

## Course description

### Contemporary Russian Politics

#### 1. Course name, ECTS, quarter / semester, contact hours

Contemporary Russian Politics

6 ECTS, February-June 2015 (3&4 Quarters)

Contact hours: 22 lectures (44 hours) & 23 discussion groups (46 hours)

#### 2. Author of the course

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#### 3. Outline

This is a broad introductory course to Russian politics and law, but it gives a good general understanding of how Russia really works. The course deals with the cursed questions of Russian politics: Why do Russians support autocracy? (Or do they?) Is it good Russia is a presidential republic? What happened to Russian federalism? What about its opposition? Who were those people in the streets in 2011-2012, and what did they want? Why does Russia always support the bad guys internationally? Are Russian courts as bad as they are told, and why? Did the 1990s reforms fail or succeed? Why do they turn the hot water off at summer? Are oligarchs still politically mighty? Much of the course evolves around issues better understood in comparison to other countries. We shall also discuss local politics and compare Bashkirian political machine to Daley's Chicago, and Russian mafia to their Sicilian counterparts. The course shall constantly bring us back on slippery ground of how Russian politics interacts with Russian society and economy, but by its end students will get a firm grasp of how this triangle works. To achieve that, the course offers a reasonably vast reading of scholarly articles seasoned with ongoing political commentary and media reports, with occasional field sorties into local party offices, courts and opposition camps. The course also focuses on contemporary Russian politics, which means late Soviet politics and the 1990s are only covered inasmuch as they served a precursor to the country one might call Putin's Russia.

#### 4. Structure and content

no	Subject	Hours (total)	Class hours		Self-study
			Lectures	Seminars	
1	Introduction to the course. Brief overview of Russian political history (1990s-2010s)	12	4	4	4
2	What is Russian politics made of? Presidentialism	16	4	4	8
3	Parties, media and opposition	16	4	4	8
4	Spiders in the box. Can federalism be a check on the all- mighty president?	16	4	4	8
5	Corruption, bureaucracy and state building	16	4	4	8
6	Institutions and the rule of law in	16	4	4	8

	Russia. Law and courts				
7	Business and state in Russia. Oil and resource curse. Oligarchs	16	4	4	8
8	Protests and color revolutions	16	4	4	8
9	Societal, economic and political sources of autocratic resilience in Russia. A normal country?	20	4	6	10
<b>Total</b>		144	36	38	70

### 5. Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for the course, though some prior training in social sciences would make it a more rewarding enterprise.

### 6. Assessment

Every class starts with a brief (1 hour long) overview of the subject by the instructor. This is followed by an in-depth discussion of the literature assigned for the class, with occasional team project presentations. The students' work in class during seminars amounts to **40%** of the final grade. This mostly deals with the instructor's assessment of their reading. The other **40%** of the grade come from a reaction paper that students write covering the reading assignment for one class of their choice (which they submit to the instructor after the first class where they get familiar with the course requirements and can ask some further questions to ascertain their points of interest for the course). The reaction paper is a 1000 words long essay where a student reviews the literature assigned for the class, gives her opinion and some critiques on it. If the literature assigned is reviewed properly, drawing on some additional literature is an advantage (but not necessarily so if the assignment literature is reviewed superficially). Finally, there is also a team project which amounts to **20%** of the final grade. With an aggregate grade of 6 or higher a student is excused from taking the exam. The exam is a written answer to one of the broad questions covered in the course. The exam lasts 2 hours and adds up to the final grade as 35% to 65%.