

Professor Ted Gerber

Office Hours: Wednesday 2-4, or by appointment (Social Science Building, Room 4450)

Phone: 262-5033

E-mail: tgerber@ssc.wisc.edu

Few countries in history have experienced such dramatic economic, political, and social changes in such a short period of time as Russia has during the last two decades. This course will examine these changes in detail and analyze them from a variety of social science perspectives. We cannot understand recent developments in Russia without some knowledge of the Soviet system, so we will start with a brief review of the history and key features of the Soviet system, with special attention to its final years when Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms set off a chain of events that ultimately led to its collapse at the end of 1991. We will then study the key political and economic changes that Russia experienced during the 1990s, a decade marked by repeated crises, instability, and turbulence under the leadership of the first Russian President, Boris Yeltsin. Next, we will consider how the political and economic situations have evolved under the administration of Russia's second president, Vladimir Putin. During the last third of the course, we will shift from economics and politics into the realms of civil society, culture, and demography, taking up such topics as the growth and limitations of non-governmental organizations, the influence of Western assistance and Western cultural practices, and Russia's population crisis.

Although we must cover a fair amount of history and current events in order to understand contemporary Russia, the course is intended to go beyond timelines and headlines by exploring the significance of Russia's post-Soviet transformation for social science theories. To this end, five broad questions (or, perhaps more accurately, sets of questions) provide a framework for our approach to these topics:

1. What roles have Soviet history, long-term Russian cultural traditions, and the policy advice and assistance of foreign countries played in shaping Russia's economic, political, and social trajectories since the Soviet collapse?
2. What kind of capitalist economy has emerged in Russia after the demise of the Soviet Union, how is it linked to the changes in Russia's socio-economic structure, and what does the Russian experience teach us about the nature of capitalism?
3. In what sense have Russian politics moved toward and away from democracy during the 1990s and 2000s, and what do these shifts teach us about the meaning of and preconditions for stable democracy?
4. How closely do Russians identify with "Western" models of economy, politics, and society and what are the alternative sources of identity that appeal to them?
5. Does Russia's "population crisis" stem mainly from the economic and political crises accompanying the Soviet collapse or does it reflect longer-term socio-cultural transformation?

Texts

All readings listed on the schedule are required. The books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore (and copies will be placed on two-hour reserve at the College Library):

- Anders Aslund. 2007. *Russia's Capitalist Revolution: Why Market Reform Succeeded and Democracy Failed*. Peter G. Peterson Institute for International Economics.
- Timothy J. Colton. 2008. *Yeltsin: A Life*. Basic Books.
- Julie DaVanzo and Clifford Grammich. 2001. *Dire Demographics: Population Trends in the Russian Federation*. RAND Corporation.
- Sarah L. Henderson. 2003. *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations*. Cornell University Press.
- David Hoffman. 2003. *The Oligarchs: Wealth and Power in the New Russia*. Public Affairs. (Perseus).
- Moshe Lewin. 2005. *The Soviet Century*. Verso.
- Hilary Pilkington. 2003. *Looking West: Cultural Globalization and Russian Youth Culture*. Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Lilia Shevtsova. 2005. *Putin's Russia*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Format

The course consists primarily of lectures. Lecture outlines in Powerpoint format will be available in advance at the course's [Learn@UW](https://learnuw.wisc.edu) website (<https://learnuw.wisc.edu>). We will have six large group discussions that will relate course readings to themes covered in the lectures. In addition, we will have two guests: Dr. Jennifer Tishler, Associate Director of the Center for Russia, East Europe, and Central Asia (CREECA) will give a brief presentation about the Center and show slides from her recent trip to Russia on September 25. Professor Timothy Colton of Harvard University will come to our class for a question and answer session on October 9 in connection with his visit to UW to give a lecture on Boris Yeltsin. Finally, I will show two Russian films outside of class. Students who cannot attend the showings can check them out of College Library reserves.

Requirements

Students are expected to attend class, complete reading assignments on time, and participate in class discussions. These components count for 10% of your grade. In addition, there are four requirements involving written work:

1. Six reading reaction essays. These are brief (two-pages, single spaced) essays that both summarize assigned readings *and* provide comments, questions, analyses, and criticisms in response to them. They are designed to insure that you not only complete the reading but reflect on how themes from the texts related to the themes in the lectures. Your written reactions will, in turn, serve as the basis for our class discussions. I will provide a handout with more details on these assignments. The reaction essays are worth 25% of your overall grade.
2. A closed-book, in-class midterm examination on October 23 (short answers and brief essays). The midterm, worth 20% of your grade, will test your mastery of the material from the first half of the course.

3. A take-home essay exam, due Tuesday, December 15, worth 25%. The final will focus mainly, but not exclusively, on themes from the second half of the course.

4. A short (5-6 page) paper on a topic related to the class, due on December 11, worth 20%. I will provide some suggested topics along with recommended readings and other sources. You must turn in an abstract (brief summary) of your topic paper on or before November 25.

I also offer up to five points of extra credit for attending lectures or other campus events related to course themes (see CREECA's website, <http://www.creeca.wisc.edu/>, for possibilities) or doing extra reading. A one-page (single spaced) reaction to the lecture, event, or reading is required to earn a point of extra credit.

SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Sep 2/4) Introduction, Geography, and the early Soviet Period

Week 2 (Sep 9/11) Historical Background: Stalinism and Stagnation

Sep 11: Read Lewin, Introductions, chs. 4-6, 8-13, 15, 16, 22-27
DUE: Reading reaction 1 (Lewin)

Week 3 (Sep 16/18) Historical Background: Gorbachev and Perestroika

Sep 16: Discussion: What was the Soviet system?
Sep 18: Read Aslund chs. 1-2

Week 4 (Sep 23/25) Transition: Political and Economic Change in the 1990s

Sep 23: Read Colton, chs. 1-9
Sep 25: Guest: Dr. Jennifer Tishler (slide show)

Week 5 (Sep 30/Oct 2) Transition: Political and Economic Change in the 1990s

Sep 30: Read Colton, chs. 10-17
DUE: Reading reaction 2 (Colton)
Oct 2: Discussion: Assessing the Yeltsin era

Week 6 (Oct 7/9) Transition: Political and Economic Change in the 1990s

Oct 7: Read: Hoffman, chs. 1-7
Oct 9: Guest: Professor Timothy Colton

Week 7 (Oct 14/16) Economic transformation: market transition and social structure

Oct 14: Read: Hoffman, chs. 8-16
DUE: Reading reaction 3 (Hoffman)
Oct 16: Discussion: Crony capitalism and market transition theory

Week 8 (Oct 21/23) Economic transformation: market transition and social structure

Oct 21: Read Aslund, chs. 3-4, 6-8
Oct 23: *Midterm Exam in Class*

Week 9 (Oct 28/30) Political change: democracy or order?

Oct 28: Read: Shevtsova 1-6

Week 10 (Nov 4/6) Political change: democracy or order?

Nov 4: Read: Shevtsova 7-13
DUE: Reading Reaction 4
Nov 6: Discussion: Putin and democracy

Week 11 (Nov 11/13) Social and cultural change: NGOs and Civil Society

Nov 11: Read: Henderson, chs.1, 2

Week 12 (Nov 18/20) Social and cultural change: NGOs and Civil Society

Nov 18: Read: Henderson, chs. 3, 4-6
DUE: Reading Reaction 5 (Henderson)
Nov 20: No class

Week 13 (Nov 25/27) Social and cultural change: West vs. East

Nov 25: Discussion: Assessing Western assistance
DUE: Abstract for topic paper
Nov 27: No class (Thanksgiving)

Week 14 (Dec 2/4) Social and cultural change: West vs. East

Dec 2: Read: Pilkington chs. 1, 4-8
DUE: Reading Reaction 6 (Pilkington)
Dec 4: Discussion: competing sources of youth identity

Week 15 (Dec 9/11) Population change: crisis or transition?

Dec 9: Read: DaVanzo and Grammich
Dec 11: *DUE: Topic Papers*
Take-home final exam handed out, due Tuesday, December 15.