

POP88104 — Russian Politics under Putin

Module Information	
Module Code	POP88104
Module Title	Russian Politics under Putin
Department	Political Science
Module Personnel	Dr Noah Buckley (buckleno@tcd.ie)
Academic Year	2026–27
Credit Weighting	5 credits
Semester	Semester 2 (Hilary Term)
Contact Hours	2 hours of seminar per week

Module Content	
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 the caustic legacies of a planned economy. This intensive graduate seminar explores the evolution of Russian politics under Vladimir Putin — from the transition out of Yeltsin’s Russia in the 1990s to the consolidation of the “vertical of power” and beyond. Topics include personalism and competing centres of power; state–society relations and civil society; Russia’s political economy and the role of oil and business; electoral manipulation and corruption; and Russia’s foreign policy and aggression abroad. The seminar emphasises close, critical engagement with cutting-edge political science research.
Module Learning Aims	This module aims to give students a deep, research-led understanding of politics in Putin’s Russia and to develop their ability to read, critique, and synthesise advanced political science scholarship. Students learn to assess theoretical arguments and empirical evidence critically and to connect the Russian case to broader debates on authoritarianism and political economy.
Learning Outcomes	On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

Module Content

	• Explain the key institutions, actors, and dynamics of Russian politics under Putin • Critically evaluate academic research on authoritarian politics, political economy, and Russian foreign policy • Synthesise and debate competing scholarly arguments and assess their methodology and evidence • Develop and defend an original analytical argument about Russian politics in written form
Indicative Reading / Resources	Indicative texts (a full set of weekly readings provided via Blackboard): • Frye, Timothy. 2021. <i>Weak Strongman: The Limits of Power in Putin's Russia</i>. Princeton University Press. • Treisman, Daniel, ed. 2018. <i>The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin's Russia</i>. Brookings Institution Press. • Sharafutdinova, Gulnaz. 2020. <i>The Red Mirror: Putin's Leadership and Russia's Insecure Identity</i>. Oxford University Press. • McGlynn, Jade. 2023. <i>Russia's War</i>. Polity Press.

Assessment

Assessment Components	Participation 20%; response papers and in-class work 30%; final paper 50%.
Assessment Details	• Participation (20%): active, informed contribution to seminar discussion, based on close reading of all required texts. • Response papers and in-class work (30%): short critical responses to the week's readings, submitted before class. In-class presentation or other assessment. • Final paper (50%): an analytical essay engaging with material from across the module, submitted at the end of the mini-term. The essay should be analytical rather than descriptive; full guidance is provided during the module and on Blackboard.



Additional Information	
Prerequisites	None (open to students on the relevant taught Masters programme)
Co-requisites	None
Any other information	Five-week intensive (mini-term) seminar. Readings are provided via Blackboard, and the final-paper assignment is distributed during the module.