The University of California – San Diego: Department of Political Science

The Soviet Successor States - 130AA
Summer Session 1 (2020)

Instructor   Dr Graham Timmins
E-Mail   grtimmins@ucsd.edu
Lectures   Tuesdays and Thursdays (11.00-12.00)
Webinars   Tuesdays and Thursdays - Group A (12.00-13.00) and Group B (13.00-14.00)
Location   Online

Copyright Statement

Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 represented a dramatic and hugely significant moment in history. For many it signalled the end of the socialist experiment launched with the Russian revolution in 1917 and heralded the irresistible march towards the 'End of History' and the triumph of the western ideas of liberal democracy and the free market. Thirty years later, the long-term development of the Post-Soviet Space comprising the fifteen successor states which emerged from the ruins of the Soviet Union remains uncertain and the topic of considerable academic and political discussion. Upon successful completion of this course, you will have:

- An overview of the historical context of the collapse of the Soviet Union and political developments in the Post-Soviet Space up until the contemporary period.
- A critical appreciation of the contemporary situation of Russian domestic politics and the development and projection of Russian foreign policy.
- A critical appreciation of the wider geopolitical context of the post-Soviet space, and the interaction between Russia and other significant international actors.

Delivery Method

I will deliver a one-hour online lecture at the beginning of each session i.e. during 11.00-12.00. This will be followed by a one-hour webinar and you will be placed in either Group A during 12.00-13.00 or Group B during 13.00-14.00. There will be 10 session in total.

Date	Class Information	
Tue 30 Jun	**Session 1**	**Course Introduction**
	Discussion	Why did the Soviet Union collapse and what were the main challenges confronting the successor states in 1992?
Thu 02 Jul	**Session 2**	**Russia under Yeltsin**
	Discussion	How successful was Yeltsin in navigating the immediate challenges of post-communism in the 1990s?

Tue 07 Jul	**Session 3** Discussion	**The European Neighbourhood Successor States** Why has it proven so difficult for the European Neighbourhood successor states to pursue multi-vector strategies?
Thu 09 Jul	**Session 4** Discussion	**The Eurasian Successor States** How significant in geopolitical terms are the Eurasian successor states?
Tue 14 Jul	**Session 5** Discussion	**Russian Domestic Politics** What do the proposed amendments to the Russian constitution tell us about the state of democracy in Russia?
Thu 16 Jul	**Session 6** Discussion	**Russian Foreign Policy** How effective has the foreign policy pursued by Putin been and has he succeeded in making Russia 'Great Again'?
Tue 21 Jul	**Session 7** Discussion	**EU-Russia Relations** Why did the EU-Russia strategic partnership fail, and should relations in the future be based on values or interests?
Thu 23 Jul	**Session 8** Discussion	**US Foreign Policy and Russia** Why did the US Reset on Russia under President Obama fail and why are US-Russian relations the way they are today?
Tue 28 Jul	**Session 9** Discussion	**China-Russia Relations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation** How credible are the aims and ambitions of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and is the SCO a threat or opportunity for the West?
Thu 30 Jul	**Session 10** Discussion	**Conclusions - Future Prospects and Scenarios** How successfully have the challenges of post-communism been addressed in the Post-Soviet Space?

Course Assessment

Performance on the course is assessed through discussion comments, each comprising approximately 1000 words. You will be required to submit four comments in total. The deadlines are:

- Comment 1 on Discussion 3 or 4 – Friday 10 July 2020
- Comment 2 on Discussion 5 or 6 – Friday 17 July 2020
- Comment 3 on Discussion 7 or 8 – Friday 24 July 2020
- Comment 4 on Discussion 9 or 10 – Friday 31 July 2020

Comments will be submitted through Canvas and no extensions will be granted except in exceptional circumstances. The three highest marked comments will contribute to your final grade. I do not use a grade curve. So if every student deserves A+, that's what every student will receive. In broad terms, this is what I expect to see for each band.

A   Excellent in terms of analytical focus, critical engagement and the balance of analysis, the range of materials used, and the style of writing and presentation.

B   Good but not excellent. The difference between good and excellent is typically the level of focus and critical reflection i.e. showing deep awareness and understanding of the different sides to a discussion, evidence of reading and appropriate use of materials, in particular primary sources, a well-polished style of academic writing with correct use of grammar and punctuation together with full and correct references for attributed materials.

C   Generally satisfactory in terms of the above but with some significant weaknesses in either some or all areas.
D   Generally poor in terms of the above with some areas not meeting minimum standards.
F   Does not meet minimum standards.

Expectations and Advice

If you can accept that there are no short cuts to the acquisition of knowledge, you will already be on the way to obtaining a good grade for this course. Follow the advice below too. Your grades will improve if you do.

- Attend class, do the reading and think. Does what you are being told and what you are reading make sense and do you agree?
- Remember you are operating in a protected intellectual space, and what is expected is robust but courteous academic exchange at all times.
- Do additional reading from a range of sources when preparing the class comments, including the use of primary source materials. Ensure you provide full and accurate references for all sources of information you use, but keep to a minimum.
- When writing your class comments, concentrate on explaining rather than describing events and issues. And remember, although your opinions are of interest I would prefer to find out what you have learned.
- Use an academic style of writing. This is an exercise in intellectual discourse and communication, and stylistic conventions apply. Spell check your work and do your best to ensure grammatical accuracy.

General Learning Resources

There is no textbook for this course. I will however provide recommended reading and other materials for each class via the website. For those of you who have a specific interest in Russian politics, I would suggest making use of the following publications:

- Contemporary Russian Politics, Neil Robinson, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018.
- Developments in Russian Politics 9th edition, Richard Sakwa et al (eds.), London: Macmillan, 2019.

Academic Support

Should you require academic support, please contact me by email and I will respond as soon as possible. I am happy too to make time available for individual Zoom consultations where there is a need. Please remember though I am in the UK and there is a significant time difference, and keep in mind that I am a visiting lecturer and will not always be aware of the specific rules and regulations in operation at UCSD. There may therefore be situations where it would be more appropriate to contact Natalie Ikker, the Undergraduate Student Affairs Advisor.

Students with Disabilities

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (https://osd.ucsd.edu/). Students are required to discuss accommodation arrangements with instructors and OSD liaisons in the department **well in advance** of any exams or assignments. The OSD Liaison for the Department of Political Science is Joanna Peralta; please connect her via the Virtual Advising Center as soon as possible.

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