

POLITICS IN RUSSIA (CPO 3633/EUS 4930)
SPRING 2026
PROFESSOR MORASKI

This document is a pre-semester (December 17) draft of the course syllabus. It is subject to changes. Students should rely on the syllabus available via Canvas.

I. General Information

3 credits

Meeting days, times and locations:

- Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Period 5 (11:45-12:35) – **034 Anderson Hall**

Instructor(s):

Name: Professor Bryon Moraski

Office: 313 Anderson Hall

Phone: 352-273-2631

Email: bmoraski@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays, 1:00-3:00 pm or by appointment

Teaching Assistant(s):

Name: N/A

Office Building/Number:

Phone:

Email:

Office Hours:

Course Description

The course focuses on politics in the Russian Federation. As the core of the former Soviet Union, the initial problems that Russia confronted highlight the various economic, political, and social difficulties that accompanied the region's transition away from communism. While Russia had made more progress toward the institution of free and competitive elections than several other former Soviet republics during the 1990s (e.g., Belarus and the Central Asian states), economic and political freedoms substantially declined after 2000. The course provides students with a foundation for understanding these developments.

Following a discussion of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the course examines the initial struggle for power in post-Soviet Russia and the origins of Russia's political institutions. After outlining Russia's institutional framework, we turn to how Russia's first president, Boris Yeltsin, addressed the various challenges that the country confronted during his time in office and how those policies facilitated the rise of Russia's second (and fourth!) president, Vladimir Putin. The remainder of the course considers how Putin consolidated power in Russia so that he could leave office in 2008 only to return in 2012 and the implications of these changes on Russia's political trajectory.

As a Comparative Politics (CPO) course, the class serves as an example of how to compare domestic politics in a single country at different moments in time. I also occasionally place Russian developments in comparative perspective, highlighting at times how the experience of one country can lead to a reconsideration of conventional wisdom.

General Education Designation: None.

Course Materials

Required Reading

The required reading for the course comes from a variety of online book chapters, journal articles, and other electronic resources. Using scholarly journal articles and other electronic sources keeps the course content current as well as the costs of the material for the students to a minimum.

Required Technology

Students may need to use Zoom to attend office hours, Adobe Reader to access much of the assigned reading, and Turnitin.com to submit paper assignments.

Materials Fee: N/A

II. Course Goals

Course Objectives

Students will learn about the principal components of domestic politics in Russia and their evolution over time.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. identify and assess existing explanations of Russia's political development;
2. analyze changes in Russian politics over time;
3. compare Russia's domestic politics to how domestic politics in other states.

III. Graded Work

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the [Catalog](#).

Graded Components

Assigned work is due via the mechanism specified, at the time specified; penalties for lateness will be provided on the assignments.

It is your responsibility to upload the correct documents to the right platform (e.g., Canvas, Google Assignments, Turnitin), depending on the assignment.

Final grades for the course will be based on the following:

1. Attendance, worth 10% of the final course grade

- I will take attendance at the beginning of each period.
- If students are late, it is their responsibility to make sure that they are not marked as absent. Students will not receive full credit for attendance on days that they are late.
- I require documentation to excuse an absence.
- Students are encouraged to review the University's attendance policies at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationattendance.html>

I reserve the right to remove students who disrupt the class or disrespect others in the class. In such instances, students should meet with me to discuss their behavior prior to returning to class.

Students will not receive attendance credit for the session in question or for any sessions missed while the issue is being resolved.

2. In-class exams, worth 90% of the final course grade

- Three exams will be administered throughout the semester.
 - Exam 1 is worth 25% of the final course grade.
 - Exam 2 is worth 30% of the final course grade.
 - Exam 3 is worth 35% of the final course grade.

Students who arrive late will have only the time between their arrival and the time initially allocated for the exam to complete the exam.

Make-up exams will be provided only for university-accepted excuses (e.g., not simply because a student is late). Make-up exams will be held during the second hour of the final exam periods scheduled by the Registrar's Office and will differ from the original.

****Participation**

- Students may earn up to 2.5 percent of the final class grade in **extra credit** over the course of the semester through class participation.
 - Quality matters.
 - Participation that is not related to the topic at hand or that illustrates a failure to prepare for class (i.e., complete the assigned reading) **does not count**.
 - The baseline for the participation grade will reflect the total number of opportunities provided to the class throughout the semester.
 - Since the opportunities for participation will vary from class to class, the only way to maximize your opportunities for participation is to attend every class.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Number Grade
A	100-92.5
A-	92.4-89.5
B+	89.4-86.5
B	86.4-82.5
B-	82.4-79.5
C+	79.4-76.5
C	76.4-72.5
C-	72.4-69.5
D+	69.4-66.5
D	66.4-62.5
D-	62.4-59.5
E	59.4-0

See the UF Catalog's "[Grades and Grading Policies](#)" for information on how UF assigns grade points.

Note: A minimum grade of C is required to earn General Education credit.

IV. Calendar

****Subject to Changes****

Week 1 (Jan 12-16) – The Soviet Experiment

Monday

- Course overview

Wednesday

- Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*.

Friday

- Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, Chapter 4

Week 2 (Jan 19-23) – The End of Communist Russia

Monday, January 19 – No class (MLK Jr. Holiday)

Wednesday

- Cohen, Stephen F. 2004. "Was the Soviet System Reformable?" *Slavic Review* 63(3): 459-488.

Friday

- Reisinger, William and Bryon Moraski. 2017. *The Regional Roots of Russia's Political Regime*, pp. 21-52 ("Chapter 2 -- Post-Soviet Russia's Political Trajectory")

Week 3 (Jan 26-30) – Russian Politics in Transition

Monday

- Evans, Geoffrey and Stephen Whitefield. 1998. "The Evolution of Left and Right in Post-Soviet Russia." *Europe-Asia Studies* 50(6): 1023-1043.

Wednesday

- Remington, Thomas F. 2000. "The Evolution of Executive-Legislative Relations in Russia since 1993." *Slavic Review* 59(3): 499-520.

Friday

- Breslauer, George W. 1999. "Boris Yeltsin as Patriarch." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 15(2): 186-200.

Week 4 (Feb 2-6) – Russia's State in Transition

Monday

- Hale, Henry E. 2005. "The Makeup and Breakup of Ethnofederal States: Why Russia Survives Where the USSR Fell." *Perspectives on Politics* 3(1): 55-70.

Wednesday

- Hendley, Kathryn. 1999. "Rewriting the Rules of the Game in Russia: The Neglected Issue of the Demand for Law." *East European Constitutional Review* 8(4): 89-95.

Friday

- Volkov, *Violent Entrepreneurs*, Chapter 1: "Veblen's Warning"

Week 5 (Feb 9-13) – The 1990s and Russian Elections

Monday

- Rose, Richard. 1999. "Living in an Antimodern Society." *East European Constitutional Review* 8(1/2): 68-75.

Wednesday, February 11 - Exam 1

Friday

- Moser, *Unexpected Outcomes*, pp 32-43.

Week 6 (Feb 16-20) – Putin's Rise to Power

Monday

- Wilhelmsen, Julie. 2005. "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Islamisation of the Chechen Separatist Movement." *Europe-Asia Studies* 57(1): 35-59.

Wednesday

- Rose, Richard. 2000. "How Floating Parties Frustrate Democratic Accountability: A Supply-Side View of Russia's Elections." *East European Constitutional Review* 9: 53-9.

Friday

- McFaul, Michael. 2000. "Russia under Putin: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back." *Journal of Democracy* 11(3): 19-33.

Week 7 (Feb 23-27) – Putin's First Term

Monday

- White, Stephen and Ian McAllister. 2003. "Putin and His Supporters." *Europe-Asia Studies* 55(3): 383-99.

Wednesday

- Remington, Thomas. 2006. "Presidential Support in the State Duma." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 31(1): 5-32.

Friday

- Moraski, Bryon J. and William M. Reisinger. 2007. "Eroding Democracy: Federal Intervention in Russia's Gubernatorial Elections." *Democratization* 14(4): 603-21.

Week 8 (March 2-6) – Putin's Consolidation of Power

Monday

- McFaul, Michael and Nikolai Petrov. 2004. "What the Elections Tell Us." *Journal of Democracy* 15(3): 20-31

Wednesday

- McFaul, Michael and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss. 2008. "The Myth of the Authoritarian Model." *Foreign Affairs* 87(1): 68-84.

Friday

- Robertson, Graeme B. 2009. "Managing Society: Protest, Civil Society, and Regime in Putin's Russia." *Slavic Review* 68 (3): 528-47.

Week 9 (Mar 9-13) – Putin's Consolidation of Power (continued)

Monday

- Atwal, Maya and Edwin Bacon. 2012. "The Youth Movement Nashi: Contentious Politics, Civil Society, and Party Politics." *East European Politics* 28(3): 256-66.

Wednesday, March 11 - Exam 2

Friday

- *Putin's Kiss*

Week 10 (Mar 16-20) – No Class (Spring Break)

Week 11 (Mar 23-27) – Managing Succession

Monday

- Hale, *Patronal Politics*, pp. 276-282

Wednesday

- Sharafutdinova, Gulnaz. 2010. "Subnational Governance in Russia: How Putin Changed the Contract with His Agents and the Problems It Created." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*. 40(4): 672-696.

Friday

- Gustafson, Thane. 2012. "Putin's Petroleum Problem: How Oil Is Holding Russia Back—and How It Could Save It." *Foreign Affairs* 91(6): 83-96.

Week 12 (Mar 30-Apr 3) – Managing Putin's Return

Monday

- March, Luke. 2012. "The Russian Duma 'Opposition': No Drama Out of Crisis?" *East European Politics* 28(3): 241-255.

Wednesday

- *Russian Analytical Digest* #108, “Duma Elections and Protest” [All]

Friday

- Moraski, Bryon J. 2017. “Reverse Coattail Effects in Undemocratic Elections: An Analysis of Russian Locomotives.” *Democratization* 24(4): 575-593.

Week 13 (Apr 6-10) – Putin 3.0

Monday

- Fedor, Julie and Rolf Fredheim. 2017. ““We need more clips about Putin, and lots of them”: Russia's state-commissioned online visual culture.” *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 45(2): 161-181.

Wednesday

- Frye, *Weak Strongman*, Chapter 7: “Hitting Them with Carrots: The Role of Repression”

Friday

- Greene, Samuel A. and Graeme B. Robertson. 2019. *Putin v. the People*. Chapter 4: “The Gatherer of Lands”

Week 14 (Apr 13-17) – The Marginalized Opposition

Monday

- Turchenko, Mikhail and Grigorii V. Golosov. 2021. “Smart Enough to Make a Difference? An Empirical Test of the Efficacy of Strategic Voting in Russia’s Authoritarian Elections.” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 37(1): 65–79.

Wednesday

- Greene and Robertson, *Putin v. the People*, Chapter 7: “Russia’s Putin”

Friday

- Snegovaya, Maria and Kirill Petrov. 2022. "Long Soviet Shadows: The Nomenklatura Ties of Putin Elites." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 38 (4): 329–348.

Week 15 (Apr 20-22) – Changing the Constitution and Making (More) War

Monday

- Von Gall, Caroline and Laura Jäckel. 2020. “The 2020 Russian Constitutional Reform.” *Russian Analytical Digest* 250: 2-5.
- Medvedev, *A War Made in Russia*, pp. 54-68

Wednesday

- Novitskaya, Alexandra, Janet Elise Johnson, Valerie Sperling, and Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom. 2025. "The Way Home, or the Way to Prison? Gender Legacies and Anti-War Protest in Russia." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. TBD [Online pre-publication]

Finals Week (April 27-May 1)

Exam 3: Wednesday 4/29/2026, 10:00–10:50 AM

Makeup exams, if necessary: Wednesday 4/29/2026, 11:00-11:50 AM