POL354H1 - Politics and Society in Russia

Syllabus

Prof. Leonid Kosals
E-mail: leon.kosals@utoronto.ca

Time: Wednesday, 12:00-2:00 pm
Location: TBA
Office Hours: TBA
Format: Hybrid (both online synchronous via Zoom: https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/87315025374 and in-person) until September 23 and in-person only after September 23

University of Toronto recommended technology requirements for remote/online learning can be found here: https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/students/tech-requirements-online-learning/

Course Description
The thread of this course is the relations between people and the Russian state (the “Leviathan”). We examine the attempts at modernization and democratization in Russia with a special focus on the last effort after the collapse of the Soviet Union. We analyze the major characteristics of the current political system and consider the role of Russia’s historical past in its functioning. In particular, the meaning and role of the political institutions including the Parliament (State Duma), political parties, and elections. We examine social peculiarities of Russian society, such as social heterogeneity, inequality, and living standards amid the operating political system. We also look at the civil and uncivil societies in their relation to the media and state policy. The post-Soviet transformation of economic and legal institutions such as the emergence of a market system with oligarchs, the rise of organized crime and corruption are also examined. We analyze ethnonationalism as one of the driving forces of the wars within the post-Soviet space and other regions in which Russia is and was involved. Russian foreign policies in various regions are discussed in their relation to domestic issues. Throughout the course, we widely use comparative analysis to investigate the similarities and differences between Russia and the post-Soviet states, Europe, and other countries around the globe.

Lectures and discussions schedule
1. Welcome, Introduction, and Organizational Issues
2. Escaping Leviathan: Two attempts of Democratization and Modernization in the Last Two Centuries
3. Have Reforms Failed in Post-Soviet Russia? Major Characteristics of the Emerged System
4. Russian Political System: Do the State Duma, Political Parties and Elections Matter?
5. Economy: Oligarchs, SMEs, Business-State Relations and Corruption
There is no final examination for this course. It is expected that you are taking part in class and making three research assignments. Your activity is divided into two parts. The first part includes participation in the in-class discussions, answering the instructor’s questions about the required readings, making comments and raising your own questions during the discussions. The second part is your involvement in online discussions about required readings in Perusal. Every student should register in https://perusall.com/ (access code for this course KOSALS-TNXYY), where required readings will be uploaded. You are expected to post comments and questions about the texts and your classmates’ remarks before every class.

For the first assignment, you should write a review of the Russian movie “Leviathan” (https://media3-criterionpic-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/display/006?t=MON2012) from the standpoint of political science, 600 words maximum in length, due October 5 at 11 pm. It is expected that except for the classical Hobbesian view on the Leviathan, you find additional studies in order to analyze the contents of the movie.

The second assignment is an essay analyzing a Russian domestic event related to government policy, the activity of civil society, political conflict, crime, business disputes, etc., covered by the media during the last 2-3 years, 1000 words maximum, due November 2 at 11 pm.

The third assignment is a paper focused on foreign Russian policy, including Russia’s relations with post-Soviet states, Europe, the USA, Canada, Latin America, etc. also covered by the media for the last 2-3 years, 1500 words maximum, due December 3 at 11 pm.

Written assignments should be done in Times New Roman 12, double-spaced, in .docx file format or other MS Word formats. Assignments should be uploaded to Quercus. The penalty for late submissions is two points per day.

**Grading**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>In-class activity</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online activity in Perusall</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>First assignment (review of the movie)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second assignment (paper on Russian domestic issue)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third assignment (paper on Russian foreign policy)</td>
<td>35%</td>
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**Academic integrity**

Plagiarism and other academic offences will not be tolerated at the University of Toronto. Academic discipline ranges from a mark of zero on an exam or assignment to dismissal from the University. For important information, see UofT’s Academic Integrity website at [http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/](http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/). See also the academic integrity website of the Faculty of Arts and Science at [http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai](http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai).

**Turnitin**

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 web site.
Required readings

September 15. Welcome, Introduction, and Organizational Issues

No readings required

September 22. Escaping Leviathan: Two attempts of Democratization and Modernization in Last Two Centuries


Andrew Barnes (2014) Three in One, Problems of Post-Communism, 61(5), pp. 3-13


September 29. Have Reforms Failed in Post-Soviet Russia? Major Characteristics of the Emerged System


October 6. Russian Political System: Do State Duma, Political Parties and Elections Matter?


October 13. Economy: Oligarchs, SMEs, Business-State Relations and Corruption


October 20. Russian Civil and Uncivil Societies: Why State Propaganda Successful?


**October 27. “Four Russias”: Social Heterogeneity, Inequality and Living Standards**


**November 3. Center-Periphery Relations**


**November 10. Reading week**

No classes

**November 17. Legal system, Crime and (Un)Punishment**


**November 24. Ethno-nationalism, War and Peace**


**December 1. Foreign Policies and Domestic Troubles**


