Administrative Unit: History and Social Sciences Department

Course Prefix and Number: POSC 317

Course Title: Politics of Russia and Eurasia

Number of: Credit Hours: 3  Lecture Hours: 3  Laboratory Hours: 0

Catalog Description: Study of the government and politics of Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union. The course will examine the historical legacy of communism and analyze the process of political and economic transition since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Offered Odd Spring.

Prerequisite(s)/Corequisite(s): None.

Text(s): Most current editions of the following:


Brown, Archie.  *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*. Oxford UP.


Any appropriate text for a course in Russian and Eurasian Politics.

Course Objectives:

- To compare and contrast the structure and functioning of Soviet and post-Soviet political and economic structures in Russia and select other countries of the former Soviet Union.
- To explore the historical, ideological and institutional legacy of the Soviet period.
- To examine the challenges faced by Russia and the other successor states as they make the economic and political transition away from communism.
- To relate developments in Russia and other successor states to theories of democratic transition.
- To investigate Russia’s relations with the U.S. and other countries.
Measurable Learning Outcomes

- Describe and explain significant events and periods of leadership that shaped the development of contemporary Russia and Eurasia, including those of Peter the Great, Lenin, Stalin, Brezhnev, Gorbachev and Yeltsin.
- Describe and explain the principles of Marxism-Leninism.
- Compare and contrast the workings of a command and market economy.
- Explain the factors leading to the dissolution of the Soviet Union.
- Describe Russia’s 1993 Constitution and assess its impact, in particular, the balance of power among political actors.
- Explain the role of the executive, legislature, and political parties in Russian political life.
- Describe and assess efforts to reform the military and judiciary.
- Explain the concept of political culture and describe Russian political culture.
- Explain the practice of Russian Federalism.
- Explain the economic transition in Russia, including the policy of shock therapy and methods of privatization.
- Assess the current state of the Russian economy and describe current reform efforts.
- Explain Russia’s fundamental foreign policy goals and assess Russia’s success in achieving them.
- Compare and contrast the political and economic transition of Russia with selected other post-Soviet successor states.
- Apply theories of democratic transitions to Russia and post-Soviet successor states.

Topical Outline (major areas of coverage):

- Fundamentals of Russian History
- The Soviet Period
  - Historical Overview
  - Ideology of Marxism-Leninism
  - Principles and institutions of Government and Economic Planning
  - Gorbachev: Glasnost and Perestroika
  - The Collapse of the USSR
- Politics in Russia
  - Politics and Political Institutions in the Russian Federation
  - Representation and Participation in the Russian Federation
  - Regionalism in Russia
  - Political Economy and Development in the Russian Federation

Note: A significant, intensive writing component is required for this course. The requirement may be satisfied by a single type-written paper of twelve pages in length or more, properly cited, or by multiple assignments of equivalent length.
- Foreign Policy Challenges
- Politics in the former Soviet Republics
- Prospects for the Future.

Material from this course may be tested on the Major Field Test (MFT) administered during the Culminating Experience course for the degree.

Recommended maximum class size for this course: 30

Library Resources: Online databases are available at http://www.ccis.edu/offices/library/resources.asp. You may access them from off-campus using your eServices login and password when prompted.

Prepared by: Brian Kessel

Date: September 27, 2005

NOTE: The intention of the master syllabus is to provide an outline of the contents of this course, as specified by the faculty of Columbia College, regardless of who teaches the course, when it is taught or where it is taught. Faculty members teaching this course for Columbia College are expected to facilitate learning pursuant to the course objectives and cover the subjects listed in the topical outline. However, instructors are also encouraged to cover additional topics of interest so long as those topics are relevant to the course’s subject. The master syllabus is, therefore, prescriptive in nature but also allows for a diversity of individual approaches to course material.

Office of Academic Affairs
12/04