

Post-Communist Russian Empire

I used to think that this urge to glorify himself was a weakness unique to Stalin, but apparently men like Stalin and Mao are very similar in this respect: to stay in power, they consider it indispensable for their authority to be held on high, not only to make the people obedient to them, but to make the people afraid of them as well.

-Nikita Khrushchev, in 1970

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Office Hours: MW, 2:20-3:20, and by appointment
Registration: PSCI 215 (14190)
Class: McKee 424; MWF, 1:25-2:15

A century after the revolution, Moscow appears to have traded its Soviet and democratic experiments for a more enduring form. This course assesses the trajectory from tsarism to one-party Communism to electoral democracy. A multiparty democracy in the Yeltsin years, the Russian Federation under Putin has few contested elections and limited opportunities for the political opposition. This course first examines domestic and foreign policy in the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. Then, it surveys states on the edge of Russia's sphere of influence, Afghanistan and Turkey, both of which—like Russia—are experiencing a resurgence of their historically-specific pre-democratic politics.

Buy the following books:

1. Barfield, Thomas. 2010. *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
2. Cohen, Stephen F. 2011. *Soviet Fates and Lost Alternatives*. New York: Columbia University Press.
3. Kuru, Ahmet T. and Alfred Stepan, eds. 2012. *Democracy, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey*. New York: Columbia University Press.
4. Wood, Tony. 2018. *Russia Without Putin: Money, Power, and the Myths of the New Cold War*. London: Verso.

We will try to follow the schedule below, though contemporary politics and events may require a change.

Week 1 (8/23-8/27): End of Absolutism and the Rise of the Soviet Union

Didier Billion, “Ankara realpolitik,” *Le Monde Diplomatique* (October 2019).
Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Structure of Soviet Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 157-172.

Week 2 (8/30-9/3): Stalin, Khrushchev, and the Structure of the Soviet Union

Cohen, Ch. 2 (pp. 29-60)

William Smaldone, *European Socialism* (Boulder, CO: Roman and Littlefield, 2014), pp. 235-244.

Week 3 (9/6-9/10): The Mature Union and the Parade of Sovereignties

Cohen, Ch. 3 (pp. 61-84)

Henry E. Hale, “Divided We Stand: Institutional Sources of Ethnofederal State Survival and Collapse,” *World Politics* 56, no. 2 (2004): 165-193.

Week 4 (9/13-9/17): The Soviet Union Passes

Cohen, Ch. 4 (pp. 85-111) and Ch. 5 (pp. 112-140)

Marilyn Berger, “Boris N. Yeltsin, Who Buried the U.S.S.R., Dies at 76,” *The New York Times* (24 April 2007): A1.

Week 5 (9/20-9/24): The New Russian State, Yeltsin, and Putin

Wood, Introduction and Ch. 1 (pp. 1-28)

Week 6 (9/27-10/1): Dictatorship of Law

Wood, Ch. 2: Faces of Power (pp. 29-56)

Kathryn Hendly, “The Role of Law,” in Wengren (Ch. 4, pp. 83-102).

Stephen Holmes, “Fragments of a Defunct State,” *London Review of Books*, Jan. 5, 2012.

Week 7 (10/4-10/8): Russia Today

Wood, Ch. 4 (pp. 89-112), Ch. 5 (pp. 113-146), and Ch. 6 (pp. 147-172)

Derek Chollet, “Obama and Putin,” *Diplomatic History* 42, no. 4 (2018): 579-582.

Allen C. Lynch, “Putin and Trump,” *Diplomatic History* 42, no. 4 (2018): 583-585.

Paper 1 topic handed out

Week 8 (10/11-10/15): Russia’s Neighbors

Cohen, Ch. 7 (pp. 162-198) and Epilogue (pp. 199-220)

Scott G. Feinstein and Ellen B. Pirro, “Testing the world order: strategic realism in Russian foreign affairs,” *International Politics* (2021): forthcoming.

Paper 1 due

Week 9 (10/18-10/22): Minority Nationalities and the New Turkish State

Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilisation* (New York: Vintage, 2005). Ch. 10—“The First Holocaust.”

Kuru and Stepan, Introduction and Ch. 2: “The Historical Roots of Kemalism”

Week 10 (10/25-10/29): Pluralism and Democracy

Kuru and Stepan, Ch. 3: “Plural Society and Monolithic State”

Kuru and Stepan, Ch. 5: “A New Politics of Engagement”

Week 11 (11/1-11/5): Erdogan’s Turkey

[Essays to be assigned]

Week 12 (11/8-11/12): Peoplehood in Afghanistan, and the Region’s Long Struggle

Barfield, pp. 1-16, 17-32, 66-81, 110-111, 159-163

Week 13 (11/15-11/19): Twentieth Century Afghan Politics

Barfield, pp. 164-174, 200-210, 217-229

Week 14 (11/22-11/26): Soviets, Americans, Mujahedeen, Taliban

Thanksgiving—No Class Wednesday and Friday

Barfield, pp. 233-245, 255-270, 272-282, 293-300, 304-313, 337-350

Week 15 (11/29-12/3): Afghanistan’s Future

As’ad AbuKhalil, “U.S. defeat in Afghanistan—A contrast with the Soviet experience,” *Monthly Review Online* (August 16, 2021): <https://mronline.org/2021/08/16/u-s-defeat-in-afghanistan-a-contrast-with-the-soviet-experience-2/>.

[Additional essays to be assigned]

Paper 2 topic handed out

Week 16 (12/6-12/10): Final Exam Week

Monday, December 6th at 4:00pm: Paper 2 due

Grades will be based on leading class discussions, regular participation, and two papers. Handouts for written assignments will be provided. Final grades will be determined as follows:

- a. Questions and critical summary: 15%
- b. Participation, reading quizzes: 15%
- c. Paper 1: 35%
- d. Paper 2: 35%

A) You are asked to help lead a week's discussion on Canvas. One week, by Monday's class, you will bring a critical summary of the reading. Another week, also by Monday, you will bring roughly five thoughtful questions to spark a class discussion

B) Students are expected to be prepared for class each day. This means having completed the readings beforehand and coming to class with questions and comments. What surprised you? What inspired you? What infuriated you? Good participation does not mean that you know all the answers. Good participation means that you're thoughtfully engaged with the material. Grades are holistic and non-formulaic, based on the quality of your comments in class. Quizzes will only be given if it seems folks are not doing the assigned reading. Remember, this class is a safe space for discussing ideas. Students are expected to treat one another with respect and hold themselves to high academic standards. Class etiquette also means putting one's phone away for the session.

C) and D) Papers are essay-based analyses on the major ideas of the course. More information will be provided before the first paper is due.

Let me close with a few final notes. One, here is UNC's mask policy, lightly edited:

UNC's mask policy requires students, employees, and visitors to wear cloth face coverings over their nose and mouths at all times while in classrooms. Student failure to comply with UNC's mask requirement is subject to disciplinary action under the Code of Student Conduct. There is no individual medical exemption for wearing a mask in an in-person course; students who cannot wear a mask because of medical or psychological conditions can contact the Disability Resource Center to explore alternative course modalities. Exceptions include individuals who are fully vaccinated and engaged in indoor instructional activity or laboratory work and can maintain at least 6 feet from the nearest person.

Two, don't be a stranger. Got questions? Want to talk politics? Send me an e-mail or make an appointment for office hours. I like hearing from students. It shows that you care about the class and want to be involved. Given the volume of e-mails I receive, I cannot write back and forth like a text exchange. To me, and to employers out there, e-mails are more like letters. They should have a greeting/salutation, a message, and a closing. E-mails should contain relevant information and questions that the recipient can understand. E-mails don't have to be fancy. Many of you already do them just fine. But they are not text messages. However old-timey this sounds, a touch of e-mail formality will take you far in life.

Three, treat your syllabus as your primary guide to the course. You will need to keep it as a reference for the entire semester. Treat Canvas as a secondary resource. I will post announcements there, as well as all the readings.

Finally, I am excited for this class and for our great conversations!