

Tackling Putin's Russia

October 2019

9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon

University of Arizona

Humanities Seminars Program

Poetry Center, Dorothy Rubel Room

Facilitator: John P. Willerton, Professor of Political Science, University of Arizona

Email: jpw@email.arizona.edu

Web: jpw.faculty.arizona.edu/

Overview of the Course

Our seminar overviews contemporary Russian politics, bridging the domestic scene and foreign policy, while also considering the ways we in the West approach this polity and its actions. The substantive focus is on the political process and its policy outcomes. During our four meetings, I will draw on culture and history – and longer-term “Russian experience” – as we probe 21st century Russian politics and Russia’s changing role in an evolving international system.

We’ll start, in our first meeting, by overviewing selected themes of contemporary Russia, in the process completing a self-graded quiz. In the process of our “quiz,” we may confirm some “common wisdom” about Russia, while engaging some unexpected Russian realities. We will move on, in our second meeting, to focus more specifically on the Russian political system, with attention to the policy outputs of nearly two decades of Putin team governance. We will continue on this course in our third meeting, and assuming you have read the two pieces by President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, we’ll factor in the governing team, its perspectives, and its policy preferences. Especially during weeks two and three, I will give attention to the post-Soviet Russian “national idea,” as both the governing team and broader society have struggled to sort out a 21st century Russian identity and programmatic goals. Finally, our course will wrap up with a look at Russian foreign and security policy, and how Russia fits into the larger international system. Overall, we will engage both domestic and foreign policy concerns, though our emphasis will be on the domestic scene, as it conditions and structures the policy process.

While much of the information of our class comes during our weekly sessions, and via PowerPoint presentations, I will distribute handouts, and there are supplementary readings, which I hope you will find valuable. Our seminar assumes no particular background on your part regarding Russia, past and present. It is intended that each lecture session will have “stand on its own material.” I hope, however, that when all four sessions are brought together, as augmented with handouts and readings, that our seminar will yield valuable new insights on Russia and its politics.

This is both an exciting and challenging time to engage Russia and its politics. Exciting, because Russia's politics are dynamic and we can feel the impact of developments arising within Russia as we look beyond its borders – and even to our own country. Challenging, because Russia has long been a rival to the United States, many Americans perceive it as an enemy, and various facets of Russian reality are opaque and subject to cartoon character treatment. This course is not presented as a “know your enemy” course. Rather, it is presented as a series of presentations-readings-discussions overviewing a country with a rich history, culture, and experience that has insights for – and is important to – our broader human experience. I appreciate all seminarians' intellectual flexibility – in reflecting over the past, monitoring the present, and anticipating the future – as *together we tackle Putin's Russia*.

Seminar Information and Readings

The most important source of information in our seminar is our four sessions, with PowerPoint presentations and related discussions. We will have for each session at least one course handout that will summarize vital information or share statistics and that will be distributed during that session. There are also a few readings which provide contextual background information and serve as a basis for our weekly group deliberations. Our class sessions are organized as “stand alone” meetings such that you may fully engage my presentations without having completed any of the readings listed on this syllabus. I do hope that those of you who complete the suggested readings will find they set a context for – and augment – what we cover in our four meetings.

With one exception, all readings listed below are available in our Coursepack, which will be distributed to all registered members of our seminar. There are no copyright or financial costs associated with these readings, so the Humanities Seminars Program can make them available to you through the Coursepack. I am the author of the published academic articles, and as such I can make them available to you without the normal charge. Meanwhile, I have two articles by Russia's leading politicians, President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, which are also free to distribute.

There is one reading which is not included in the Coursepack. While I am the author of this 56-page textbook-like chapter, it is part of a bank of country chapters, there are copyright restrictions, and you will need to go to the publisher's website to purchase and download the electronic version (there is no hard copy, only an electronic copy). There is a \$5.94 charge for downloading this chapter, and you can use a credit card. Please note this chapter – like all readings – is suggested, and there is no requirement to obtain it. You will be able to fully engage our course without this chapter, or – for that matter – any of our readings. However, for those who choose to download the chapter, I hope it will prove valuable as a comprehensive, up-to-date (as of February 2019) overview of Russian politics.

Here are the directions for finding, buying, and downloading the chapter:

1. Go online to <https://mheducation.com/shop/>
2. Search for and select the chapter (McGraw-Hill Create will call it a book) by title, ISBN, author, department.

ISBN: 9781307479508

Title: Tackling Putin's Russia

Author: John Willerton

Department: Humanities Seminars Program

3. Add the chapter/book to your cart and pay using a credit card. The cost should be \$5.94.

Schedule of Topics

Thursday, October 3

Overview + "First Day Quiz" (self-graded; let's have some fun!)

** Reading: John P. Willerton, "Russian Federation: Complexity and Uncertainty," McGraw-Hill-Create, 2019. [Available at McGraw-Hill Create; not in the Coursepack; all other readings in the Coursepack]

Thursday, October 10

Polity and Society

** Reading: John P. Willerton, "Russian Public Assessments of the Putin Policy Program: Achievements and Challenges," Russian Politics, 1, 2, 2016, pp. 131-58. [Coursepack]

Thursday, October 17

Vladimir Putin and the Governing Team

** Reading: Vladimir Putin, "Democracy and the quality of government," Kommersant, 6 February 2012, as found at: <http://premier.gov/ru>, accessed 4 March 2012. [Coursepack]

** Reading: Dmitry Medvedev, "Go Russia!" 10 September 2010, as found at: <http://president.gov/ru>, accessed 12 October 2010. [Coursepack]

Thursday, October 24

Foreign and Security Concerns

- ** Reading: John P. Willerton, "Russia, the US, and the Cold War that Never Ended," English-language original of article, "Mosca è nostra nemica perché non la capiamo," published in ***Limes: Italian Review of Geopolitics; Limes: Revista italiana di Geopolitica***, Issue 2/16, March 2016, pp. 115-22. [Coursepack]

- ** Reading: John P. Willerton, "Washington calls Moscow," English-language original of article, "Washington chiama Mosca," published in ***Limes: Revista Italiana di Geopolitica; Limes: Italian Review of Geopolitics***, Issue 11/16, November 2016, pp. 143-53. [Coursepack]