“We hoped for the best, but things turned out as usual.”
Viktor Chernomydrin, Prime Minister of Russia, 1992-1998

Course objectives
This course uses the experience of the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia to understand change in political and economic systems, from collapse of existing governments to the revolutionary reconstruction of society to tensions between autocracy and a government responsive to popular demands. Particular focus is placed on how ordinary people are affected by systemic social and political change and how they can or cannot shape political outcomes. The class fulfills the College of Arts and Sciences Global Citizenship requirement and the social science requirement. For Political Science majors, it counts as a comparative politics course. WELCOME!

Over the course of the semester, you should improve your ability to:

Understand how knowledge is created and shared across forms and contexts
- Demonstrate capacity for critical thinking through the development of coherent, logically supported arguments, both written and oral
- Recognize how Western perceptions of the Soviet Union and Russia shaped policies toward it
- Understand how leaders, their values, and their policies shape society

Understand inquiry as sustained engagement with increasingly complex questions
- Evaluate competing scholarly arguments, especially about the nature of totalitarianism, the determinants of social and political change, and the reasons political institutions take the shape that they do
- Examine the causes and consequences of political and social tensions in multi-ethnic regimes
- Analyze the nature of state power and how it is expressed through political institutions
- Adjudicate between competing theories or arguments, giving credit to perspectives other than your own

Understand yourselves in solidarity with and for others locally, nationally, and globally
- Become more sensitive to diverse understandings of social and economic justice
- Appreciate the human costs and political demands of social change
- Analyze the power of citizens to affect regimes in nondemocratic systems
Office hours: Tuesday 1:00-3:00 and Thursday 11:00-1:00, and by appointment
I am often (but not always) in my office at other times. Feel free to drop by.

Required books

Books are available at the campus bookstore.
There are additional readings on e-reserve. [http://eres.slu.edu/eres/coursepass.aspx?cid=4255](http://eres.slu.edu/eres/coursepass.aspx?cid=4255)
(Password: sovpol14)

Academic Integrity
The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student’s own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination or quiz without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, sharing or receiving the questions from an on-line quiz with another student, taking an on-line quiz with the help of another student, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

All clear violations of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. In this course, academic dishonesty on an assignment will result in an automatic grade of 0 for that assignment and a report of academic dishonesty sent to the Academic Honesty Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences. In the case of Class B violations, the Academic Honesty Committee may impose a larger sanction including, but not limited to, assigning a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University.

Students should refer to the following SLU website for more information about Class A and B violations and the procedures following a report of academic dishonesty: [http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml](http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml)

Student success
In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success).

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 314-977-8885 or visit the Student Success Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Two papers, on questions I provide, around 6 pages each—approximately 40 % of course grade
Two quizzes—approximately 10 %
Final exam—25 %
Attendance and class participation—25 %

Missed quizzes and tests must be excused by me before the test is given. Otherwise, the student will receive a grade of 0 for the missing work. Grades of 0 will also be given for missing papers. The zeros will be averaged into the final course grade. Late essays may be subject to penalties.

Additional requirements for Honors students: Honors students will act as teaching/research assistants for this course. This work will involve some research, class presentations, contributions to discussions, and small group leadership. Honors students will be required to hand in a five-page reflection on what they learned from this experience (due Dec 4th). If others would like to share in this experience, let me know.

Class participation: The quality of this class depends a great deal on you and your readiness to contribute meaningfully to class discussions. You should think about class as a time for exploration, for figuring out what readings mean, and for critically evaluating arguments made by various authors, by other students, and by me. A number of things follow from this:

- Attendance is required, and excessive absence will harm your grade.
- Laptops (and, of course, phones) may not be used in class. While the most self-disciplined among us will not be distracted by the wealth of entertainments provided by the internet, laptops tend to reduce uninterrupted focus on the discussion and serve as barriers to honest and direct interaction.
- Careful reading is essential. Complete all reading assignments before the class for which they are listed.
- It is helpful to keep up with current events in the former Soviet Union. Try http://www.rferl.org/ and/or a good newspaper.
- I provide a reading question for each day to help you see what you should be getting out of the reading. You are welcome to write 1-2 page answers to the question for practice addressing the kinds of questions you'll be graded on and for extra credit. A thoughtful, carefully reasoned answer could earn you up to 2 points added to your participation grade, up to a maximum of 10 points for the semester. For extra credit, answers must be submitted on the day the question is listed. For practice, you can hand in answers any time.

Russian language students. Students who are studying Russian language may enjoy keeping up with Russian news from Russian language sources. This blog will help you get started: http://blogs.transparent.com/russian/sneak-russian-into-your-online-experience/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=languageblog&utm_content=russian
Listen to Эхо Москвы on-line: http://tunein.com/radio/Echo-of-Moscow-912-s8735/)
Новая Газета is an excellent independent newspaper: http://www.novayagazeta.ru/

University Writing Services: I encourage you to take advantage of University Writing Services; getting feedback benefits all writers! Trained writing consultants can help with any writing, multimedia project, or oral presentation. During one-on-one consultations, you can work on everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. These services do fill up, so please make an appointment! Also, bring your assignment description, and a few goals, to the consultation! For more information, or to make an appointment, visit www.slu.edu/writingservices.xml or call 977-3484.
Grading Scale

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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<td>60-70</td>
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<td>90-92</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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REVOLUTION AND STATE-BUILDING

August 26  
*Introduction: political change*

August 28  

Why does Marx consider the proletariat a class in “radical chains”?

September 2  
V. I. Lenin, Excerpts from *What is to be Done?*, in David McLellan, *Marxism: Essential Writings*, pp. 146-149 (on e-reserve).  

Does it make sense to think – as Marx does – that revolution will arise organically from the situation of the proletariat under capitalism?

September 4  

Did the revolution that occurred in Russia in November 1917 conform more to Marx’s or to Lenin’s predictions?

September 9  

If Olson is right that people are always better off living under democracy, why aren’t democracies more common?

September 11  

What are some explanations for the regular recreation of autocratic regimes in Russia? Which makes sense to you?

TOTALITARIANISM

September 16  

How can we explain Stalin?
September 18  

Why do vanguard parties become “fossilized,” and what does that mean?

QUIZ

September 23  
Koestler, “The Second Hearing.”

How can revolutionaries justify their actions when they don’t know what their ultimate consequences will be?

September 25  
Koestler, finish the book

Is Rubashov’s “swing theory” a convincing justification for dictatorship?

September 30  


Why did observers think the Soviet system was more stable than it really was? What did they miss? Why did they miss it?

REFORMING THE SOVIET SYSTEM

October 2  
McAuley, ”Perestroika and the End of Party Rule,” ”Dispersal of Power,” and ”Conclusion,” pp. 89-123.


Why might it be hard to reform a totalitarian system?

October 7  
Joel Ostrow, “Glasnost Gutted the Party, Democratization Doomed the State, Political Liberalization and the Soviet Disintegration,” in Ostrow, pp. 84-114.


Does Ostrow make a strong case for his claim that “glasnost caused the collapse of the Communist Party, while democratization caused the collapse of the Soviet state” (p. 88)?

October 9  
ESSAY ONE DUE

Movie: *Vor’*
October 14

To what degree does popular mobilization explain the collapse of the Soviet Union?

October 16
Katherine Verdery, “What was Socialism and Why Did it Fall?,” in Ostow, pp. 70-83.

Is it more plausible that the 1991 was led by an inept group of conspirators or that it was founded on hidden arrangements between Yeltsin and the KGB?

October 21
FALL BREAK—no classes

**THE YELTSIN YEARS—“SIMPLY CATASTROPHIC”**

October 23


Would Olson agree with Verdery that “socialism’s fragility begins with the system of ‘centralized planning’ (Ostrow, p. 71)?

October 28


Does Shleifer and Treisman’s conclusion that “in slightly over a decade, Russia has become a typical middle-income, capitalist democracy’ (p. 201) seem right?

October 30

Why do you think that Russian leaders are so ready to compromise elections? Why don’t American politicians do the same?

**PUTIN—RETURN TO AUTOCRACY**

November 4

Gessen, chs. 1-3, pp. 11-70. (Question on the next page)
The people who put Putin in power seem not to have imagined that he would concentrate so much power in his own hands and remain in office so long? Should they have anticipated that outcome?

QUIZ

November 6

Why did “strengthening vertical power” seem like a good idea after Yeltsin?

November 11

Why is a strong legislature good for democracy?

November 13
Vladimir Gel’man, “Party Politics in Russia: From Competition to Hierarchy,” in Ostrow, pp. 273-289.

Gel’man says, “All rulers in the world would like to govern their countries without checks or balances” (p. 276). Why do Russian rulers get away with it?

November 18

Why is it so difficult to create a strong opposition in Russia? How would you handle the many personal and professional compromises implicit in living in an autocratic regime?

November 20
Why do people believe such divergent stories about the present and the past?

November 25
ESSAY TWO DUE

November 27
THANKSGIVING—no classes

December 2
Marlène Laruelle, “Conclusion,” in Ostrow, pp. 434-443.

Why is nationalism an “ideology of domination” (Laruelle, p. 435) in Russia? Is it always?

December 4
M. Steven Fish, “Symptoms of the Failure of Democracy in Russia,” in Ostrow, pp. 331-332.
Dmitry Sidorov, “All the News the Kremlin Thinks is Fit to Print,” in Ostrow, pp. 485-487.

Why did democracy fail in Russia? Do you think it will succeed in the future?

HONORS STUDENTS: 5 page reflection due

December 16
FINAL EXAM, 8:30-9:30

Selected Supplemental Reading
FICTION
Zamiatin, Eugene. 1924. We. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co.
PERSONAL AND JOURNALISTIC ACCOUNTS

The Soviet Period:

The Reform Period and After:

SOME SCHOLARLY WORKS:


