

University of Mississippi  
Spring 2013

**POL 326: Russian & East European Politics**  
MW 3:00-4:15 Lewis 109

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is a comparative survey of politics in Russia and so-called “Eastern” (or postcommunist) Europe. Throughout the semester, we will discuss several themes: the impact of political culture and historical legacies, evolving forms of participation and contestation, political organizations (parties and interest groups) and social movements, formal and informal government structures and institutions, the dual challenges of economic liberalization and democratization, and the impact of domestic and external factors on policy-making.

This course will underline similarities within and differences across the region. It has two goals: 1) to understand how each country’s political system has evolved, using a *historical institutional framework*, and 2) to learn about broader patterns (within the region and beyond), using a *comparative perspective*. Although much of our attention will be given to Russia, it is important to put Russia in a comparative context by understanding how politics in other post-Soviet or former communist countries.

This is an intermediate-level, elective course in political science. I will assume students are familiar with basic theories and concepts of comparative politics. If you have not yet taken POL 102, or if you need a refresher, I suggest the *Concise Dictionary of Politics* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010).

**COURSE TEXTBOOKS**

The following books are required for this course:

Remington, Thomas F. 2011. *Politics in Russia*, 7th ed. Pearson Longman.

Wolchik, Sharon L. and Jane L. Curry, eds. 2010. *Central and East European Politics: From Communism to Democracy*, 2nd ed. Rowan & Littlefield.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Below is a summary of course requirements and their share (in points) of the final grade:

Attendance & Participation	50
Participation	50
Group Paper	50
Group Presentation	50
Midterm Exam	100
Final Exam	100
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 400

**Attendance.** Attendance is worth 12.5% of the semester grade. You are allowed *THREE* absences (for *ANY* reason—including emergencies) throughout the semester. After that, *each absence will cost 5 points*. Plan accordingly.

Basically, I expect you to treat this course like you would any other professional responsibility. After all, that is what you're training for in college.

I will waive absence penalties only for extreme emergencies (and at my discretion) or for university-related absences. However, this will only apply to absences *after* the three allowed absences.

**Participation.** Active participation in class is an essential part of learning, particularly in advanced level courses. Participation in this course is worth 12.5% of the semester grade. This will be evaluated by “spot checks” during class lectures. The way the process will work, is as follows: I will randomly select a student (using a set of index cards with your names on them) and ask a question about the course readings. I will evaluate your response, and give it a mark on the card. I will make sure to call on *at least* 10 students every class period.

Individual responses will be marked as follows:

- A Student has clearly read and demonstrates effort at deeper conceptual understanding
- B Student has clearly read and understood basic factual material
- C Student may have the read material, but has trouble articulating it correctly
- D Student did not read the material
- Z Student is absent or refuses to answer

Over the course of the semester (before midterm grades and before final grades), I will use these to assign participation grades.

**Exams.** This course will have two exams, a midterm and a final. Both exams will follow this format:

	Number of questions on exam	Points worth per question	Total points per section
Multiple-choice	30	1	30
Short answer/identification	25	1	25
Short essay (1-2 paragraphs)	5	5	25
Long essay (4-5 paragraphs)	1	20	20
Total			100

Each exam is worth 100 points, and will combine short answer/identification, short essay, and one long essay question. I will hand out study guides one week prior to each exam.

**Group Project.** Throughout the semester, you will work on a group research project: an analysis of the most recent election in a post-Soviet or East European country. This project offers you an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of course material—and to apply them to a case. You will work together in a group of 4-5 students *and will be graded collectively*.

The project is divided into three separately graded components:

- An **analysis paper** of 3-4 pages in length that discusses the most recent election in your country, putting it into context. The paper should demonstrate your ability to apply your knowledge of the region, the case, and use that to explain contemporary politics—in this case, an election.
- A **presentation** of 5-7 minutes in length in which you present your analysis to the class. The presentation grade is split into two equal parts: (1) a slideshow presentation and (2) the oral presentation itself.

I will provide specific guidelines (and a grading rubric) for both components of the group project in the second week of the semester.

Group work is becoming an essential skill in today’s professional environment. Learning how to manage and work with a diverse group of people (and with a diverse set of skills) is important. I encourage you to meet regularly with your team and work on the project consistently throughout the semester. This may also become your “base” study group (useful for preparing not only for exams, but also for the in-class participation “spot checks”).

**Postcommunism Film Series.** In addition to the course readings, we will discuss two films:

*My Perestroika.* DVD. Directed by Robin Hessman. 2010. New Day Films.

*Good Bye, Lenin!* DVD. Directed by Wolfgang Becker. 2003. Sony Pictures.

We will discuss the films in class, and there will be at least one essay question related to the film on each exam. You also have the opportunity to write a two-page reflective essay on each film for extra credit.

## GRADING SCALE

This course uses the university’s new +/- grading scale. The corresponding percentages and point scores for each +/- letter grade are outlined below:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Points
A	93-100	372-400
A-	90-92	360-371
B+	87-89	348-359
B	83-86	332-347
B-	80-82	320-331
C+	77-79	308-319
C	73-76	292-307
C-	70-72	280-291
D	60-69	240-279
F	0-59	0-239

**ADDITIONAL ISSUES & CLASS RULES**

Please be sure you follow these basic class rules and policies throughout the semester:

***Classroom Behavior.*** I do not allow use of cell phones, laptops, or other electronic devices in class without my explicit permission. I also expect you to consistently behave in ways that demonstrate your respect for me and the course, your fellow students, and yourself.

***Missing Assignments.*** If you prepare for contingencies (by not starting to work on assignments the night before), you should not miss any assignments. Even if your work is incomplete, submitting what you have accomplished prior to any emergency is better than earning a zero. Extensions will only be granted for extreme circumstances, and at my discretion.

***Communication.*** Email is the most common way for students and faculty to communicate outside of class. I try to answer messages promptly, but do not expect emails sent *after 5pm* to be answered until *after 8 am* the following day. Additionally, remember to keep messages professional and respectful (e.g. use salutations, such as “Professor Centellas” or “Dr. Centellas”). Also, check your university email account regularly; I use that address when sending messages related to the course.

***Student Disability Services.*** If you have a *documented* disability as described by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 933-112 Section 504) or the American s with Disabilities Act (ADA) and would like to request academic and/or physical accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services at 234 Martindale Center (662-915-7128). Course requirements will not be waived, but reasonable accommodations may be provided as appropriate. Please consult <http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/sds/> for more information on student disability services.

***Academic Integrity & Plagiarism.*** All work submitted under *your* name is assumed to be *your* original work. The penalty for plagiarism and/or cheating in this class ranges from failure of the assignment to failing the course. Additional penalties are also possible. All students should familiarize themselves with the relevant guidelines and procedures in the *M Book*.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Week 1	1/23	Introduction: Hand out syllabus and go over course schedule
Week 2	1/28	CEEP: Ch. 1 (Democracy, the Market, and the Return to Europe) RP: Ch. 2 (Soviet Union and Its Demise)
	1/30	RP: Ch. 1 (State and Regime) RP: Ch. 3 (Constitutional Order)
Week 3	2/04	RP: Ch. 4 (Political Participation and Recruitment)
	2/06	RP: Ch. 5 (Ideology and Political Culture)
Week 4	2/11	RP: Ch. 6 (Interest Groups and Political Parties)
	2/13	RP: Ch. 7 (State and Market in Russia's Economic Transition) **Film: <i>My Perestroika</i>
Week 5	2/18	RP: Ch. 8 (Politics and Law)
	2/20	RP: Ch. 9 (Russia as Regional Super-Power)
Week 6	2/25	CEEP: Ch. 11 (Baltic States)
	2/29	CEEP: Ch. 15 (Ukraine)
Week 7	3/04	<b>Midterm Exam Pt. 1</b> (multiple-choice and short answer/identification)
	3/06	<b>Midterm Exam Pt. 2</b> (short essay and long essay)
<b>Spring break—no class</b>		
Week 8	3/18	CEEP: Ch. 2 (The Political Transition)
	3/20	CEEP: Ch. 3 (Re-Creating the Market)
Week 9	3/25	CEEP: Ch. 4 (Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Expansion of Democracy)
	3/27	CEEP: Ch. 5 (Women's Participation in Postcommunist Politics)
Week 10	4/01	CEEP: Ch. 6 (EU Accession and the Role of International Actors)
	4/03	CEEP: Ch. 7 (Security Issues: NATO and Beyond) **Film: <i>Good Bye, Lenin!</i>
Week 11	4/08	CEEP: Ch. 9 (Czech and Slovak Republics)
	4/10	CEEP: Ch. 10 (Hungary)
Week 12	4/15	CEEP: Ch. 8 (Poland) CEEP: Ch. 14 (Romania)
	4/17	CEEP: Ch. 12 (Bulgaria)
Week 13	4/22	CEEP: Ch. 16 (Albania)
	4/24	CEEP: Ch. 13 (Yugoslavia)

Week 14	4/29	Group presentations
	5/01	Group presentations (continued) CEEP: Ch. 17 (What Now?)
Finals Week	5/09	<b><i>Final exam—4:00 pm</i></b>