CIEE in St. Petersburg, Russia

Course name: Contemporary Russian Politics and Governance
Course number: POLI 3003 RASP
Programs offering course: Russian Area Studies Program
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3 credits
Contact hours: 45 hours
Term: Spring 2019

Course Description
The course offers introduction to modern governmental system and politics of the Russian Federation. The course applies analytical approach to historical perspective of political, economic and social circumstances and tendencies which led to Russia’s birth; explores highlights of current Russia development. This course explores fundamental elements of modern Russian statecraft. Students are offered to investigate key dimensions of Russian domestic and foreign policy. Doing this students will address Russian and foreign expertise available through the publications of scholars in leading scientific journals, as well as through mass media and social media reports.

Learning Objectives
Completing this course students will be able to:
- Demonstrate understanding basic facts about Russia;
- Identify and explain the central principles, institutions, procedures and decision-making processes in Russia;
- Develop an analytical, social scientific disposition toward Russian politics.
- Evaluate the basic strengths and weaknesses of the political and governmental system of the Russian Federation;
- Students will have a stronger and more informed perspective on Russian domestic and foreign policy;
- Explain key sociopolitical developments in Russia;
- Relate historical events developments in the USSR to contemporary political issues and outcomes in the Russian Federation;
- Students will become familiar with a number of contemporary political issues and challenges that Russia faces and better understand their make-up and importance;
- Students will gain insights into the intricacies of Russian policy deliberation in various spheres;
- Students will be able to better comprehend other’s views and formulate, present and defend their own vision and positions on issues;
- Demonstrate skills in critical thinking;
- Distinguish students’ own views on Russian agenda from those of others and can defend their own perspective.
Course Prerequisites
Fundamentals in political science, geography, geopolitics, law, economics, psychology are required.

Methods of Instruction
The course consists of lectures and seminars. Lectures cover major episodes of Russian evolution as an independent state, specific problems of contemporary statecraft, and provides background into key modern policies and challenges of the Russian Federation. Seminars are founded mainly on specification, extension and expansion of suggested themes. Part of seminars will include student’s mini-research presentations on a given theme and follow-up discussions. Another part will be focused on debates based on home reading.

Assessment, Evaluation and Final Grade
Final grades for the course will be calculated as follows:
Class participation: 10%
Research presentation: 30%
Quizzes: 15%
Essay: 25%
Final test: 20%

Total: 100%

Course requirements
Class participation is essential for the successful completion of the course. A/P mark will be calculated by evaluation of attendance at the class, frequency and quality of contribution to the discussion. Each class is equipped with mandatory essential reading materials. Students are encouraged to contribute to the discussion related to the theme under consideration and share their ideas. In the beginning of the class each student is expected to report briefly fresh news in regard to Russian political, social or economic development.

Research presentation. Each student is expected to conduct three surveys on given themes and present the results of his/her researches at seminars. Each presentation will count for 10% of the course grade.

There will be three quizzes along the course based on the material of examined topics. Each quiz will amount for 5% of the course grade.
The list of themes for the essay will be disseminated on the third class. Students choose and reserve the theme for the essay by the next class by sending an email stating the choice to the course instructor. Students are free to suggest their themes for the essay, however each of the cases is subject to course instructor approval.

Requirements for the essay:
The essay should be 9-12 pages long.
Should contain: title page, introduction, argumentation, conclusion, bibliography.
Font: TNR, 12 point font size.
Margin: 2 cm on left, right, top and bottom.
Spacing: 1,5.
The text should be well structured, original, supplied by references.

Class Attendance
Attendance is crucial for successful completion of the class. Students are allowed to have two unexcused absences for each course for the whole semester program. These allowed unexcused absences should be used for situations such as minor illnesses without a doctor’s note or personal situations that prevent the student from attending the class. Allowed unexcused absences should not be used in a planned way for travel or other activities.
Unexcused absences beyond the limit of two will lower a student’s grade by 2 points on the 100-point scale each. For example, if your overall score in the class is 90 (an equivalent of A-) and you have had three unexcused absences, your final score will be 88 (B+).

Weekly Schedule and Design of the Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logic of the course</th>
<th>Historical approach</th>
<th>Realm of policy</th>
<th>Theme.</th>
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<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>Pre-Putin Russia</td>
<td>Domestic and Foreign policy</td>
<td>Russia’s portrait: reflection and distortion, images versus reality. Political culture and its impact on political process.</td>
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<td>2)</td>
<td>Domestic policy</td>
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<td>Reformation in 1990s</td>
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<td>3)</td>
<td>Domestic policy</td>
<td>Domestic policy</td>
<td>Governmental and Political Systemic foundations.</td>
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<td>4)</td>
<td>Russia under Putin rule</td>
<td>Domestic policy</td>
<td>Electoral system</td>
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<td>Parliamentarism</td>
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<td>6)</td>
<td>Russia under Putin rule</td>
<td>Domestic policy</td>
<td>Freedom of Speech and Mass Media</td>
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<td>7)</td>
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<td>Russian Economic policy</td>
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<td>8)</td>
<td>Russia under Putin rule</td>
<td>Domestic policy</td>
<td>Russian Security policy</td>
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<td>Russian Social policy</td>
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<td>10)</td>
<td>Foreign policy</td>
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<td>Russian Foreign policy.</td>
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<td>Week</td>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>Seminars</td>
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<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>Introduction.</strong></td>
<td>1.1. <strong>Russia and national identity</strong></td>
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<td>Introduction of the course to students.</td>
<td>1.2. <strong>Religious factor of socio-political</strong></td>
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<td>Students introduce themselves and their</td>
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<td>motivation and personal interests within the</td>
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<td><strong>Topic 1: Breaking Myths about Russia.</strong></td>
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<td>Political Culture of Russia and its Impact on</td>
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<td>Political Process.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td><strong>Topic 2: Evolution of Russian Political</strong></td>
<td>2.1. <strong>Political leadership.</strong></td>
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<td>System: from USSR to New Russia.</td>
<td>2.2. <strong>Who are you, Mr. Gorbachev?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2.1. Transition to independence:</strong></td>
<td>- Phenomenon of personality factor.</td>
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<td>Gorbachev, “Perestroika” and the Fall of the</td>
<td>2.3. <strong>Who are you Mr. Yeltsin?</strong></td>
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<td>USSR.</td>
<td>- Phenomenon of personality factor.</td>
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<td><strong>2.2 Transformation of Russian Political</strong></td>
<td>2.4. **Communist Party of the USSR: major</td>
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<td>Regime in 1990s.</td>
<td>features</td>
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<td>Yeltsin’s Domestic and Foreign Policy.</td>
<td>2.5. <strong>Revolutions in Eastern Europe of 1989</strong></td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td><strong>Topic 3. Russia - Institutional design:</strong></td>
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<td>modern governmental and administrative system.</td>
<td><strong>Political and economic elites in modern</strong></td>
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<td>constitutions – a comparative</td>
<td><strong>3.2. Key figures and connections in Russian</strong></td>
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<td>political and economic systems:</td>
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<td>Boris Yeltsin</td>
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**Course approaches / logic:**

**Historical approach:**
- ¼ - pre-Putin era.
- ¾ - Putin era.

**Realm approach:**
- ¾ - Domestic/Internal policy of Russia.
- ¼ - Foreign policy of Russia.

**Domestic policy:**
Problem approach: Electoral system, Mass media, Parliamentarism,

**Foreign policy:**
Global approach.
Regional approach.
<p>| | |</p>
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| **3.2. Executive branch of power:** | Vladimir Putin  
Dmitry Medvedev  
Sergey Sobianin  
Sergey Shoygu  
Other personalities  
**3.3. Legislative branch of power:** |  
**Council of Federation**  
**State Duma**  
**3.4. Judicial system and justice administration**  
**Law enforcement agencies of Russia and phenomenon of “siloviki”:** |
| **4. Topic 4. Reformation of Electoral system of Russia.** |  
**4.1. Foundations and key characteristics.**  
**4.2. Case study: prospects of online voting.**  
**4.1. Gender and Politics in Russia.**  
**4.2. Case studies: Elections to regional legislatures (St.Petersburg Legislative Assembly)** |
| **5. Topic 5. Parliamentarism and Political rivalry in Russia.** |  
**5.1. Development of Political parties in Russia.**  
**5.2. Theory of dominant party formation. False start of propresidential party.**  
**5.3. United Russia as the Dominant Party.**  
**5.1. Evolution of Political Opposition in Russia: Rise and Fall.**  
**5.2. Fight Against Corruption.**  
**5.3. Civil Society and Protest Movement.** |
**6.1. Rise and Fall of “Oligarchs”.**  
**6.2. Freedom of speech in Russia: critical analysis.**  
**6.3. NGOs struggling for freedom of speech political rights.** |
**Free market ideology. State-led Capitalism. Winners and Losers.**  
**7.1. Energy as an instrument of Russian Foreign policy.**  
**7.2. Competitive sectors of Russia Economy:**  
• Space industry;  
• Russia and international trade in weapons;  
• Agricultural sector  
• etc. |
**Russia’s Threat Perception.**  
**8.1. Russia-NATO relations.**  
**8.2. Russian Nuclear Potential and Balance of Power.** |
**9.1. Ethno-nationalism in Russia.**  
**9.2. Environmental risks legacy of Soviet Union and Environmental policy of Russia.**  
**9.3. Cyberspace regulation in Russia.** |
| **10. Topic 10. Key Characteristics of Russian Foreign policy.** |  
**10.1 Foundations, Aims and Means of Russian Foreign Policy.**  
**10.2. Russia in International organizations and associations:**  
10.3. UN;  
10.4. BRICS;  
10.5. Organization of Shanghai cooperation.**  
**10.1. Global challenges and Russian Foreign Policy.**  
**10.2. Russia in International organizations and associations:**  
10.3. UN;  
10.4. BRICS;  
10.5. Organization of Shanghai cooperation.**
Thematic plan:

Class 1.
Introductory class.
Introduction of the course to students.
Students introduce themselves; explain motivation, personal interests and expectations within the course framework.

Topic 1: Political Culture of Russia and its Impact on Political Process.
Breaking Myths about Russia.
Russia’s portrait: reflection and distortion, images versus reality.
Political culture and its effect on political process.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary reading:

Seminar 1.
1.1. Russia and national identity.
1.2. Religious factor of socio-political development of Russia.

Essential reading:

**Supplementary reading:**

**Class 2.**
**Topic 2: Evolution of Russian Political System: from USSR to New Russia.**

2.1. Transition to independence: Gorbachev, “Perestroika” and the Fall of the USSR.

**Essential reading:**

**Supplementary reading:**

2.2 Transformation of Russian Political Regime in 1990s. Boris Yeltsin’s Domestic and Foreign Policy.

**Essential reading:**

Supplementary reading:

Seminar 2.
1.1. Political leadership:
   Who are you, Mr. Gorbachev? - personality factor.
   Who are you Mr. Yeltsin? - personality factor.
1.2. Communist Party of the USSR: major features

Essential reading:

Supplementary reading:

Class 3.
Quiz.
Topic 3. Russia - Institutional design: modern governmental and administrative system.
  3.1. Constitution (Russian and the US constitutions – a comparative analysis)
  3.2. Executive branch of power:
     President
Government
3.3. Legislative branch of power:
   Council of Federation
   State Duma
3.4. Judicial system and justice administration

Essential reading:

Supplementary reading:

Seminar 3.
3.1. Political and economic elites in modern Russia.
3.2. Key figures and connections in Russian political and economic systems:
   Boris Yeltsin
   Vladimir Putin
   Dmitry Medvedev
   Sergey Sobianin
   Sergey Shoygu
   Other personalities
3.4. Law enforcement agencies of Russia and phenomenon of “siloviki”.

Essential reading:
- Rivera David W., Rivera Sharon Werning. The Militarization of the Russian Elite under Putin: What We Know, What We Think We Know (but Don’t), and What We Need to Know // Problems of Post-Communism, March 2017. pp. 1–12.

Supplementary reading:

Class 4.
Topic 4. Reformation of Electoral system of Russia.
  4.1. Foundations and key characteristics.
  4.2. Case study: prospects of online voting.

Essential reading materials:

Supplementary reading:

Seminar 4.
  4.1. Gender and Politics in Russia.
  4.2. Case studies: Elections to regional legislatures (St.Petersburg Legislative Assembly)

Supplementary reading:
• Wegren Stephen K., Nikulin Alexander, Trotsuk Irina, Golovina Svetlana. Gender inequality in Russia's rural informal economy // Communist and Post-Communist Studies, 2017. 50, pp. 87-98.

Class 5.
Topic 5. Parliamentarism and Political rivalry in Russia.
  5.1. Development of Political parties in Russia.
  5.2. Theory of dominant party formation. False start of propresidential party.
  5.3. United Russia as the Dominant Party.

Essential reading:

Supplementary reading:

Seminar 5.
  5.1. Evolution of Political Opposition in Russia: Rise and Fall.
  5.2. Fight against Corruption.
  5.3. Civil Society and Protest Movement.

Essential reading:

Supplementary reading:

Class 6.

Essential reading:

Supplementary reading:

Seminar 6.
6.1. Rise and Fall of “Oligarchs”.
6.2. Freedom of speech in Russia: critical analysis.
6.3. NGOs struggling for freedom of speech political rights.

Essential reading:
**Supplementary reading:**
- Gel’man Vladimir. The Rise and Decline of Electoral Authoritarianism in Russia.

**Class 7.**  
**Quiz.**  
**Topic 7. Russian Policies: Modern Economic Policy.**  
**Free market ideology. State-led Capitalism. Winners and Losers.**

**Essential reading:**

**Supplementary reading:**

**Seminar 7.**  
**7.1. Energy as an instrument of Russian Foreign policy.**  
**7.2. Competitive sectors of Russia Economy:**  
  a. Space industry;  
  b. Russia and international trade in weapons;  
  c. Agricultural sector etc.

**Essential reading:**

**Supplementary reading:**

Class 8.

Seminar 8.
8.1. Russia-NATO relations.
8.2. Russian Nuclear Potential and Balance of Power.

Class 9.

Essential reading:

Supplementary reading:

Seminar 9.
9.1. Ethno-nationalism in Russia.
9.2. Environmental risks legacy of Soviet Union and Environmental policy of Russia.
9.3. Cyberspace regulation in Russia.

Essential reading:

Supplementary reading:
• Ellen Martus. Contested policymaking in Russia: industry, environment, and the “best available technology” debate // Post-Soviet Affairs, 2017 vol. 33, №. 4, pp. 276–297
• Carolina Vendil Pallin. Internet control through ownership: the case of Russia // Post-Soviet Affairs, 2017 vol. 33, №. 1, pp. 16–33.

Class 10.
10.1 Foundations, Aims and Means of Russian Foreign Policy.
10.3 Key vectors of Russian Foreign Policy:
• Multilateral Relations.
• Bilateral Relations.
10.4 Regional Approach: Phenomenon of Near Abroad and Post Soviet Area.

Essential reading:

Supplementary reading:

Seminar 10.
10.1. Global challenges and Russian Foreign Policy.
10.2. Russia in International organizations and associations:
10.3. UN
10.4. BRICS
10.5. Organization of Shanghai cooperation

Essential reading:

Supplementary reading:

Class 11.
Quiz.

Topic 11. Russia and the West:
- 11.1. Russia-US Relations.
- 11.2. Russia-EU Relations.

Seminar 11.
- 11.1. Anti Russian sanctions and their impact over political and economic conditions in Russia.
- 11.2. Russian Soft power: cultural, educational programs etc.
- 11.3. Arctic and Antarctic priorities of Russian Foreign policy (case studies).

Essential reading:

Supplementary reading:
Class 12.
Topic 12. Russia and the East:
   12.1 Russian Political Alliances in the Asia-Pacific Region.
   12.2 Russian Priorities for Economic Cooperation in Asia.

Seminar 12.
   12.1. Russia-China relations: 1) political, 2) economic.
   12.2. Russia-Japan relations: 1) political, 2) economic.
   12.3. Russian political and economic priorities in Africa.

Essential reading:

Supplementary reading:

Readings
The course reading materials include scholarly articles selected for each theme or class. Each class is supplied with mandatory essential reading (usually one article per class) and supplementary reading materials. Students are recommended to read at least one publication from the list of supplementary materials for each class. Reading materials will be available on Google drive folder or another digital platform (to be announced). St. Petersburg University library digital resources (including full text articles/publications) are available to students while on campus.

Online resources
Students are strongly encouraged to maintain familiarity with “Russian course” by following news flows related to Russia (e.g. Russia Today - https://russian.rt.com/).