

Syllabus “Regions of Russia and the world in comparative perspective”

Higher School of Economics

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Credits: 3
Contact Hours: 56
Self-study Hours: 58
Educational Format: elective course, without online courses

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Course Description, Learning Objectives

Globalization is a political trend that has had the greatest impact on the last decades. The world is going through a period marked by the erosion of the boundaries between nation-states. This erosion seriously undermines the very concept of the state sovereignty. At the same time we witness an emerging trend of regionalization in economic, political, and geographic senses - between countries and within countries. This trend gives rise to serious political consequences. Regionalization as well as globalization shape our modern world and mold its spatial organization. Spatial organization, resulting from two different processes – integration and fragmentation, can be considered as directly connected to globalization. When it goes from the bottom to the top it leads to macroregions formation, which can be seen as a direct result of globalization. When it moves from top to bottom it leads to growing subnational diversity and autonomy at all levels, which is a reaction onto globalization.

Russia, which alone occupies 1/7 of the world territory, is a country where regional approach is indispensable. To get an idea of Russia as a whole one should not only realize its regional diversity but have knowledge of its different regions which collectively make the country. It's not so much about mechanical gathering and memorizing the information about different regions, but rather learning the country through its regions. At the same time Russia can serve a testing ground for all kinds of regional studies.

The course offers a complex social-political, cultural and economic - approach to understanding, studying and explaining regional diversity of Russia viewed against the general international background. Basic information is given on the regional dimension of Russia's nature, population, history, culture and economy and the way they factor in the Russian societal life and political processes. Methods of regional studies applied to Russia and other countries are considered, including comparative analysis, structuralism, functionalism, time-space analysis, landscape studies.

Regionalization can be seen as one of these methods. In the course it is approached in two different ways: as an objective socio-economic process (political regionalization) and as a research technique (academic regionalization). In the first sense regionalization is opposed to unitarianization and unification. Contrary to the myth claiming that regionalization leads to disintegration, regionalization in fact is a way to keep the unity of a state. It can serve as an alternative to federalization or even as a first phase of federalization. In the second sense regionalization is a spatial dimension of regional classification and typology. Differences in the approaches of the two leading schools of regionalization - Russian and American - are considered. Regionalization within and beyond national borders is considered. Different schemes of regionalization of Russia are analyzed.

The notion of “region” is defined along with region’s composition and its basic features including integrity. Plurality of regions’ networks and of regions’ contours. Hierarchy of regional networks: macro-, mezzo- and microregions. Different types of regions: natural regions and zones, administrative regions (and evolution of state-territorial composition), economic regions (and dynamics of a spatial organization of settlement and economy), socio-cultural, political regions etc. Mental maps. Vernacular regions.

Different models of regional differentiation: center-periphery, concentric zones, growth poles, field of urban settlement, etc. are analyzed, illustrated with different examples and used for analysis.

Boundaries and their different types including lines and zones are investigated. Major functions of boundaries: barrier, connection. Dynamics of boundaries: sustainability and changes. Erosion of boundaries in some cases and their strengthening, as well as the emergence of new ones in other cases.

Russian regions being the main subject of the course are considered in comparative perspective along with regions of the United States, European Union, Germany, Ukraine, and some other countries. The emphasis is made on federal districts, natural zones, major economic regions, historical provinces and cultural regions, subjects of federation, large urban agglomerations, vernacular regions of different scale etc. Evolutionary approach is practiced to learn about Russia’s past, present and future in regional dimension.

Federalism, regionalism and regional separatism are studied using cases of post-Soviet space, Russia in particular, European countries and the United States. Russia’s “parade of sovereignties” in early 1990s. Scotland, Catalonia, Basque country.

Regional integration is analyzed at both national and supranational levels. European regional blocs and alliances: EFTA, CEFTA, Schengen zone, Central European Initiative, Vysegrad group. Northern, Eastern, Southern, Western Europe, Central Europe.

The course uses ample graphic material, first and foremost, maps of different kinds including classic geographical maps, maps of isolines with gradients, anamorphoses, mental maps. Other forms of presenting geographical information including Geographic Information Systems, spatial matrixes etc. are studied and used as well.

As a result, students should:

Know:

- The main research directions of contemporary regional policy and the basic concepts underlying them
- The major debates in contemporary regional policy and the arguments underlying them
- The techniques used in modern research design

Be able to:

- to describe the major research directions animating contemporary regional policy
- to describe and critique the major arguments within these major research directions
- to identify key components of the research design of major works and critique them
- to modify cutting edge techniques to apply them to their own research designs and work

Have:

- the skill to identify unanswered questions and research puzzles in existing research directions
- the skill to critique and evaluate the arguments, research design, and findings of research
- the skill to develop a research design for original work and to choose appropriate techniques for their research question

Learning Outcomes

By successfully completing this course, students will (1) know key information about regions of Russia and the world; (2) know the basics of regional analysis; (3) analyze this information and these viewpoints; (4) apply their knowledge and analysis to key questions of regional development in general and Russian regional development in particular; and (5) discuss Russian politics intelligently, actively, and creatively.

Grading System

40% Classroom Participation. Each student is required to participate in class discussions, to present one report, and to make presentation based on his or her essay.

30% Essay. Each student will write one 3000-word essay and to make presentation in class based on it.

30% Final Exam (comprehensive, covering the entire course).

Class Policies

- Grading Policy: “8” refers to work that fulfills all the requirements of a given assignment and does so well. Grades of 9 and 10 are reserved for truly outstanding work, for which all students will be encouraged to strive. Grades of 7 or lower indicate that the assignment has not been adequately performed to the full extent expected, although 6-7 indicates that the work still has significant merit whereas a 4-5 should serve as a strong warning to seek help.
- Absences will result in “zero” grades for participation and any activity that day. To be excused from attendance of a given class, a student must notify the professor with an acceptable excuse *prior* to the start of that day’s class unless, in the professor’s judgment, advance notification was impossible. If a student is to miss an examination or in-class exercise for illness or any reason other than religious observance, documentation (e.g., from a doctor) must be provided in order to avoid getting a zero grade for that day’s activities.
- Students are responsible for keeping track of any announcements, including possible changes in the syllabus or office hours, made in class or on Blackboard by the instructor or teaching associate.

Readings

Students are expected to have looked through presentations made for each lecture and read the readings listed for each lecture *before* class on the day of that lecture. Lectures will not simply repeat readings, but will assume knowledge of the reading material, so understanding lectures will depend on doing readings on schedule. In-class activities will also often require familiarity with the readings.

Class Schedule

1. Introduction. The notion of region

2. Geographic boundaries: physical/natural, political/administrative and other
3. Regional infrastructure and superstructure
4. Factors of regions' formation and development
5. Regions' development and functioning
6. Regional management
7. Urban agglomerations
8. Regions of Russia and the USA: comparative analysis
9. Euroregions
10. Regions in post-Soviet space
11. Greater Moscow/Moscow capital region – Ile de France – Greater London
12. Crimea.

1. **The notion of region.** An ideal region. Region according to Hettner-Kant typology of sciences. Characteristics of regions: area, location, boundaries, other: physical, economic, cultural. Types of regions: formal, functional, perceptual. Regional taxonomies and hierarchies. Region as a complex system combining elements of organismic and population systems. Connectivity, internal and external connections. Regional studies. Regionalization: approaches and schools. Kinds of regionalization. Integral and thematic regionalization. Presentation of geographic information: maps, mental maps, GIS... Fields and gradients, plates and fractures.
2. **Geographic boundaries:** physical/natural, political/administrative and other: social, economic etc. Natural territorial complexes (NTC) and territorial productive complexes (TPC). Boundaries: lines and zones; existing and former, old and new. Functions of boundaries: barrier, contact, filter. Boundaries' permeability. Changing boundaries in time and space. Agglomeration limits and delimitation. Isochrones of transportation accessibility. Borders: lines and marchlands. Natural borders, geometric borders, relict borders. Border disputes, ethnic-territorial claims and conflicts. Borders regime: cases of Southern and Northern Korea, pale of settlement, 101 kilometer. Cross-border regions. Overlaying and splitting borders.
3. **Regional structure.** Hierarchies/matreshkas, levels and networks. Regionalism in Russia. Russia's regional hierarchy: 1) macroregions including European and Asian parts, Siberia, the Far East; federal districts, economic regions, military districts and commands, river basin management, rail roads; 2) mezoregions including federation subjects, landscape regions and provinces; 3) microregions including Leizerovich microregions, local self-administration-2, electoral districts, landscapes). Taxonomic levels: the country in whole; big parts (North-South, Europe-Asia, European North – Center – European South – Volga – Urals – Siberia – Far East); administrative regions; electoral districts; vernacular regions. **Regions: internal structure.** The core, semi-periphery and periphery. The von Thunen model, Christaller's central place theory. Rodoman's model of polarized biosphere. Zipf rank size rule. Urban spatial structure models: Ernest Burgess concentric ring model, Homer Hoyt sector model, Patel and Ullman multiple nuclei model. Alexei Gutnov functional model of skeleton-tissue- plasm. Overcentralization of Russian regions, role of administrative centers. Zones of special legal status: Special Economic Zones, Advanced Development Territories.
4. **Factors of regions' formation and development.** A. Natural: hydrography and relief, climate and vegetation. Civilization and great historical rivers by Lev Mechnikov and regions peculiar to each historical stage. Rivers as barriers and skeletons for regions' formation. The case of Volga river. Coastal zones. Origins of urban settlements – fortresses and trading centers at the edges of natural zones. B. Historical-cultural-ethnic. Historical borders: partitions of Poland, serfdom. Ethnic regions and ethnic conflicts. Lack of natural barriers and aspatiality of Russian culture.

Ethnic composition and its dynamics. Russian wives: Arkhangelsk and Orel. Serfdom and its present day spatial implications. The Jewish Pale. C. Economy. Models of von Thunen and of Walter Christaller at present. Friction of distance and serving zones. Peri-Urban agriculture. Networks optimization – of settlement, health care and other services provision, etc.

5. **Regions' development and functioning.** Dropping out of hierarchical levels and emergence of new ones. Enlarging and disaggregation of hierarchical levels, cycles of administrative reforms. Urban sprawl, urban agglomerations. Megalopolises in Northern America and Europe. Transnational: the Blue Banana, the Golden Banana, the Green Banana, Gulf of Finland, and national. Russia: cycles of enlargement and fragmentation. Complication/simplification of internal structure. Growth poles: capital agglomerations, ports and southern regions. Commuting. Greater London urban area. Sochi as Russia's summer capital. Supranational integration and regionalization-secessionism. Connectivity – autarky. Borders' changing role.
6. **Regional management.** Subordination and hierarchical levels. Unitarianism – federalism. Competitive federalism. Federalism Russian style. Regionalization and federalization of Ukraine. Territorial planning and management. Managerial schemes and networks. Catherine the Great gubernias and Putin's federal districts. Russia - from 89 to 83+2 regions. Republics and national autonomies, krais, oblasts, federal cities. Constitution and regional matreshkas. Siloviki regional management schemes. Arbitrazh and administrative courts. Church eparchies. Federal districts (7-8-9). Federalism, Russian style. Federal and regional bureaucracy. Representation of regional interests at the center.
7. **Urban agglomerations.** Form of settlement and of spatial organization of society. Agglotentrism and ultraurbanism. Urbanization-suburbanization-desurbanisation-reurbanization. Transportation development and commuting. Dimensions: legal, statistical, managerial, economic, life self-organization. Standard metropolitan statistical areas (SMSA). Grigory Golts' constant. Stages of agglomerations development. Agglomerations in Russia and in the world.
8. **Regions of Russia and the USA: comparative analysis.** State-territorial composition and its development. Western frontier in the US and Eastern frontier in Russia. Time zones. Number of top level regions, their character, borders, capitals. American counties and Russian administrative rayons. Russia as a continental empire, its spatial growth. Remote areas – 'ukraines'. Geopolitics: heartland, hinterland, Rimland, thalassocracy vs tellurocracy.
9. **Euroregions,** their genesis, types, levels. Barents-region. Regionalization of Europe. Cross-border cooperation and transboundary regions. Euroregions and eurodistricts. Baltic, Barents, Dnepr, Donbas, Karelia, Neman. Multi-level partnership (European, governmental, regional, local), in several development domains (infra-structure, economy, culture and sports, tourism and leisure, transports, environment, health, energy, communications, education, innovation and technology, etc.). SWOT analysis of Euroregions development.
10. **Regions in post-Soviet space.** Mixture of pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet features. New borders and their delimitation, demarcation and construction, border regimes. Socio-economic space transformation. The case of Russian-Ukrainian border and development of Chernozem regions across it. Schemes of administrative-territorial composition. Border disputes and ethnic-territorial conflicts. Secessionism and irredentism. Non-recognized states: Nagorny Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, Donetsk and Luhansk peoples republics. Integration projects. Cross-border cooperation.
11. **Greater Moscow/Moscow capital region – Ile de France – Greater London.** Moscow and the rest. Overcentralization and its costs. Moscow as the capital and a global city. Capital functions and their transfer. S. Petersburg as the second capital. Moscowcentrism and Moscowclasm.

Moscow as a model and a center of innovations which are spread across the country. Center-periphery model at all levels. Distance from Moscow as factor of politics in regions. Spatial trajectory of innovations' spread.

12. **Crimea:** breaking region out of Ukrainian political and socio-economic space and its embedding into Russian space. Shifts in internal political and managerial design in the Republic of Crimea and city of Sevastopol. Political parties, law enforcement, local self-administration. Ethnic composition and settlement system, Crimean tatars. Internal and external relations. Status of Crimea and Sevastopol. Representation of federal interests in Crimea and of Crimean interests in Moscow. Crimean federal district.

Main Literature List:

1. Timothy J. Colton and Michael McFaul, Popular Choice and Managed Democracy : The Russian Elections of 1999 and 2000 https://b-ok.org/book/2872397/c6c5d5/?_ir=1
2. Timothy J. Colton, Transitional Citizens : Voters and What Influences Them in the New Russia <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3300606>

Additional Literature List

- Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes (2007), eds. The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics. New York: Oxford University Press. Available at:
<http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199566020.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199566020>.