

Course Syllabus

Title of the course	Contemporary Russian Politics				
Title of the Academic Programme	BA programme in Political Science and World Politics				
Type of the course	Core				
Prerequisites	Categories of political science				
ECTS workload	6				
Total indicative study hours	Directed Study	Self-directed study	Total		
	52	176	228		
Course Overview	<p>The course aims at forming a coherent knowledge of the recent political developments in Russia through the lens of various conceptual and theoretical approaches. The course revolves around four major issues in Russian politics: super-presidentialism, regionalisation, state weakness and weak political institutions, and its resource wealth and business-state relations. The tasks of the course are therefore covering these four components. The three former institutional characteristics are taken to be more stable and to produce stronger legacies traced back to the late Soviet times and the 1990s. The latter, being primarily the naughts' feature, enters analysis by the mid-term.</p>				
Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)	<p>ULO₉: Able to think critically and interpret the experience (personal and of other persons), relate to professional and social activities</p> <p>PLO₄: Student is capable of retrieving, collecting, processing and analyzing information relevant for achieving goals in the professional field</p> <p>PLO₈: Student is capable of executing applied analysis of the political phenomena and political processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - by using political science methods - and in support of practical decision making process <p>PLO₉: Student is capable of reporting the results of the information retrieval and analysis, academic or applied research she/he has conducted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in various genres (including reviews, policy papers, reports and publications pertaining to socio-political subject matter); - and depending on the target audience 				
Teaching and Learning Methods	<p>The course consists of 13 lectures (26 hours) and 13 seminars (26 hours). All lectures are supported by Power Point presentations. Students are expected to read academic literature assigned for the seminars, make presentations, discuss the material in groups.</p>				
Content and Structure of the Course					
№	Topic	Total	Directed Study		Self-directed Study
			Lectures	Tutorials	
1	Introduction. The institutionalist conceptual lens	2	2	0	0
2	Critical Junctures in Russian Political History	17	2	2	13

3	Soviet Politics and Perestroika	17	2	2	13
4	1992-1993 and the New Constitution	17	2	2	13
5	Parties and Electoral Process	17	2	2	13
6	Media	17	2	2	13
7	Federalism in Russia	18	2	2	14
8	State-building and reform process in Russia. The role of <i>Siloviki</i>	18	2	2	14
9	Rule of Law and Courts	18	2	2	14
10	Business and State	18	2	2	14
11	Civil Society and NGOs	18	2	2	14
12	Color Revolutions in the Post-Socialist countries and Political Protest in Russia	18	2	2	14
13	Course recap: Societal, economic and political sources of regime resilience in Russia	18	2	2	14
14	Final test	15	0	2	13
Total study hours		228	26	26	176

Indicative Assessment Methods and Strategy	<p>Final grade (G_{final} in the formula below) consists of the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% work in class during seminars • 20% reaction paper (due on November 10) • 10% development of a political party (group presentation) • 10% news report (group presentation) • 10% political portrait of elite group (group presentation) • 20% final test • 10% exam $G_{\text{final}} = 0.2 * G_{\text{work in class}} + 0.2 * G_{\text{r.paper}} + 0.1 * G_{\text{pol.party pres.}} + 0.1 * G_{\text{news report}} + 0.1 * G_{\text{pol.portrait pres}} + 0.2 * G_{\text{final test}} + 0.1 * G_{\text{exam}}$ <p>Seminar work assessment Every seminar starts with a brief discussion of the lecture material with the instructor. This is followed either by a news report presentation or a political portrait (both presented in groups). The main body of the seminar is an in-depth discussion of the literature assigned for the class, with occasional team project presentations. The grade derives from the instructor's assessment of their reading and the subsequent input into the group discussion.</p> <p>Reaction paper Reaction paper covers the reading assignment for one specific class. Each student is free to choose any subject. The reaction paper is an 800 to 1000 words long essay where a student reviews any three pieces of literature assigned for the class on any given subject, gives his/her opinion and some critiques on it. Reaction papers must be submitted on November 10</p>
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by 9pm. A reaction paper briefly covers the reading, criticizes it, etc. The author is expected to answer some basic questions, e.g. what are the central issues in the literature reviewed, which arguments the works put forth, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the papers under review. The important thing about reaction paper is that it should not merely summarize the works that it reviews (reaction paper is not an annotated bibliography), but should add something to it – either in criticism, or in some interesting development of the arguments proposed, or both. (A minor, yet noteworthy thing is that the instructors are tough on plagiarism. Consult the HSE plagiarism policies on that.) It should also be well written. Students are expected to pick at least two readings from the list of suggested literature, but can also add some of the literature of their own choice. In this case they should consult the course instructor and have their suggested literature approved before they review it. Importantly, the 800 to 1000 words you will have within the wordcount is a very scarce resource: it's not much! Do not waste the wordcount: avoid unnecessarily lengthy introductions and formal conclusions. Think what exactly your message is and try to convey it as effectively as you can. If the reaction paper is watery and unsubstantial, it will show and we will grade accordingly.

Group presentation: Development of a political party

For the discussion group on party and electoral system development students prepare a group presentation devoted to the history of one particular political party currently active in Russia or historically significant in Russian politics. Specific parties are assigned to the groups by the instructors.

Group presentation: Recent political developments (news report)

Once in a semester each student should present in a group a report and analysis of the political news covering the two weeks preceding the class. Students form groups of around five people each, review the most recent political events (approximately five events covering the two previous weeks), and present the analysis of the news to the class.

It is important that the news are reported in a concise, balanced, analytical, and unbiased manner, and that the report is interesting to the audience.

During the class the group has 10-15 minutes to present the news in an engaging, informative, and balanced way. The presentation should be illustrated with a powerpoint. The last slide should contain all sources used to prepare the report.

The night before their presentation the group should email the list of the news they will cover (which should not be detailed – just a list) to their instructor. One point (out of ten they can get for this task) comes from emailing the list on time. The other nine points come from the instructor's evaluation of how concise, analytical, balanced, unbiased, and interesting to the audience the report is.

We suggest that the students both try to pick the news that proved to have the most repercussions and drew a wide response in the society, and also those that may not have been so noticeable but that are (for whatever reason) important for the current or future political developments.

Following this logic, while paying sufficient attention to what is

happening in Moscow, students are advised to also pick at least one piece of news from the regions.

Group presentation: Political portrait of one elite group/faction

Yet another group presentation answers a question of the type: who do they call the...? E.g., who did they call the *Family* in Yeltsin times? Who do they call the *Piterskie*? Who do they call the *Liberals*?, etc.

The presentation builds around discussing the main personalities within any given group, where their cohesiveness comes from, how the group evolves over time, what its goals are, and which resources it commands. Each group (around six people) prepares one such presentation within the course.

When grading the elite group report the instructor will pay attention in particular to the following requirements:

- the report should be supported by a presentation (e.g., PowerPoint)
- the report should last 15-20 minutes;
- the last slide should contain all sources used to prepare the report;
- the night before the presentation the group should send to the instructor the list of names of members of the elite who belong to the elite faction.

The main points that should be covered in the report are:

- 1 Composition of the group and how it formed;
- 2 Goals (if any), ideology (if any), and resources the group commands (material, political and so on);
- 3 The group's opponents (and other important connections with other actors and groups)
- 4 Publicity and image of the group: how public is it? How popular is it among the population?
- 5 Historical evolution of the group: when and how it emerged; when it enjoyed most influence; where it is now.

Notice that with some of these points subjective assessments are inevitable, and oftentimes the resources you would have to research would not be official or even trustworthy. Make sure to keep track of when you refer to hearsay or rumors in your argumentation, and when you present your (or somebody else's) subjective opinion. Try to avoid being misleading about that during your presentation.

Final test

The final test is administered at the last seminar of the course. It is part a multiple-choice, and part an open-ended question test covering the material of the lectures and the reading for the seminars.

Retakes and valid excuses

Retakes are not provided for any of these components (class work, reaction paper and the three group presentations). Missing a deadline without a valid excuse (i.e., sickness with a certificate from a physician) results in the student getting a zero for the component.

A student must be present at all her presentations unless sick. In case of sickness the student gets the same grade all other students get in her group if they confirm that she sufficiently participated in preparing the

presentation.
If a student does not submit the reaction paper due to sickness any time between November 3 and 10, the deadline to submit the paper is extended for her for one week starting at the end of her sickness leave as attested by the physician.

Determining the sufficient grade to be released from the exam

On December 2 a decision about the cut-off grade which releases students from taking the exam is taken based upon the average grade for the components which are already graded. Students released from the exam can still take it if they want. To do so they have to inform the instructors about that by email before the exam.

Written Exam

The exam is a written essay on two broad questions covered in the course. The exam lasts for two hours. The list of all questions for the exam is provided separately on LMS.

The exam grade is *blocking*, meaning that the student who fails to get a pass (four or higher) for the exam has to retake it even if her total grade is passing.

Readings / Indicative Learning Resources

Mandatory

Shevtsova, Lilia. 2005. *Putin's Russia*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1123676>.

Fish, M Steven. 2005. *Democracy Derailed in Russia: The Failure of Open Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=244422>.

Optional

Desai, Padma. 2006. *Conversations on Russia: Reform from Yeltsin to Putin*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=271252>.

Sakwa, Richard. 2002. *Russian Politics and Society*. London: Routledge.

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=170183>.

Additional materials are provided on LMS.

Indicative Self- Study Strategies

Type	+/-	Hours
Reading for seminars / tutorials (lecture materials, mandatory and optional resources)	+	106
Assignments for seminars / tutorials / labs	+	20
E-learning / distance learning (MOOC / LMS)	-	0
Fieldwork	+	10
Project work	+	20
Other (please specify)	-	0

	Preparation for the exam	+	20
Academic Support for the Course	Academic support for the course is provided via LMS, where students can find: guidelines and recommendations for doing the course; guidelines and recommendations for self-study; samples of assessment materials.		
Facilities, Equipment and Software	(If required)		
Course Instructor	Ivan Grigoriev, igrigoriev@hse.ru Daniil Tinyakov, tinyakovdk@gmail.com Aleksei Sorbale, asorbale@hse.ru Roman Egorov, regorov@hse.ru		

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) Delivering

Course ILO(s)	Teaching and Learning Methods for delivering ILO(s)	Indicative Assessment Methods of Delivered ILO(s)
ULO ₉ : Able to think critically and interpret the experience (personal and of other persons), relate to professional and social activities	Seminar discussion focuses on the students' critically interpreting the main events and trends in Russian political development.	The instructor assesses this ability and its development during the seminar discussions.
PLO ₄ : Student is capable of retrieving, collecting, processing and analyzing information relevant for achieving goals in the professional field	Students must retrieve, collect, process and analyze a wealth of information to prepare for the group presentations.	The instructor assesses this ability and its development in the three group presentations that each student participates in throughout the course.
PLO ₈ : Student is capable of executing applied analysis of the political phenomena and political processes - by using political science methods - and in support of practical decision making process	Students execute applied analysis of the ongoing political processes they observe as they present their news report covering the two weeks preceding the class.	The instructor assesses this ability and its development in the three group presentations that each student participates in throughout the course.
PLO ₉ : Student is capable of reporting the results of the information retrieval and analysis, academic or applied research she/he has conducted: - in various genres (including reviews, policy papers, reports and publications pertaining to socio-political subject matter); - and depending on the target audience	Students report the results of their information retrieval and analysis of the secondary academic and applied science sources they are provided with in a reaction paper which might take a form of a review or a report covering the literature for the course.	The instructor assesses this ability and its development in the reaction paper students write for the course.

Assessment Criteria

In-class Participation

Grades	Assessment Criteria
«Excellent» (8-10)	A critical analysis which demonstrates original thinking and shows strong evidence of preparatory research and broad background knowledge.
«Good» (6-7)	Shows strong evidence of preparatory research and broad background knowledge. Excellent oral expression.
«Satisfactory» (4-5)	Satisfactory overall, showing a fair knowledge of the topic, a reasonable standard of expression. Some hesitation in answering follow-up questions and/or gives incomplete or partly irrelevant answers.
«Fail» (0-3)	Limited evidence of relevant knowledge and an attempt to address the topic. Unable to offer relevant information or opinion in answer to follow-up questions.

Group presentations

Grades	Assessment Criteria
«Excellent» (8-10)	A well-structured, analytical presentation of project work. Shows strong evidence and broad background knowledge. In a group presentation all members contribute equally and each contribution builds on the previous one clearly. Answers to follow-up questions reveal a good range and depth of knowledge beyond that covered in the presentation and show confidence in discussion.
«Good» (6-7)	Clearly organized analysis, showing evidence of a good overall knowledge of the topic. The presenter of the project work highlights key points and responds to follow up questions appropriately. In group presentations there is evidence that the group has met to discuss the topic and is presenting the results of that discussion, in an order previously agreed.
«Satisfactory» (4-5)	Takes a very basic approach to the topic, using broadly appropriate material but lacking focus. The presentation of project work is largely unstructured, and some points are irrelevant to the topic. Knowledge of the topic is limited and there may be evidence of basic misunderstanding. In a group presentation, most of the work is done by one or two students and the individual contributions do not add up.
«Fail» (0-3)	Fails to demonstrate any appropriate knowledge.

Reaction paper

Grades	Assessment Criteria
«Excellent» (8-10)	Has a clear argument, which addresses the topic and responds effectively to all aspects of the task. Fully satisfies all the requirements of the task; rare minor errors occur;
«Good» (6-7)	Responds to most aspects of the topic with a clear, explicit argument. Covers the requirements of the task; may produce occasional errors.
«Satisfactory» (4-5)	Generally addresses the task; the format may be inappropriate in places; display

	little evidence of (depending on the assignment): independent thought and critical judgement include a partial superficial coverage of the key issues, lack critical analysis, may make frequent errors.
«Fail» (0-3)	Fails to demonstrate any appropriate knowledge.

Recommendations for students about organization of self-study

Recommendations for self-study for seminars

Most important about preparing for seminars is to do this:

- read without getting distracted to other things. If you use your tablet, laptop or smartphone to do the readings, switch off the internet for an hour or two while reading. Facebook can wait;
- make notes for the classes – even if it is just half a page of what you think about the reading, how you liked it and why. When you write (preferably in long hand), you make sure you process the information that the reading provides you with;
- when reading, think about some useful details that the author has to tell – both for the discussion group you prepare to, and in general. Are there any interesting historical details in the reading – something you would like to draw your groupmates attention to? Is there anything you think could be useful for your future research? Is there anything you like or dislike for personal reasons?
- discuss the reading with your groupmates out of class. You do not study Russian politics to only talk about what you think in class. Use cafeteria queues to discuss the assignments – it can be fun!
- to make discussions more productive, set up a reading group where you could meet to exchange opinions. After all, there is so much more to each particular reading assigned to this class than what we can squeeze into a seminar;
- in seminars think of what specifically the instructor tries to help you understand about the reading, but also think about what the instructors may not understand which is interesting. Don't be afraid to share your personal perspectives on the reading – but make sure you do that not to the other students' detriment (meaning, let other people talk too).

Recommendations for essay

The reaction paper is just around 800-1000 words: too short to be formally structured into sections (the way you structure all other essays). However, there still should be something you use to introduce the reader to the subject (maybe just a couple of phrases, but still); there must be something you conclude with (again, not necessarily long); and something in between where you actually review the sources you choose.

Importantly, there should be a bibliography – the list of sources covered in the reaction paper. Showing the wordcount (just by putting it at the end of the essay, e.g. “Wordcount: 800 words”) would be a nice touch.

If the reaction paper is too long or too short, this can be reflected in the grade. Stick to the wordcount as hard as you can.

Recommendations for group presentations

Students prepare three group presentations throughout the course. In all cases they work within the same small groups formed at the beginning of the course and consisting of 5-6 students from within the same seminar group.

One of these three presentations (Development of a political party) is to be prepared for the seminar on political parties (DGs 5-6). The other two are alternating weekly presentations.

Common to all three presentations is that they are group tasks: all members of the group get the same grade, and it is very important that students within the group work in common and coordinatedly. To achieve that result, keep in mind three things:

- don't postpone – start preparing the presentation as early as you can;
- meet up: do not rely on digital coworking too much, meet to discuss and rehearse in person;
- have a calendar specifying what you do and when, and stick to it;
- use division of labour when it comes to preparing different substantive parts of the presentation (e.g. for the Siloviki presentation it is alright to have a MVD guy and a National Guards guy). Avoid division of labour in formal tasks (e.g. one person does all the reading; another puts together a powerpoint; yet another presents all of it) – it is less rewarding in terms of teamwork, and you learn less this way;
- be explicit about who does what within your division of labour;
- be responsible: do not be late for your presentations.

Recommendations for final test

For the final test, review of your notes – both from the lectures and the seminars. Look through the presentations. But do not do that all at once: do it topic by topic.

For every subject, after reviewing it look at it and:

- try to formulate several multiple choice questions: not too hard and detailed, but specific enough to test your knowledge of this particular topic;
- also try to formulate some open-ended questions which would concern something important about Russian politics, which would allow you to show some detailed knowledge, but also a good theoretical grasp of how Russian politics is organized.

Try to formulate as many good questions like that as possible. Write them down. Most probably, these will be the questions you'll have to answer during test.

Recommendations for exam

For the exam, review of your notes – both from the lectures and the seminars. Look through the presentations. Notice now you are doing the same thing you were doing to prepare for the test. However, for the exam you will actually have to write about some of the broader issues, and convince the instructor who will administer the exam that you know it both in terms of some general structures, but also more profoundly – with all kinds of details and factoids about years, events, personalities.

For every exam question (the list is available as a separate file on LMS; tentative list is provided below) think about the general structure of the topic; its historical elements (what happened after what, that kind of stuff); the personalities; and interesting factoids about all of it. Also try to put the way you look at this issue into the broader perspective: how does the thing we discuss relates to Russian politics at large?

Importantly, notice that if you feel like your answer to any two given questions in the exam would be similar, most probably that means you are missing something special about the question at hand.

Sample of exam questions

1. Was Perestroika a successful policy? Why?
2. What were the reasons and the outcome of Constitutional crisis in 1993?
3. Presidential elections in 1996 and 2000.
4. Reforms of the first and second Putin's administration.
5. Presidential succession in 2008 and in 2011-12.
6. Building power vertical in Russia.
7. Checks and balances in Russian Constitution.
8. President-parliament relations in 1990s and 2000s.
9. Political parties in Russia.
10. Role of the media in Russia from 1990s to nowadays.

11. Federal institutions in Russia.
12. Redistributive politics and Russian regions.
13. Russian governors and federal party system.
14. State autonomy and state capacity in Russia.
15. Patrimonial traditions against discipline of bureaucracy.
16. Machine politics in Russia.
17. Formal and informal institutions in Russian politics.
18. Rule of law in Russia.
19. The role of Constitutional Court in Russia.
20. Big oil in Russian economy.
21. The role of oligarchs in 1990s and after.
22. People's support of power in Russia.

Special conditions for organization of learning process for students with special needs

The following types of comprehension of learning information (including e-learning and distance learning) can be offered to students with disabilities (by their written request) in accordance with their individual psychophysical characteristics:

- 1) *for persons with vision disorders*: a printed text in enlarged font; an electronic document; audios (transferring of learning materials into the audio); an individual advising with an assistance of a sign language interpreter; individual assignments and advising.
- 2) *for persons with hearing disorders*: a printed text; an electronic document; video materials with subtitles; an individual advising with an assistance of a sign language interpreter; individual assignments and advising.
- 3) *for persons with muscle-skeleton disorders*: a printed text; an electronic document; audios; individual assignments and advising.