Nations and Nationalisms in the Former USSR

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Seminars: Wednesdays, 4-6
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**Reading List Arranged By Week**  

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<td>Section Two</td>
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<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>26</td>
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Course Description

The collapse of the USSR along national lines surprised most contemporary observers in 1991. Over the next twenty years, as cultural, political, and military conflicts shook Eastern Europe and Central Asia, they raised troubling questions about the reach and claims of national identities and nationalisms in the region. A historical and transnational approach is crucial for understanding these issues, for key associations and overlapping fault lines were established in the late Soviet period. By examining how the nominally socialist Soviet state dealt with its multi-ethnic population, this course illuminates key aspects of post-communist transformations in Ukraine and other countries of the former USSR.

The course is divided into three thematic sections: state building and modernisation; centre-periphery dynamics; and interethnic conflict and violence. In the first few weeks, we will explore the relationship between national identities, nationalisms and state building in the former USSR: How did the Soviet state use nationalism to control and transform its vast territory? To what extent did nationalism pose a challenge to the Soviet state? How far have post-Soviet states mobilised national sentiment to gain legitimacy? The second part of the course explores the evolving notions of ‘centres’ and ‘peripheries’ in the former USSR: What was the extent of Russification in the former USSR? Has the idea of a ‘Soviet people’ survived the collapse of the USSR, and is Russia still the centre of the post-Soviet world? What is the relationship between regional and national identities in Soviet successor states? Finally, in the third part of the course, we will concentrate on national conflict and interethnic violence: What are the roots of far right ideologies in the region? To what extent do separatist movements threaten Soviet successor states? Why has the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in so much bloodshed in the Caucasus?

Engaging with history and political science literature, students will gain experience in handling a wide range of sources. More broadly, by exploring particular case studies and relevant theories, they will reflect upon the origins and the meaning of nations and nationalisms in the modern world.

Course Objectives:

- To analyse the scope and claims of national identities and nationalisms in the former USSR
- To examine Russian and Soviet history through the prism of the nationalities question
- To acquire an understanding of theoretical issues surrounding national identities and nationalisms
- To adopt interdisciplinary approaches to the study of the former USSR
- To gain experience handling a wide range of primary and secondary sources
- To improve research and analytical skills
- To improve written and oral communication skills
Seminar Schedule

1) Introduction: What is a nation? (11 January)

Section I: State-building and modernisation

2) The USSR as a Communal Apartment (18 January)
3) State and Socialism in Central Asia (25 January)
4) Ukrainian Roads to Independence (1 February)

Section II: Centres and peripheries

5) Where are the Russians? (8 February)
6) The ‘Near Abroad’ (15 February)
7) The Western Borderlands (29 February)
8) No class/Individual essay meetings (week beginning 5 March, times to be arranged)

Section III: Conflict and violence

9) The Far Right (14 March)
10) Separatism (21 March)
11) Inter-Ethnic Violence in the Caucasus (28 March)

12) Conclusions: Nationalism, Soviet Patriotism and Communist Nostalgia (4 April)
Assessment

- FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY. 3 position papers, each worth 10% of the final mark. Students will be divided into three groups, and will produce position papers by the following deadlines:

Group 1: 18 January, 8 February, 14 March
Group 2: 25 January, 15 February, 21 March
Group 3: 1 February, 29 February, 28 March

In other words, each student will write 3 position papers. In a position paper, you should outline a clear answer to the question set for the class when your deadline falls (see questions below). Position papers should not exceed 750 words. Of course, your argument will not be as carefully considered as it would be in an essay, but writing position papers will help you develop opinions about the kinds of issues which you will later discuss in class. You should hand in your position papers to me in class. I will then read them and give you feedback the next week.

- FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY. Book review due on 15 February, to be handed in during class (no more than 2,000 words, including footnotes). 30% of the final mark.

You need to write a review of one of the books listed below. You should not just aim to summarise the argument, but also to assess how the book contributes to wider literature and our understanding of nations and nationalism in the USSR and its successor states. You should adopt a critical approach, analysing the author’s methodology and use of evidence, providing illustrative examples. Your reviews will be structured like an essay, with a strong introduction and conclusion. You must make sure that they contain an argument of your own.

Please choose from one of the following texts:

J. Breuilly, Nationalism and the state (1993)


W.J. Risch, The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv (2011)


S. Yekelchyk, Stalin's empire of memory: Russian-Ukrainian relations in the Soviet historical imagination (2004)
Analytical Essay due on **4 April, to be handed in during class** (no more than 5,000 words for undergraduates, no more than 8,000 words for graduates. The word count includes footnotes). 70% of the final mark.

You will choose your own questions in consultation with me. Please send me your questions by email by 4 March. I will hold individual meetings with all students in the week beginning 5 March.

* Please submit hard copies of all written work to me during class. Please also submit an electronic copy to Turnitin.

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>A- class work will be distinguished in some or all of the following ways: originality of thought or interpretation; independence of judgement; wide-ranging reading, often beyond that recommended; intelligent use of primary sources; historiographical awareness and criticism; clarity and rigour of argument and structure, well directed at the title; clarity and elegance of style; unusual and apt examples; comparison e.g. with themes and topics covered in other modules.</td>
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<tr>
<td>85-89</td>
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<td>80-84</td>
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<td>77-79</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>B-class work will be distinguished in some or all of the following ways: clarity and rigour of argument and structure, well directed at the title; thorough coverage of recommended reading; intelligent use of primary sources; historiographical awareness; well chosen examples; comparison e.g. with themes and topics covered in other modules; clarity of style.</td>
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<td>73-76</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>70-72</td>
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<td>67-69</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>C-class work will have some of the following features: some evidence of knowledge and understanding, but limitations in clarity and rigour of argument and structure; restricted coverage of recommended reading; restricted use of primary sources; weaknesses of style; failure to address the title set.</td>
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<td>63-66</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-62</td>
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<td>57-59</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>D-class work will have some of the following features: very limited knowledge and understanding; confusion in argument or structure; insufficient reading; confused style; failure to address the title set.</td>
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<td>53-56</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-52</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Work with very serious deficiencies that falls below the required standard, failing to address the literature with the seriousness required and with an inadequate grasp of the subject matter and of historical analysis</td>
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Academic Policies

Please note that 3 points per day of lateness reduction in mark will apply to both written assignments.

It is essential that you write your papers using your own original thoughts and words, and that you quote every secondary source that you use. Plagiarism is a serious offence. To learn about the University of Toronto’s policy on academic integrity and plagiarism, go to http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com website.

If you need to request special consideration (for example, late submission of an assignment or a make-up for missed class), please e-mail me in advance at your earliest convenience. Supporting documentation may be required, so be sure to obtain medical or other relevant certificates. Special consideration may be granted only in cases of serious medical situations.

Please keep all your rough notes and a second copy of your paper on file until your graded paper is returned to you.

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility
**Background Reading**

- The following texts provide an overview of the history of nationalism in Eastern Europe


- The following texts provide useful overviews of the nationalities question in the USSR and its successor states


Terry Martin, ‘The Soviet Union as Empire: Salvaging a Dubious Analytical Category’, *Ab Imperio*, no. 2, 2002

Graham Smith (ed.), *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*

- The following texts provide an overview of political, economic, social and cultural developments in the USSR.


I. **Introduction: What is a nation?**

**Questions for Discussion:**
What is a nation?
What is nationalism?
When did nations arise?
Is there a specifically East European form of nationalism?

**Required Reading:**
OR
Oliver Zimmer, *Nationalism in Europe, 1890-1940* (2003) [the theoretical chapters]
OR

**Further Reading:**
J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the state* (1993)
Michael Brown (ed.), *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict* (2001)
Atsuko Ichijo and Gordon Uzelac (eds.), *When is the Nation? Towards an Understanding of Theories of Nationalism* (2005)
A. Smith, *The ethnic origins of nations* (1986)
Section One: State Building and Modernisation

II. The USSR as a Communal Apartment

Questions for Discussion:

**Position paper: Why did the Soviet state promote non-Russian national cultures?**

How useful is Yuri Slezkine’s metaphor of the USSR as a ‘communal apartment’?

In what ways does the history of *korenizatsiia* inform our understanding of what nations and nationalisms are?

To what extent can the USSR be seen as an empire?

Required Reading:


Y. Slezkine, ‘The USSR as communal apartment, or how a socialist state promoted ethnic particularism’, *Slavic Review* 53 (1994)


Iosif Stalin, Report at the Fourth Conference of the Central Committee with Nationalities Officials on the Practical Measures for Applying the Resolution on the National Question of the Twelfth Party Congress. June 10, 1923 [extracts] (page 1 of the sources booklet)

Further Reading:


V. Tolz, ‘Imperial Scholars and Minority Nationalisms in Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia’, *Kritika* 10:2

III. **State and Socialism in Central Asia**

**Questions for Discussion:**

**Position paper: How far did the Soviet state succeed in creating new national cultures in Central Asia?**
- What were the sources of nationalism in Soviet Central Asia in the late Soviet period?
- What role did Islam play in fuelling nationalism in Soviet Central Asia?
- What factors help to fuel inter-ethnic tensions in Central Asia?
- How useful is it to view Central Asian states as nationalising regimes?
- Did nationalism undermine the socialist project in Soviet Central Asia? Is there a basic contradiction between nationalism and communism?

**Required Reading:**
- M. Sultan-Galiev, ‘Methods of Anti-Religious Propaganda Among the Moslems’, 1922 (page 2 of the sources booklet)

**Further Reading:**
- Rafis Abazov, ‘Central Asia’s Conflicting Legacy and Ethnic Policies: Revisiting a Crisis Zone in the Former USSR’, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 5:2 (Summer 1999)
- Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Havard UP, 2006)
- Sally Cummings, ‘Legitimation and Identification in Kazakhstan’, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 12:2 (Summer 2006)
- A. Danilovich, ‘Kazakhs: A Nation of Two Identities’, *Problems of Post-Communism* 57:1
Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrot, *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997)


Ainura Elebayeva et al, ‘The Shifting Identities and Loyalties in Kyrgyzstan: The Evidence From the Field’, *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 28, no. 2 (June 2000)


Fierman, ‘Kazakh Language and Prospects for its Role in Kazakh “Groupness”’, *Ab Imperio*, no. 2, 2005


Henry Hale, ‘Cause without a Rebel: Kazakhstan’s Unionist Nationalism in the USSR and CIS’, *Nationalities Papers* 37:1


Rico Isaacs, ‘Papa – Nursultan Nazarbayev and the Discourse of Charismatic Leadership and Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan’, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* 10:3


Kirill Nourzhanov, *Tajikistan: The History of an Ethnic State*


Edward Schatz, ‘Framing Strategies and Non-Conflict in Multi-Ethnic Kazakhstan’, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 6, no. 2 (Summer 2000)


Berna Turan, ‘A bargain between the secular state and Turkish Islam: politics of ethnicity in Central Asia’, *Nations and Nationalism* vol. 10, no. 3 (July 2004)

IV. Ukrainian Roads to Independence

Questions for Discussion:

**Position paper: To what extent did inhabitants of Ukraine support the cause of independence in 1991?**
Why did ‘national communism’ arise in Soviet Ukraine by 1991?
How ‘Ukrainian’ is eastern and southern Ukraine?
What are the dilemmas of state-led nation building in Ukraine?
How far can nationalism foster the rise of civil society?
Do nations create nationalisms, or do nationalisms create nations?

Required Reading:
M. Beissinger, *Nationalist mobilisation and the collapse of the Soviet state* (2002), pp.147-199
Peter Rodgers, ‘Understanding Regionalism and the Politics of Identity in Ukraine’s Eastern Borderlands’, *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 34, no. 2 (May 2006)

The Minsk Agreement. December 8, 1991 (page 4 of the sources booklet)

Further Reading:
Phillip G Roeder, 'Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization', *World Politics*, vol. 43


Section Two: Centres and Peripheries

V. Where are the Russians?

Questions for Discussion:

**Position paper: Do you agree with Geoffrey Hosking’s conclusion that ethnic Russians were both ‘rulers and victims’ in the USSR?**

How did the Soviet state transform the Russian Far North?
To what extent is Russian national identity based on ethnicity?
How strong are non-Russian ethnic identities in the Russian Federation?
Is Russia really a federation?
In what ways can Russia be seen as a nation state?

Required Reading:


Boris Yeltsin, ‘There Won’t be a Civil War’, 23 March 1991 (page 7 of the sources booklet)

Further Reading:

Mikhail Alexseev (ed.), *Centre-Periphery Conflict in Post-Soviet Russia: A Federation Imperilled* (1999)


Joan Chevelier, ‘Language Policy in the Russian Federation’, Russian as the “State Language”, *Ab Imperio* no. 1, 2005


VI. The ‘Near Abroad’?

Questions for Discussion:

Position paper: To what extent can Ukraine be described as Russia’s ‘near abroad’?
Who shaped cultural production in Soviet Ukraine?
Why was historical memory so important in Brezhnev-era USSR?
How far did myths of national history in Ukraine and Belarus undermine the legitimacy of the Soviet regime? How important are they for the Belarusian and Ukrainian states today?
What challenges do ethnic Russians face in the Russian ‘Near Abroad’?
What is the relationship between national identity and foreign policy?

Required Reading:
Ilya Prizel, National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine (Cambridge, 1998) [introduction and chapter 9]


Further Reading:
A. Kappeler, “Great Russians” and “Little Russians”: Russian-Ukrainian relations and perceptions in historical perpsective’, Kritika 6:3 (Summer 2005)
George S. N. Luckyj, 'Polarity in Ukrainian Intellectual Dissent', Canadian Slavonic Papers 14:2
S. Plokhy, Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past (2008)
Graham Smith and Andrew Wilson, 'Rethinking Russia's Post-Soviet Diaspora: The Potential for Political Mobilisation in Eastern Ukraine and North-East Estonia', Europe-Asia Studies 49:5
S. Yekelchyk, Stalin's empire of memory: Russian-Ukrainian relations in the Soviet historical imagination (2004)
Andrew Wilson, 'Myths of National History in Belarus and Ukraine', in Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (1997)

The famine of the 1930s occupies a prominent role in modern-day Ukrainian national discourses. While debates about the national character of the famine continue, they shape Ukrainian-Russian relations today. For history of the famine see, for example:


Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands*
VII. The western borderlands

Questions for discussion:

**Position paper: How distinctive was the Soviet west from the rest of the USSR after 1945?**

Why have the Baltic States been described as the USSR’s ‘window on Europe’?
Do you agree with Andrew Wilson’s description of Ukrainian nationalism as a ‘minority faith’?
Can Galicia still be seen as ‘Ukraine’s Piedmont’?
How did the Soviet state approach the issue of ethnic diversity in the west? In what ways do post-Soviet states deal with ethnic diversity?
How would you define ‘borderlands’? What conceptual problems do scholars face when studying borderlands?

**Required Reading:**

W.J. Risch, *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv* (2011) [chapter 7]
AND/OR Y. Hrytsak, ‘National Identities in Post-Soviet Ukraine: The Case of L’viv and Donets’k’, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 22

Stenogram of a Session of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldavia, 10 November 1968 (page 16 of the sources booklet)

**Further Reading:**

T. Amar, ‘Sovietisation as a Civilising Mission in the West’ in Balazs Apor et al, *The Sovietisation of Eastern Europe*
S. Frunchak, ‘Commemorating the Future in Postwar Chernivtsi’, *East European Politics and Societies* 24:3
Ivan Katchanovski, *Cleft Countries: Regional Political Divisions and Cultures in Post-Soviet Ukraine and Moldova*, (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2006)
VIII. Essay Consultations (work-in-progress)

There will be no class this week, but I will meet individually with all students to discuss their final essays. You will be expected to give a short, 5-minute presentation on your research topic. Please also print out a bibliography for your project, and come prepared with any questions or concerns that you might have.
Section Three: Conflict and Violence

IX. The Far Right

Questions for Discussion:
Position paper: Why was xenophobia on the rise in the USSR after 1945?
What factors helped to fuel far right Russian nationalism in the USSR?
How do you account for the differences between the Russian and Ukrainian far right?
What kind of threat do Russian and Ukrainian far right groups pose today?
What is far right nationalism?

Required Reading:
Konstantin Azadovskii and Boris Egorov, ‘From Anti-Westernism to Anti-Semitism: Stalin and the impact of the “anti-cosmopolitan” campaigns on Soviet culture’, Journal of Cold War Studies 4:1
Ilia Ehrenburg, Memoirs, 1921-1941 (1963) [extracts] (page 19 of the sources booklet)

Further Reading:
James Gregor, ‘Fascism and the New Russian Nationalism’, Communist and Post-Communist Studies 31:1
Walter Laqueur, Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia (1993)
M. Pauly, ‘Soviet polonophobia and the formulation of nationalities policy in the Ukrainian SSR 1927-1934’ in David Ransel and Bozena Shallcross (eds.), Polish encounters, Russian identity (2005)
Stephen Shenfield, Russian Fascism: Traditions, Tendencies, Movements (2001)
Andreas Umland, ‘The Post-Soviet Russian Extreme Right’, Problems of Post-Communism 44:4
Alexander Yanov, The Russian New Right: Right-Wing Ideologies in the Contemporary USSR (Berkeley: University of California, 1978)
Questions for Discussion:

**Position paper: To what extent can the conflicts in Chechnya and Transdnistria be seen as a legacy of the Soviet nationalities policy?**

Account for the relative weakness of Tatar separatism in Tatarstan.

How have post-Soviet states dealt with the problem of separatism?

What is the importance of language and religion in driving separatist movements?

**Required Reading:**


Stefan Troebst, “‘We are Transnistrians!” Post-Soviet Identity Management in the Dniester Valley’, *Ab Imperio*, no. 1, 2003, pp. 437-66.


**Further Reading:**

Alexseev (ed.), *Centre-Periphery Conflict in Post-Soviet Russia*, (1999) [chapter by Gail Lapidus]


M. David-Fox et al (eds), *Orientalism and Empire in Russia* (2006)


Elise Giuliano, ‘Islamic Identity and Political Mobilization in Russia: Chechnia and Dagestan Compared’, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 11, no. 2


Guilnaz Sharafutdinova, ‘Chechnya Versus Tatarstan: Understanding Ethnopolitics in Post-Communist Russia’, *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 47, no. 2

Howard Davis et al, ‘Modelling Political and Cultural Change in Tatarstan: Historic and Pragmatic Claims to Nationhood’, *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 6, no. 2


Vladimir Solonari, ‘Creating a “People”: A Case Study in Post-Soviet History-Writing’, *Kritika*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Spring 2003), pp. 411-38
Dmitry Gorenburg, ‘Tatar Language Policies in Comparative Perspective: Why Some Revivals Fail and Some Succeed’, *Ab Imperio*, no. 1, 2005
XI. **Inter-ethnic violence in the Caucasus**

Questions for Discussion:

**Position paper: Why has there been so much violence in the Caucasus after 1991?**
What forces shape historical memory in Azerbaijan and Armenia?
How have Caucasian definitions of national identity and nationalism changed since 1991?
Is the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh still explosive today? Why?

**Required Reading:**
Yasmin Kilit Aklar, ‘The Teaching of History in Azerbaijan and Nationalism’, *Ab Imperio*, no. 2, 2005

**Further Reading:**
Bruno Coppieters (ed.), *Contested Borders in the Caucasus* (1996)
XII. **Conclusions: National Identities, Soviet Patriotism and Communist Nostalgia**

**Questions for Discussion:**
Did a ‘Soviet nation’ ever exist?
Why does Zvi Gitelman write about a ‘century of ambivalence’ with regards to the Jews of Russia and the USSR?
How strong is Soviet nostalgia in the former USSR? How does it affect the domestic and foreign policies of the former Soviet republics?
What is the relationship between national identities, nationalisms and state building in the former USSR?
Where are the ‘centres’ and where are the ‘peripheries’ in the former USSR?
To what extent has nationalism fuelled conflict and violence in the former USSR?

**Required Reading:**
B. Tromly, ‘Soviet Patriotism and its Discontents among Higher Education Students in Khrushchev-Era Russia and Ukraine’, *Nationalities Papers* 37:3

**Further Reading:**
Z. Gitelman, *A century of ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present*
N. Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: the Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War Two in Russia* (1994)