Center – Periphery relations in Russia

Lecturer:
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Abstract:
This course examines center-periphery relations in the Russian Federation in a broader perspective. The first part of the course surveys some important aspects of political, economic and cultural geography of contemporary Russia. During the course particular attention will be paid to the meanings and character of Russia’s borders. We will consider how, to what extent and through what kind of mechanisms issues such as abundance and location of energy resources, climate, size of the country’s territory and interregional interactions influence the building and functioning in institutions in Russia.

The second part of the course will focus on such issues as approaches to centrality (Russian case), centralization/decentralization debates and practices, territorial structure of Russia and its dynamics, interregional disparities, ethnic regions, spatial aspects of urbanization, development of federalism in Russia.

The students will have several opportunities to reflect on material that we will cover in this class taking part in debates and discussions.

Course Outline

Lectures 1-2. Introduction. Formation of Russia’s Territory: Models of Colonization

Russia as “geographic term”. Ivan Ilyin: “Russia as Organic Entity”. The problem of consolidation of state territory.
Colonization models: collecting of lands, moving of the borders, “strategic borders”.

Required readings:

Supplemental Readings:

Lecture 3-4. Space Cleavages within Russia’s Territory

Four types of the space cleavages within Russia’s territory. East – West gradient: intercontinental border between Europe and Asia. Population and economic development versus natural resources and size of the territory. North versus South. Russia as Northern country and the implications. Center – periphery model: how it was created and reproduces in Russia. Ethnic divisions: Russian “orthodox” core versus ethnic non-Russian regions as fragments of other civilizations.

Required readings:

Supplemental Readings:

Lecture 5-6. Russia: Dynamics of Administrative-Territorial Division
The first attempt to organize the territory of Empire: Peter the Great. Reforms of Catherine the Great: the introduction of “guberniya” level. Territorial division of Russia at the eve of the 1917 Revolution.


**Required readings:**

**Supplemental Readings:**

**Lecture 7-8. Federalism in Russia**

**Required readings:**
Supplemental Readings:

Lecture 9-10. Ethnic Regions in the Russian Federation


Required readings:

Supplemental Readings:


**Required readings:**

**Supplemental Readings:**

**Lecture 13-14. Regional Policy and Interregional Disparities in the Russian Federation**

Dynamic of interregional disparities in Russia: comparisons with US, EU, China and India. What concept for regional policy? Territorial justice versus economic efficiency. How to preserve solidarity between the regions? New institutions for regional policy. Financial transfers for political purposes. Paternalistic or market preserving regional policy? The main goal: fighting income inequalities or changing the structure of regional economies?

**Required readings:**

Supplemental Readings:

Lecture 15-16. Modernization in Russia: the Role of Geography

Modernization and innovative development as key national priorities. Size of the country and its multiethnic composition: additional risks and challenges for modernization. Modernization, decentralization and subsidiarity principle. The role of redistribution. Political autonomy for the regions and interregional competition as the main conditions for successful diffusion of innovations. The role of the state and public structural policies.

Required readings:

Supplemental Readings: