

POSC 203
Petrograd to Petrostate: Power and Public in Post-Communist Russia
Professor Constantine Pleshakov
Tuesday/Thursday
10-11:20

Russia emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union a budding democracy with aggressively contested elections on the federal and local level. Twenty years later, it is an authoritarian state in which opposition is persecuted and the electorate divorced from any policy-making. This course will examine the dynamics of Russian politics from the anti-Communist revolution of 1991 to the present, attempting to answer the question why this happened. First, we will revisit the legacy of the Soviet era pertinent to “new” Russia – centralism and political repression but also social welfare systems, feminism, and communality. Second, we will look at the socio-economic factors of Russia’s metamorphosis, the products of the Russian version of free market economy (among others, the emergence of a new dominant minority, the “oligarchs,” and the gap between the rich and the poor). Third, we will examine the concepts of democracy and human rights prevalent in Russia over the past twenty years and ask how different they are from Western. Fourth, we will try determining the role of individuals in Russian politics. How did Vladimir Putin dismantle the democratic institutions of Russia so quickly? What was the voters’ reaction to that? What made his victory over the “oligarchs” possible? Was that a case of a leader going against the grain or did he fit the profile of an ideal leader the majority of Russians wanted? Is it Putin’s Russia or Russia’s very own Putin?

Required books:

Peter Baker and Susan Glasser. *Kremlin Rising: Vladimir Putin’s Russia and the End of Revolution*. Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2007. ISBN 978-1-59797-122-5

Timothy J. Colton. *Yeltsin: A Life*. New York: Basic Books, 2008. ISBN 978-0-465-01271-8

Francis Fukuyama. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press, 2006. ISBN 978-0-7432-8455-4

Mark Hollingsworth and Stewart Lansley. *Londongrad: From Russia with Cash. The Inside Story of the Oligarchs*. London: Fourth Estate, 2009. ISBN 978-0-00-735637-9

Requirements:

Class attendance (no laptops allowed in the classroom)

Dedicated reading of assigned texts

2 essays (1,000 words, due on October 18 and December 13) and 3 quizzes (October 6, November 10, and December 6). Each assignment 20% of the final grade

Sample quiz questions (10 questions on a quiz):

- * What is Fukuyama’s interpretation of *thymos*?
- * What does Fukuyama mean by the “democratization of the means of violence”?
- * Legislative branch of government according to the 1993 Russian Constitution.
- * 1996 “loans for shares” agreement.
- * Roman Abramovich’s business empire.

| Class | Topic | Readings | Assignment |
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| Sep. 6, Tuesday | Intro | | |
| 1. Soviet legacy | | | |
| Sep. 8, Thursday | Class, centralism and repression | Fukuyama: Introduction, Ch. 1 (pp.XI-XXIII, 3-12); Colton: Ch. 1, 2 (pp. 11-51) | |
| Sep. 13, Tuesday | Soviet economy. Welfare and benefits | Colton: Ch. 3, 4 (pp. 53-105) | |
| Sep. 15, Thursday | Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika. Concepts of free market, democracy, and human rights | Fukuyama: Ch. 2, 3 (pp. 13-51); Colton: Ch. 5, 6 (pp.107-150) | |
| Sep. 20, Tuesday | Disintegration of the Soviet Union. Revolution of 1991 | Colton: Ch. 7-8 (pp. 151-210) | |
| Sep. 22, Thursday | "The Worldwide Liberal Revolution" | Fukuyama: Ch. 4-12 (pp.39-139) | |
| 2. Boris Yeltsin | | | |
| Sep. 27, Tuesday | President Boris Yeltsin. Privatization and "shock therapy" | Colton: Introduction, Ch. 9 (pp. 1-10; 211-235) | |
| Sep. 29, Thursday | 1993 Constitution | Colton: Ch. 11 (pp. 263-292) | |
| Oct. 4, Tuesday | The rise of Seven Bankers. Oligarchy. "Loans for shares" | <i>Londongrad</i> : Ch. 2 (pp.29-64) | |
| Oct. 6, Thursday | 1996 presidential elections | Colton: Ch. 12, 14 (pp. 293-320, 345-373) | 1 st quiz |
| Mid Semester Break | | | |
| Oct. 13, Thursday | <i>Oligarch</i> (film) | | |
| Oct. 18, Tuesday | Democracy as moral choice | Fukuyama: Ch. 13-15 (pp. 143-170) | 1 st essay |
| Oct. 20, Thursday | Lordship and Bondage | Fukuyama: Ch. 16-19 (pp.171-208) | |
| 3. Vladimir Putin | | | |
| Oct. 27, Thursday | President Vladimir Putin | <i>Kremlin Rising</i> : Introduction, Ch. 2 (pp.1-14, 38-62) | |
| Nov. 1, Tuesday | The fall of Seven Bankers | <i>Kremlin Rising</i> : Ch. 4, 14, 17 (pp. 78-98, 272-292, 312-334); <i>Londongrad</i> : Ch. 3 (pp.65-87) | |
| Nov. 3, Thursday | War in Chechnya | <i>Kremlin Rising</i> : Ch. 1, 5, 8 (pp. 15-37, 99-120, 156-178) | |
| Nov. 8, Tuesday | Curtailing freedom. Mikhail | <i>Kremlin Rising</i> : Ch. 12, 13 (pp. 231-271); <i>Londongrad</i> : | |

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| | Khodorkovsky's case | Ch. 8 (pp. 209-251) | |
| Nov. 10, Thursday | Nationalism | <i>Kremlin Rising</i> : Ch. 3, 10, 11 (pp. 63-77, 197-230) | 2 nd quiz |
| Nov. 15, Tuesday | The new poor | <i>Kremlin Rising</i> : Ch. 9 (pp. 179-196) | |
| Nov. 17, Thursday | The new rich | <i>Londongrad</i> : Ch. 5, 6 (pp. 117-183) | |
| Thanksgiving Break | | | |
| Nov. 29, Tuesday | Conspicuous consumption | <i>Kremlin Rising</i> : Ch. 7 (pp. 139-155); <i>Londongrad</i> , Ch. 12 (pp. 345-370) | |
| Dec. 1, Thursday | Concepts of democracy and human rights | <i>Kremlin Rising</i> : Ch. 15-18, Epilogue (pp. 293-382) | |
| Dec. 6, Tuesday | Free and unequal | Fukuyama: Ch. 20-31 (pp. 211-339) | 3 rd quiz |
| Dec. 8, Thursday | President Dmitri Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin: Dual power | Fukuyama: Afterword (pp. 341-354); <i>Kremlin Rising</i> , Afterword (pp. 383-394) | |
| Dec. 13, Tuesday | 2012 presidential elections in Russia | | 2 nd essay |