
* Connie Bruck \hspace{0.3cm} ‘The billionaire’s playlist,’ \textit{The New Yorker}, 20 Jan 2014

Nov 30 \hspace{0.3cm} \textbf{Role-play exercise} group declarations due by 4.00 pm.

Dec 1 \hspace{0.3cm} \textbf{PUTIN’S FOREIGN POLICY}

Putin set out to restore Russia as a great power – while the US saw Russia as a spent force. The causes and consequences of the 2008 war in Georgia; and the ‘gas wars’ with Ukraine. Was Obama’s reset of relations with Russia doomed from the start?

* Peter Rutland \hspace{0.3cm} ‘US foreign policy in Russia,’ in Mick Cox (ed.) \textit{US Foreign Policy}
* Dmitry Trenin \hspace{0.3cm} ‘Russia’s foreign policy’ in Anders Aslund et al, \textit{Russia After the Global Economic Crisis}, 2010, ch. 9
* Richard Boudreaux \hspace{0.3cm} ‘Russia’s fading army fights losing battle to reform,’ \textit{WSJ}, 5/20/11
* Charles King \hspace{0.3cm} ‘The five day war,’ \textit{Foreign Affairs}, Nov 2008, 2-11
* Andrew Kuchins \hspace{0.3cm} ‘US-Russia relations,’ in Anders Aslund et al, \textit{Russia After the Global Economic Crisis} 2010, ch. 12

Dec 3 \hspace{0.3cm} \textbf{CRISIS IN UKRAINE}

Russia and The EU competed to include Ukraine in their respective free trade zones. Protests erupted in Kyiv when President Yanukovich backed out of the EU treaty in Nov 2013. Yanukovich fled in Feb 2014, triggering Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March and the outbreak of war in east Ukraine.

Is Putin a new Hitler, or was he merely responding to Western provocations?

* Serhii Kudelia \hspace{0.3cm} ‘The house that Yanukovich built,’ \textit{Journal of Democracy} 25: 3 May 2014, 19-34
* Michael McFaul \hspace{0.3cm} ‘Confronting Putin’s Russia,’ \textit{New York Times}, 23 Mar 2014
* Dominique Arel \hspace{0.3cm} ‘Why Ukrainians fight over language,’ \textit{Foreign Affairs}, 18 March 2014
* John Mearsheimer \hspace{0.3cm} ‘Why the Ukraine crisis is the West’s fault,’ \textit{Foreign Affairs}, Sept 2014
* Anders Aslund \hspace{0.3cm} ‘Is the West to blame? Of course not,’ blog, 20 Aug 2014
Dec 8  THE PUTIN REGIME

An overview of the state of Putin’s Russia in 2015. Putin’s sky-high ratings, the scattered opposition, the tension between siloviki and oligarchs, the pressure caused by economic decline.

David Remnick  ‘Watching the eclipse,” New Yorker, 11 Aug 2014
Stephen White  ‘Russian presidential election’ Russian Analytical Dgst, 110, Mar 2012
Pavel Kanygin  ‘Russia, Dislike,’ NG, 1 June 2011. Why young Russians are emigrating.

Dec 9  FINAL ASSIGNMENT  POLICY PROPOSAL

3-4 page policy memo sent to the instructor by 4.00 pm on Dec 9.

Dec 10  POWER AND POLICY IN THE KREMLIN

Role-playing exercise in class on Dec 10.

Dec 15 Tuesday  FINAL EXAM
7.00-8.00 pm

Three short-answer questions from a list of 10, covering the whole range of material in the course but focusing on the evolution of Russian politics, domestic and foreign, from Yeltsin to Putin.