

PO8052: Russian Politics under Putin

Syllabus: Coronavirus Edition

Hilary Term 2021

Instructor: Dr. Noah Buckley

Email: buckleno@tcd.ie

Office: what's an office?

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2pm to 4pm on Zoom (<https://tcd-ie.zoom.us/j/6139408910>) – please email me to let me know you will be stopping by

Class will be held Mondays 4-6pm Irish time, in the cloud (i.e. Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)

Module Description

After over 70 years of Soviet communist rule, in the 1990s the Russian Federation found itself struggling with political disintegration, chaotic democracy, and caustic legacies of a planned economy. This course explores the evolution of Russian politics under Vladimir Putin—from the transition from Yeltsin's Russia in the 1990s to the evolutions of the “vertical of power” in Putin's third term in office. This module covers topics including how the Putin regime has involved corruption in Russia, “petropolitics,” electoral fraud, and new social movements.

Assessment

Participation (15%)

Student attendance, participation, and discussion is crucial to this seminar. Students are expected to have read all required readings before class. You should plan on digging in deeply with each reading—you are advised to develop critiques of readings, connections between them, suggestions for improvement or future research, and to build links to other political science research before you arrive to discuss them with the group in class.

Students will be evaluated on the *quality* of their input in discussions. Asking questions, bringing evidence, explaining your views and thoughts, and debating issues of significance, relevance, research design, real-world applicability, accuracy, and other factors will be important in participating fully.

A critical component of the course is lively discussion of the week's readings.¹ You should be prepared to discuss each reading on the syllabus for each week. You have not really done the readings until you are able to succinctly restate the argument, describe the methodology, and identify some strengths and weaknesses of the work. In other words, reading the article once, or worse, skimming the abstract, the introduction and conclusion alone, will not be sufficient.

¹ These four paragraphs are adapted from Timothy Frye's 2021 syllabus for “The Politics of Autocracy.”

You should assess the logical consistency, clarity, and novelty of the theoretical argument. Does it produce new insights? Are the assumptions of the theory clear and reasonable? Is the logic of the theory internally consistent? Do the hypotheses flow logically from the theory? Does the theory generate hypotheses that could be tested, but are not? Does the theory suggest possible causal mechanisms?

You should also assess the evidence provided in support of the argument. Are the empirical tests convincing? Are the procedures used to assess the argument described adequately? Are the measures valid and reliable? Does the author consider multiple mechanisms which may link variables? Are other interpretations of the evidence more plausible? How important are these problems? Can they be addressed? If so, how?

You should also consider the implications of the argument. Has the author made claims that extend beyond the evidence? Are the findings important? If so, for what? For substantive outcomes? For normative reasons? For social science? Has the author convinced you that you should care about the finding? How does this work relate to similar work? To what related topics could the theory, evidence, or research design apply? Are there policy implications for the work?

Response Papers (20%)

Students will be required to submit two response papers over the five weeks of the module. These papers should **not** offer a summary of the readings for that week, but, rather, they should engage with the readings. Critiques, establishment of connections between readings, and other insightful thoughts coming from a critical perspective are all good elements to include, where appropriate. See above guidelines for in-class participation—these may be helpful for the response papers as well. Response papers should engage with multiple required readings for that week, but can also include suggesting readings in addition.

Each response paper should be around 600-900 words in length, double-spaced in 12pt font. They should be submitted to Blackboard **by midnight on the Sunday** before class. Late submissions will be penalized up to 5 points per day late.

In-class Presentation (15%)

Students will each make one short, live presentation to the class in weeks 2-5 of the mini-term.

These presentations will be 10 minutes (no more) each, and you are encouraged to use slides. We will then have discussions about the materials. In general, weaker presentations will simply summarize the readings ("Smith says x, Jones says y").²

Strong presentations will do at least one of the following:

- Describe any key conceptual issues that must be addressed by work on the question (e.g., a presentation on inequality might discuss different ways of conceptualizing inequality);

² Ibid.

- Describe the central arguments/debates in the literature on the question (e.g., a presentation on corruption might focus on different types of variables—such as regime type, decentralization, level of development—that influence corruption levels);
- Describe thorny methodological issues that bedevil work on the question (e.g., a presentation on social revolutions might discuss the problems created by the small-n nature of the phenomenon).
- Offer criticisms and/or suggest pathways for future research.

To help you get started, the syllabus lists "Suggested Readings." These might serve as a place to begin, but students must do their own bibliographic research. You should obviously not feel obligated to cover all of these suggested readings.

Final essay (50%)

Students are required to submit a final essay at the end of the mini-term. The essay should show engagement with the material from across the mini-module as well as readings, concepts, and ideas from the recommended reading list and/or other sources.

You should apply these materials and ideas to an essay that assesses the current state of Putin's rule in the Russian political system and offers critically-engaged thoughts on his succession problem and prospects for Russian politics in the near term. Your paper should use one or more of the themes from this mini-module (the five topics, one each week on the syllabus) to say how the theme(s) are shaping prospects for Putin's succession, Russian democracy, Russian economic liberalization and growth, and/or rule of law in Russia over the next 2-5 years. You can and should engage with the relevant literature, while offering a thoughtful critique of it and what it can tell us about these questions.

The essay should be about 2,500 words in length (certainly no less than 2000 and no more than 3000) including everything but the reference list; double-spaced in 12pt font. The deadline for submission to Blackboard is **11:59pm (midnight) on Sunday, March 21**. Creativity, clear and strong argumentation, a good structure, and clear writing are important features of a good essay. The essay should not focus on literature review, historical narrative (or other narrative rather than analytical approaches), or pure summarization. I want to hear your thoughts and analysis!

Online Seminar Etiquette³

This seminar will be conducted online on Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. I will open access to the class at least five minutes before our official start time. Please sign into the session a few minutes before we start. Classes will be recorded, but sharing is not allowed.

I *very strongly* urge you to turn on your video! It will make it a lot easier for all of us to get engaged if your video is turned on. If there is an issue or if you would prefer to leave video off, **please let me know**. Whether or not students have their videos on, I reserve the right to cold-call on you and I expect that all students will take part in polls, breakout sessions, and other activities during class.

³ Ibid.

In general, keep your mute function on when you are not speaking to avoid background noise.

Practice active listening skills. If you are muted, please use nonverbal clues to let the speaker know that you have heard and that you do or do not understand. Often a simple “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” will be enough.

Feel free to use the “raise hand” function when you have a question.

Treat all digital course material with integrity just as you would printed course material. Never distribute the class sessions in whole or in part without explicit permission from me.

Be patient with connectivity issues!

Plagiarism

Please do not plagiarize. Academic dishonesty is a serious matter, with serious consequences that can result in receiving no credit for an assignment, a failing grade for the module, and even expulsion from the program. It is never permissible to turn in any work that contains others’ ideas without proper acknowledgment. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work meets the standard of academic honesty set forth in the College Calendar (see <http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism/calendar>). If you are paraphrasing, cite the source. If you are quoting, use quotation marks and appropriate citation. Remember that academic integrity is a reflection of one’s character. In addition, we strongly recommend that you visit <http://www.plagiarism.org/> for more information on what is and is not plagiarism. Lastly, students are required to only submit “new work” in each module, which means work that has not been submitted previously in any other university module. Students who wish to use previously submitted work as part of a new project will need the approval of the lecturer.

Readings

Some readings for the mini-module, such as book chapters, will be made available on Blackboard. Other readings can be found on Google Scholar or will be provided in digital copy.

Note: I may adjust the contents of the syllabus somewhat in the next week or two as we work through the readings.

CLASS SCHEDULE

1. From Yeltsin to Putin 3.0: Personalism, ‘The Vertical of Power,’ and Competing Centers of Power

Required reading:

- Daniel Treisman. “Introduction: Rethinking Putin’s Political Order.” In *The New Autocracy*, ed. Daniel Treisman. 2018.
- Marshall Goldman. 2008. *Petrostate: Putin, Power and the New Russia*. Oxford University Press. Pages 93-123.
- Andrei Soldatov and Michael Rochlitz. “The *Siloviki* in Russian Politics.” In *The New Autocracy*, ed. Daniel Treisman. 2018.
- Meduza. “Powerful, but not omnipotent.” November 3, 2020. <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2020/11/03/powerful-but-not-omnipotent>
- Kendall-Taylor, Andrea, and Erica Frantz. 2018. “Putin’s Succession Conundrum: How Authoritarians Navigate the Challenge.” *Foreign Affairs* 21.

Strongly recommended:

- Peter Rutland, “Putin’s Path to Power.” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 2000, 16, 4.

Additional reading:

- Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Treisman. “Russia: A Normal Country: Russia After Communism.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. Winter 2005. 19:1, 151-174.
- Ivan Krastev and Gleb Pavlovsky. 2018 “The Arrival of Post-Putin Russia.” European Council on Foreign Relations.
- Ian Bremmer and Samuel Charap. 2007. “The *Siloviki* in Putin's Russia: Who They Are and What They Want,” *The Washington Quarterly*.
- Sperling, Valerie. *Sex, politics, and Putin: Political legitimacy in Russia*. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Michael McFaul and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, “The Myth of the Authoritarian Model: How Putin’s Crackdown Holds Russia Back,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, 1 (2008)
- Documentary: “I, Putin”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izEANd_ehak
- Brian D. Taylor (2017) “The Russian *Siloviki* & Political Change”, *Daedulus*
- Christian Neef and Matthias Schepp. 2011. “The Puppet President: Medvedev's Betrayal of Russian Democracy” *Spiegel Online*.
- Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin’s Russia* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003)

2. State and Society: Discontent, Civil Society, and Stagnation

Required reading:

- Graeme Robertson. 2013. “Protesting Putinism: The Election Protests of 2011 – 2012 in Broader Perspective.” *Problems of Post-Communism*, 60(2).
- Vladimir Gel'man. 2015. “Political Opposition in Russia: A Troubled Transformation.” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 67:2, 177-191.
- Anton Sobolev and Alexei Zakharov. “Civic and Political Activism in Russia.” In *The New Autocracy*, ed. Daniel Treisman. 2018.
- Robertson, Graeme and Samuel Greene. “The Kremlin Emboldened: How Putin Wins Support.” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 28 no. 4, 2017, p. 86-100.

Strongly recommended viewing, in part or in full:

- Alexei Navalny and FBK. “Putin's palace. History of world's largest bribe” YouTube video, 1 hour 53 minutes. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipAnwilMncI>
- Alexei Navalny and FBK. “Don't Call Him 'Dimon'” YouTube video, 49 minutes. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrwlk7_GF9g

Recommended reading:

- Samuel Greene 2017 “From Boom to Bust: Hardship, Mobilization & Russia's Social Contract,” *Daedulus*
- Robert W. Orttung. 2013. “Navalny's Campaign to be Moscow Mayor,” *Russian Analytical Digest*, no. 136, September 16, 2-5.
- Brian Taylor. 2013. “Putin's Crackdown,” PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo no.277, September.
- March, Luke. 2009. “Managing Opposition in a Hybrid Regime: Just Russia and Parastatal Opposition” *Slavic Review*. 69(3)
- Graeme B. Robertson. 2009. “Managing Society: Protest, Civil Society, and Regime in Putin's Russia” *Slavic Review*
- Regina Smyth, “Beyond United Russia,” PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo no.302, September 2013

3. Spheres of Influence and Russia's International Presence

Required reading:

- Daniel Treisman. 2016. “Why Putin Took Crimea.” *Foreign Affairs* 95.3 (May/June).
- Michael McFaul, Stephen Stestanovich, and John Mearsheimer. 2014. “Faulty Powers: Who Started the Ukraine Crisis?” *Foreign Affairs* 93.6.
- Margot Light, *Developments in Russian Politics 7* “Chapter 13: Foreign Policy.”
- Fyodor Lukyanov. 2016. “Putin's Foreign Policy: the Quest to Restore Russia's Rightful Place” *Foreign Affairs*.
- Andrei Tsygankov. 2015. “Vladimir Putin's last stand: the sources of Russia's Ukraine policy”, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 31:4, 279-303.

Recommended reading:

- Maria Popova, “Why the Orange Revolution Was Short and Peaceful and Euromaidan Long and Violent,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 61, no. 6 (November-December 2014), pp. 64-70
- Daniel Treisman. 2011. *The Return: Russia's Journey from Gorbachev to Medvedev*. Chapter 9.
- Richard Sakwa, “‘New Cold War’ or twenty years’ crisis? Russia and international politics”, *International Affairs*, Volume 84, Issue 2, March 2008, Pages 241–267
- Dmitri Trenin. 2010. “Russian Foreign Policy: Modernization or Marginalization?” in Anders Åslund, Sergei Guriev, and Andrew C. Kuchins (eds.) *Russia After the Global Crisis* Peterson Institute
- Fyodor Lukyanov. 2016. “Putin's Foreign Policy: the Quest to Restore Russia's Rightful Place” *Foreign Affairs*
- John Mearsheimer. 2014. “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin” *Foreign Affairs* 93.5

4. Electoral Authoritarianism in Russia

Required reading:

- Stephen White. 2011. “Elections: Russian Style.” *Europe-Asia Studies*. 63(4).
- Timothy Frye, Ora John Reuter, and David Szakonyi, “Political Machines at Work: Voter Mobilization and Electoral Subversion in the Workplace,” *World Politics* 66:2 (April 2014), pp. 195-228.
- Timothy Colton and Michael McFaul. 2001. “Are Russians Undemocratic?” Carnegie Endowment Working Paper.
- Reuter, Ora John, Noah Buckley, Alexandra Shubenkova, and Guzel Garifullina. “Local elections in authoritarian regimes: An elite-based theory with evidence from Russian mayoral elections.” *Comparative political studies* 49, no. 5 (2016): 662-697.

Recommended reading:

- Enikolopov, Ruben, Vasily Korovkin, Maria Petrova, Konstantin Sonin, and Alexei Zakharov. 2013 “Field Experiment Estimate of Electoral Fraud in Russian Parliamentary Elections” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 110(2).
- Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World* (Yale University Press, 2005)
- Allina-Pisano, Jessica. 2010. “Social contracts and authoritarian projects in the post-Soviet space: the use of administrative resource.” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. 43: 373- 382*

5. Russia’s Political Economy

Required reading:

- Marshall Goldman. 2004. “Putin and the Oligarchs,” *Foreign Affairs*, Nov/Dec 2004.
- Noah Buckley. 2018. “Corruption and Power in Russia.” FPRI Research Paper.
- David Szakonyi. 2018. “Governing Business: The State and Business in Russia.” FPRI Research Paper.
- Timothy Frye and Andrei Shleifer. 1997. “The Invisible Hand and the Grabbing Hand.” *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings*. 554-559
- Sergei Guriev and Aleh Tsyvinski, “Challenges Facing the Russian Economy after the Crisis” in Anders Åslund, Sergei Guriev, and Andrew C. Kuchins (eds.) *Russia After the Global Crisis*. Peterson Institute.
- Daniel Treisman. 2010. “Is Russia Cursed by Oil?” *Journal of International Affairs*, 63 (2).

Recommended reading:

- Daniel Treisman, “Putin’s Silovarchs,” *Orbis* 5, 1 (2008)
- Jordan Gans-Morse, “Threats to Property Rights in Russia: From Private Coercion to State Aggression,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 28, 3 (2012): 263-295.
- Vadim Volkov. 1999. “Violent Entrepreneurship in Post-Communist Russia.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, no. 5.
- Timothy Frye. 2010. “Corruption and Rule of Law” in Anders Åslund, Sergei Guriev, and Andrew C. Kuchins (eds.) *Russia After the Global Crisis* Peterson Institute

- Peter Rutland and Natasha Kogan 1998. “The Russian Mafia: Between Hype and Reality,” *Transitions Online*
- Sergei Cheloukhine and Joseph King “Corruption networks as a sphere of investment activities in modern Russia” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*
- Vadim Volkov. 2014. ‘The Russian Mafia: Rise and Extinction’ in Paoli L. *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*. Oxford University Press.
- Clifford Gaddy and Barry Ickes, *Russia’s Virtual Economy* (Brookings Institution Press, 2002)