Political Science 100, Fall 2012  
First Year Interest Group: Russian Politics and Culture  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  

Thursdays 1:15PM - 3:45PM, Sterling 1335  
See the Learn@UW website for more course information  

Professor:  
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Course description and objectives  
Few countries have experienced such dramatic political, economic and social changes in such a short period of time as Russia has during the last two decades; at the same there are some enduring continuities in Russia from the Czarist period through the Soviet period and to the present. This FIG will provide students with the tools necessary to examine Russia’s profound transformation, and its continuing influence on the world stage, from both a social science and humanities perspective, providing an interdisciplinary basis for understanding Russian culture and politics.  

This course, Political Science 100, "Russian Politics and Culture," is the linking seminar of the FIG. The course will be a writing-intensive seminar where students will be introduced to some key concepts in comparative politics as they relate to Russia such as the state, the party and electoral system, regime type (authoritarianism), and also the social system in terms of class, national and ethnic identities, and transformations of the economy. Many of these concepts appear in Russian literature and understanding the political and social system from a social science perspective will provide a context for the first linked course, Lit Trans 201/203: Survey of 19th Century Russian Literature in Translation I, taught by Professor David Bethea. While the political science seminar will provide the social science concepts to support understanding of works covered in the literature course, the literature course will also enhance students' understanding of contemporary Russian politics and culture. The second linked course will be Slavic 101: First-semester Russian, which will provide students with an introduction to speaking, listening, reading and writing Russian, as well as further exposure to Russian culture.  

Essential learning outcomes:  
This FIG will address several "essential learning outcomes" of the LEAP initiative (http://www.aacu.org/leap/vision.cfm). Students' knowledge of human cultures will be enhanced by their exploration of Russia through the prism of its political system, culture, literature, and language. This course will place a great emphasis on critical thinking and writing skills. The final project will be done in small groups and will help students to gain competence in communication skills and teamwork. The connection between the literature and politics course combined with the language course will provide an integrated learning experience where each course will build on and support the other courses.  

We hope this FIG will inspire students to continue their study of Russian area and language studies as they progress through UW-Madison.
Course requirements and grading

Reading preparation and participation in discussion: 10%
Three in-class explanation of concepts (3.33% each) 10%
Four Short Papers (10% each) 40%
Final Project 35%
Attendance and write-up for required 5 extra-curricular activities (1% each) 5%
Total: 100%

Extra credit:
Attendance and write-up for up to 5 additional extra-curricular activities 5%

All grades based on in-class work will be posted on Learn@UW each week. Thus, you can track your grade throughout the semester

Reading, Preparation, and Participation:

• This is a discussion-based class and active participation is essential. Mere attendance is not full participation. Active participation means being prepared by doing the reading and thinking about the material so that you can ask and answer questions related to the course material in class.
• Absences will only be excused due to religious conflicts or medical issues; contact me as soon as possible, should a medical issue or religious conflict arise.
• Students are expected to attend for the full class period; arriving late or leaving the room during class will result in a lowered participation grade for the day.
• It is acceptable to use a laptop in class to take notes, but engaging in other work or online activity unrelated to the course during class will result in a lowered participation grade for the day.
• The grading scheme for discussion participation is:
  A = Attended and actively participated (e.g. raised hand, and seemed in command of readings and material)
  B = Attended and spoke, but without evidence of preparation
  C = Attended but did not speak
  F = Did not attend
Note that there is no "D" reflecting the large gap between attending and not attending. Also, there are no A/B or B/C grades, but those liminal grades will appear in the final course grades.

In-class explanation of concepts:

Students are responsible for reading all assigned material before class. There are no traditional lectures in this course; instead each week I will randomly choose five students and ask each of them to explain a concept from the week's readings. Students' explanations will be graded according to the following criteria:
  A = Outstanding explanation of concept, going beyond just description of text and offering original analysis
  B = Good explanation of concept, demonstrating adequate engagement with the text
  C = Minimally able to explain or describe concept, but only in the broadest terms
D = Unable to explain concept with any accuracy, suggesting a lack of reading
F = Did not attend

**Short Papers**

- Students will write 4 short papers. These papers should:
  a. Discuss all of the week's readings, although there does not have to be an equal amount of space for each reading
  b. Be completed on the day before the seminar and posted as a .pdf on the Learn@UW website by Wednesday at 9:00 am
  c. Be approximately, but no longer than 1000 words (approximately 2 single-spaced pages), and include page numbers and a word count at the top next to your name
  d. Use 12-point font.

All papers should include:
1. Part I (approximately 600 words) engages directly with the readings, providing an overview of the main issues, which demonstrates that you understand the material and that you are able to figure out what are the key points. You should comment on the positive and negative aspects of the work based on your analysis, not just summarize the authors' arguments.
2. Part II (approximately 300 words) is a focused paragraph at the end that is explicitly your own analysis of something in the readings, for example an application of an argument to an empirical case, or a topic you think merits further discussion.
3. Two discussion questions for the class at the end of your review (approximately 100 words).

**Paper grading criteria (point values given in parentheses):**

- A = Raised interesting or innovative points and paper is coherent and free of typos or other errors + fulfilled all A/B requirements (100)
- A/B = Included one focused paragraph on one issue/aspect of the reading and made a case for why that focus is justified + fulfilled all B requirements (90)
- B = Accurately captured key aspects of the main arguments of the readings in the essay and provided relevant discussion questions (85)
- B/C = Discussed some aspect of the readings and provided discussion questions (80)
- C = Egregiously inaccurate or incomplete discussion of readings or missing questions (75)

- Late papers will be marked down one grade if not posted by 9 am the day before, 2 grades down if not posted by 12:00 pm on the day of class.
- Papers with a significant number of grammatical or spelling errors will be marked down one grade. Make sure to proofread.

**Final Project**

Students will work in groups to develop a paper and presentation that explores one topic in Russian politics (based on the weekly topics covered in class), its connections with Russian literature (based on literature covered in Lit/Trans 201/203) and the resources available to study this topic at UW-Madison. Each group will:

- Consist of 4-5 students; groups will be set up on Sept. 6th in class
Collectively choose the Russian political topic and which literary work(s) to connect to the political topic;
- I encourage you to sign up for my office hours to discuss the topic and also to see Prof. David Bethea to discuss the literary choices.
- **A one page summary of the topic and potential literary work(s) is due at 11:00 am on Oct. 3 on Learn@UW as .pdf**
  - Include a title, one-paragraph discussion of the political topic, one-paragraph discussion of the literary work(s), and the connections between them

Develop a plan for gathering information about the possibility of studying this topic & literature at UW-Madison, including consideration of library resources, course offerings, and available faculty.
- **A two-page summary of this plan is due at 11:00 am on Oct. 17 on Learn@UW as .pdf**

Gather information on resources at UW-Madison by examining library resources, consulting the course catalog, and interviewing relevant faculty.

Write a 2500 word paper (approximately 10 double-spaced pages) discussing the political topic, how it relates to Russian literature and what resources are available to study this topic at UW-Madison.
- **Paper is due at 11:00 am on Nov. 28 on Learn@UW as .pdf**
  - Paper should consist of introduction, plus 3 parts as described above

Develop a five to seven-slide presentation (using PowerPoint, Pages, or a similar program) based on the paper
- **Slides are due at 11:00 am on Dec. 5 on Learn@UW as .pdf**

**Jointly present the project in class on Dec. 13**

**Presentation at a local high school in December.** Date/time/place to be worked out in cooperation with CREECA's outreach coordinator, Nancy Heingartner.

**Extra-Curricular Events and Extra Credit**
This class is interdisciplinary and takes an inclusive approach to learning about Russian politics and culture. It also includes the goal of introducing students to various Russia-themed events in the Madison area and on the UW-Madison campus. Therefore attendance at extracurricular activities is an essential part of the course. Because student schedules may not permit attendance at every extra curricular event, only 5 events are required, but students may choose an additional 5 for extra credit. See the attached list of Extra-Curricular Events and the CREECA website (click on "Events") at http://www.creeca.wisc.edu. The required events are:
- Sat. Sept. 22 at 8 PM, Madison Symphony Orchestra, Russia concert; dinner before at 6:00 pm.
- Thurs. Oct. 11, 12:00 pm and 4:00 pm: Lunch and CREECA lecture by Marie Mendras, Professor at Sciences Po University and Research Fellow with the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) in Paris, , 206 Ingraham Hall
- Sat., Oct. 20, 7:00 p.m., Guerman's film, *My Friend, Ivan Lapshin*, 4070 Vilas Hall
- Thurs. Oct. 25, 4:00 pm: CREECA Faculty Roundtable "Contemporary Russian Literature and Society", 206 Ingraham Hall
- Thurs., Nov. 29, 4:00 pm: CREECA lecture, "Imperfect Institutional Change: Peasant Disturbances Before and After Russia's Emancipation Reform of 1861," Scott Gehlbach, Professor of Political Science, UW-Madison, 206 Ingraham Hall
For each event that you attend, you should write a short reflection essay (approximately 250-300 words, which is about one-half of one single-spaced page). In this essay you should reflect on how the event connects to the class. For example, what topics or themes from class did the event make you think of, what new ideas did it prompt, and/or how did it change your views of Russia. Each essay is worth 1% of the final grade.

**Other course policies**

Disability accommodations:
People with disabilities will be fully included in this course. Please inform me if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments of this course to enable you to participate fully. Confidentiality of the shared information will be strictly maintained. Certain accommodations may require the assistance of the McBurney Disability Office on campus. The McBurney Disability Resource Center can be reached at (608) 263-2741 or via email at mcburney@odos.wisc.edu.

Contacting me:
• Feel free to talk with me before or after class, go to my office hours, or send me an email. You don’t need to make an appointment to go to office hours – just come!

**Course readings**

The following book is required:
The book is also available at the Reserve Section of the Helen C. White College library.

Recommended book (chapters will be available online):

In addition to these books, there are some assigned articles or book chapters available on the Learn@UW course website.

**Class schedule and readings**

**Thurs., Sept. 6: Introduction to the Course**
• No assigned readings

**Thurs., Sept. 13: From communist to postcommunist rule**
Thurs., Sept. 20: Voters, parties and parliament  
- Library visit: meet at memorial library; room TBA  
- White, *Understanding Russian Politics*: chp. 2, pp. 27-70.

Sat., Sept. 22: Required event: Madison Symphony Orchestra, 8:00 pm; dinner at 6:00 pm

Thurs., Sept. 27: Presidential government  

Wed. Oct. 3: Final Project: A one page summary of the topic and potential literary work(s) is due at 11:00 am on Learn@UW as .pdf

Thurs., Oct. 4: Contemporary Political protests  

Thurs., Oct. 11: The State  

Thurs., Oct. 11, 2012, 12:00 and 4:00: Required events: Lunch (Place TBA) and CREECA Lecture, "Russian Politics: The Paradox of a Weak State," Marie Mendras, Professor at the Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences Po University, 206 Ingraham

Wed. Oct. 17: Final Project: A two-page summary of this plan is due at 11:00 am on Learn@UW as .pdf

Thurs., Oct. 18: From Plan to Market  
- White, *Understanding Russian Politics*: chp. 4, pp. 115-162.

Sat., Oct. 20, 7:00 p.m.: Required event: Alexsei Guerman: The Complete Features A Cinematheque Film: *My Friend, Ivan Lapshin*, 4070 Vilas Hall

Thurs., Oct. 25: A Divided Society  
Thurs. Oct. 25, 2012, 4:00: Required event: CREECA Faculty Roundtable "Contemporary Russian Literature and Society", 206 Ingraham Hall

Thurs., Nov. 1: Contemporary Russian nationalism

- Brandenberger, David. 2010. "Stalin's populism and the accidental creation of Russian national identity," Nationalities Papers 38:5 (September), 723-739, and responses to this article by Marples, Umland, Luks, and Brandenburger.

Recommended only

Thurs., Nov. 8: Changing times, changing values

- White, Understanding Russian Politics: chp. 6, pp. 219-262.

Thurs., Nov. 15: Film

- In-class film, My perestroika, 2010, directed and filmed by Robin Hessman

Nov. 22: Thanksgiving – No Class

Wed. Nov. 28: Final Project: Paper is due at 11:00 am on Learn@UW as .pdf

Thurs., Nov. 29: Russia and the wider world


Thursday, November 29, 2012; 4:00 pm: Required event: CREECA lecture, "Imperfect Institutional Change: Peasant Disturbances Before and After Russia’s Emancipation Reform of 1861," Scott Gehlbach, Professor of Political Science, UW-Madison, 206 Ingraham

Wed. Dec. 5: Final Project: Presentation slides are due at 11:00 am on Learn@UW as .pdf

Thurs., Dec. 6: What kind of system?


Thurs., Dec. 13: Concluding Discussion and Student Slide Presentations

- Student papers (downloadable from Learn@UW)

Present the slide presentation at a local high school in December. Date/time/place TBA