Politics of Post-Soviet Eurasia  
IAFF 6338 Section 12  
Wednesdays, 5:10-7:00 PM, 1957 E Street, Room 303A

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Office hours: By appointment (1957 E Street, Ste. 412)

Overview:

This course is a seminar on comparative politics and state building in the non-Russian successor states of the USSR – a region often referred to as post-Soviet Eurasia. The course is structured by topic, not subregion, and addresses the following issues: the concept of political “transition”; historical legacies and the construction of political institutions; democracy, authoritarianism, and hybrid regimes; informal practices; popular mobilization; economic foundations of power; and the “new” post-Soviet politics.

The course is not a comprehensive survey of politics in the region, although it includes case studies of political developments in several states (including Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and others). Readings have been selected on the basis of a combination of empirical research and comparative value, as well as the extent to which they are in dialogue with each other.

While no previous knowledge is required, a background in regional and/or comparative politics will be very helpful.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will have a comparative understanding of state building processes and politics in post-Soviet Eurasia; structure, critique, and support arguments about political outcomes and processes in the region; and establish linkages between the development of area-studies knowledge and theoretical frameworks that improve our understanding of politics in other regions of the world and at other times.

Requirements:

Reaction Papers (4-5 pages, Times New Roman, 12 pt., double-spaced): 20% each  
   Paper One – on readings from Session 2-7, no later than October 8  
   Paper Two – on readings from Session 8-13, no later than November 19

   Abstract – no later than October 29  
   Final Paper – December 12 (Friday, 5PM)

Participation: 15%
The reaction papers are responses to a reading or set of readings from one week or theme of the course. You should use the reaction papers to assess one or more of the arguments presented in the readings: their logic, the evidence they employ, and/or their scope (i.e., does the author make explicit claims to generalization that are defensible? If the author does not, could s/he have?). While not required, explicit comparisons of two or more arguments are welcome (e.g., do authors present complementary or alternative explanations for a certain outcome, or are explanations incompatible?)

You may choose the sessions for which you write reaction papers, which will be due in class that day, but one paper must be on readings from Sessions 2-7 and one paper must be on readings from Sessions 8-13.

The research paper will be on a topic of your choice and may be comparative (within post-Soviet Eurasia) or on a single country. More information on developing a research paper will be provided in class.

**University Resources and Policies:**

**University Policy on Religious Holidays:**
1. Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance;
2. Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations;
3. Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities

**Academic Integrity:** Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For the remainder of the code, see: http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html

**Support for Students Outside the Classroom**

**DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)**
Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/

**UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC) 202-994-5300**
The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:
- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
- confidential assessment, counselling services (individual and small group), and referrals
- http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices

**Security**
In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.
Readings:

Readings are primarily available via university-accessible databases, with links available via Blackboard.

The following books are recommended but not required for purchase:

Valerie J. Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries* (Cambridge, 2011)


Alena V. Ledeneva, *Can Russia Modernize? Sistema, Power Networks and Informal Governance* (Cambridge, 2013)

Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (Cambridge, 2010)

The following journals, among others, are recommended for final paper research:

- Central Asian Survey
- Communist and Post-Communist Studies
- Demokratizatsiya
- East European Politics
- Eurasian Geography and Economics
- Europe-Asia Studies
- Journal of Democracy
- Nationalities Papers
- Post-Soviet Affairs
- Problems of Post-Communism

Schedule:

1. Aug. 27: Overview

2. Sept. 3: Transition


3. **Sept. 10: Legacies**


4. **Sept. 17: Democracy**


5. **Sept. 24: Competitive Authoritarianism**

Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, Chapters 1, 2 and 5, 1-83, 183-235.


RECOMMENDED:

7. Oct. 8: Informal Politics


8. Oct. 15: Authoritarianism


10. Oct. 29: The Political Economy of Control (ABSTRACT DUE)


(ABSTRACT DUE)


13. Nov. 19: The Cycle Continues? From Orange to Maidan and Beyond


**Nov. 26: NO CLASS**

14. Dec. 3: Conclusion

Final Papers Due: Friday, December 12, 5PM.