



POL 384 Spring 2010
Soviet and Russian Politics
T/R 5:00 – 6:15 p.m. MM 218

Dr. Marcia A. Beck (mbeck@mail.as.miami.edu)
Office: Jenkins 312-B (Political Science Depart.)
Office Hours: T/R 2:30-4:00 and by appointment

This course explores Russia in its various political manifestations, from the tsarist Empire to the Soviet communist system to the Russian post-communist transition; the 2nd half of the course is devoted to current Russian politics under Putin and Medvedev. Emphasis is on the dynamics of the communist and post-communist revolutions, as well as the traditional weakness of classical political liberalism, which continues to undermine Russia's participation in the family of western liberal democracies. Topics include: the demise of the tsarist regime and the Bolshevik revolution of 1917; Stalinism, terror, and totalitarianism; post-Stalinist stagnation and the rule of Khrushchev and Brezhnev; Gorbachev's perestroika and glasnost; the emergence of civil society; Yeltsin and the failed democratic revolution; and the bureaucratic authoritarianism of Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev. Interpretations of Soviet communism and Russia's post-communist transition are analyzed using texts, novels, film, and documentaries.

Requirements: All requirements, each worth 20%, must be completed to receive a passing grade:

1. 5-10 page paper, choice of 2 novels, hard copy due Tuesday March 9th in class. See attached.
2. Midterm exam: Thursday, March 11th in class
3. 15-20 research paper: hard copy due May 4th, by 2:00 p.m.
4. Final exam: Tuesday, May 11th, 5:00 – 7:30 p.m. MM 218
5. Class attendance, individual participation, group participation, class assignments

Policies:

1. Computers can be used to take notes only: no personal tasks (IMs, e-mails, etc.) or recordings.
2. No video or audio recordings of class.
3. Class notes are for your consumption only – not to be put on the internet in any form.
4. Plagiarism (explanation in class) and/or cheating absolutely not tolerated (see UM's Honor Code). All work must be your own unless cited.
5. No late papers/extensions without valid medical/emergency reason or advance permission.
6. Final exam must be taken at indicated day and time unless unavoidable by virtue of UM rules.

Required Books (in bookstore): *Other course readings on Lib. Reserve & accessible via Blackboard*

1. *Under Western Eyes* by Joseph Conrad (Penguin Classics edition in bookstore)
2. *A History of Modern Russia from Nicholas II to Vladimir Putin* by Robert Service
3. *Darkness at Noon*, a novel, by Arthur Koestler (Scribner edition in bookstore)
4. *Russia Politics*, Catherine Danks



PART I: COMMUNIST AND ANTI-COMMUNIST REVOLUTIONS CAUSES AND EFFECTS

WEEK 1 1/19: Introduction: **REFORM, REACTION, and REVOLUTION**

**1/21 Tsarist, Soviet, and post-Communist (?) Russia:
“Il-liberal” or “A-liberal” Political Culture and State-Society Relations**

Readings: 1. “Young Russians’ About-Face from the West”

November 5, 2009. Short piece on the web:

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/221210/page/1>

Also watch the video and be able to explain the views of the students – especially the last two students, starting at about 30 seconds before the end of the 3-minute tape.

2. “Pride and Power” – newspaper article on library reserve /Blackboard

*3. William Henry Chamberlain, “Russia Between East and West”
Russian Review, 1960. 5-pages. Handout.*

WEEK 2

1/26 Tsarist Russia: Reform and Reaction

Readings: 1. Service, 1-41 (see questions)

2. Start Conrad, Part I, pp. 5-84 (see questions)

1/28 Tsarist Russia: Reaction and Revolution

Readings: 1. Service, 45-61 (see questions)

2. Finish Conrad, Part I, pp. 5-84 (see questions)

WEEK 3

2/2 The Bolshevik Revolution

Readings: 1. Service, 62-80 (see questions)

2. Start Conrad, Part II, pp. 85-163 (see questions)

2/4 Russian Revolution: Documentary

Readings: 1. Service, 81-100 (see questions)

2. Finish Conrad, Part II, pp. 85-163 (see questions)

WEEK 4

2/9 Revolution, Civil War, and State Building: Documentary

Reading: Conrad, Part III, pp. 165-241 (see questions)

2/11 Revolution and the Construction of the Soviet Party-State

Reading: Conrad, Part IV, pp. 243-318 (see questions)

WEEK 5

- 2/16 **Stalin: Collectivization, Industrialization, Modernization**
Readings: 1. Service, 169-189 and 190-209 (see questions)
2. Koestler, a. "About the Author," page 273
b. "The First Hearing" pages 1-96
- 2/18 **Stalin: Terror and Totalitarianism**
Reading: Service, 210-234 and 235-253 (see questions)
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WEEK 6

- 2/23 **Film: Burnt by the Sun, Part I**

Readings: 1. Short film handout: Important for understanding the film
2. Koestler, "The Second Hearing" pages 97-167
3. Koestler, "The Third Hearing" pages 169-246
- 2/25 **Film: Burnt by the Sun, Part II**
Reading: Koestler: "The Grammatical Fiction" (247-272)
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WEEK 7

- 3/2 **Post-Stalin Decompression: Totalitarianism without Terror**
Post-Stalin Stultification: "Zastoi" and the Grayness of Life
Reading: Service, 397-411 and 412-427 (see questions)
- 3/4 **(Unwitting) Transition from Communism:**
Gorbachev's Perestroika and Glasnost: Documentary
Reading: Service, 428-466 (see questions)
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WEEK 8

- 3/9 **From Perestroika to Pandemonium:** **SHORT PAPER DUE**
The Demise of the Soviet Party-State
Reading: Service, 467-507(see questions)
- 3/10 **WEDNESDAY: Midterm Exam Study Session.**
Time and Place TBA
- 3/11 **Midterm Exam**
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MARCH 13 – 21: SPRING BREAK



**PART II: BACK TO THE FUTURE?
LIBERALISM, DEMOCRACY & BUREAUCRATIC AUTHORITARIANISM
IN THE POST-COMMUNIST TRANSITION**

WEEK 9

3/23 **Yeltsin's Postcommunist Russia: Attacking Parliament to Preserve Democracy**

Readings:

1) David Remnick, "The October Revolution," in *Resurrection: The Struggle for a New Russia*, 1998, pages 37-83

2) *Danks* 53-81

3/25 **Yeltsin's Postcommunist Russia: The Big 3 Battles of State Construction**

Reading:

A.V. Lukin, "The Transitional Period in Russia: Democratization and Liberal Reforms." *Russian Law and Politics* (Jan/Feb 2000).
On library reserve – link via Blackboard

WEEK 10

3/30 **Putin and Making Russia Whole. Federalism & its Discontents
Russian Identity: Empire or Nation?**

Readings:

1. *Danks*, 82-105, 172-205

2. Emil' Pain, "Russia Between Empire and Nation." *Russian Politics and Law*,
March-April 2009. *On library reserve – link via Blackboard*

4/1 **President Putin: The Federal Executive and Consolidation of State Power**

Readings:

1. *Danks*, 109-145

2. Pierre Hassner, "Russia's Transition to Autocracy." *Journal of Democracy*,
April 2008. *On library reserve – link via Blackboard.*

WEEK 11

4/6 **The Rule of Law and Russia's Judicial System
Equal before the Law unless you oppose Putin's State?**

Readings:

- 1) *Danks 206-232*
- 2) *Marie-Elisabeth Baudoin, "Is the Constitutional Court the Last Bastion in Russia against the Threat of Authoritarianism? Europe-Asia Studies July 2006. On reserve.*
- 3) *V.A. Baird, et al., The Persuasive Power of Russian Courts, Political Research Quarterly, September 2007, On reserve.*

4/8 **Bureaucratic Capitalism, Social Policies, Corruption**

Readings:

- 1) *Danks, 376-399 and 400-419*
- 2) *S. P. Peregudov, "Business and State Bureaucracy in Russia," Russian Politics and Law, July-August 2009. On reserve.*

WEEK 12

4/13 **Parliament Under Putin: Democracy or presidential support structure?**

Readings:

- 1) *Danks, 146-171*
- 2) *Thomas Remington, "Patronage and the Party of Power: President-Parliament Relations under Vladimir Putin," Europe-Asia Studies, August 2008. On reserve*

4/15 **Putin and Political Parties: Democracy or Cooptation?**

Readings:

- 1) *Danks 315-341*
- 2) *Vladimir Gel'man, "Party Politics in Russia: From Competition to Hierarchy," Europe-Asia Studies, August 2008. On reserve – Blackboard link.*

WEEK 13

4/20 **State-sponsored civil society, independent civil society, and opposition:**

Readings:

- 1) *Danks, 263-288*
- 2) *Graeme B. Robertson, "Managing Society: Protest, Civil Society, and Regime in Putin's Russia, Slavic Review, Fall 2009. On reserve.*
- 3) *NASHI Handout*

4/22 **President Medvedev: Does He Matter?
The Wedge Theory and other Elite Conspiracy Theories**

Reading:

1) Stephen Blank, "The Putin Succession and its Implications for Russian Politics," February 2008. On library reserve; link via Blackboard

WEEK 14

4/27 **Whither Russian Democracy? Reports from
SDT 1, SDT2, and SDT3**

Readings:

1) Dmitry Gorenburg, "Russia's Political Future: Scenarios and Projections" *Russian Politics and Law*, November-December 2009. 3 pages. On reserve.

2) Nikolai Petrov, "Warm Spell or Spring Thaw? Imagined and Real Changes In the Russian Political System." *Russian Politics and Law*, November-December 2009, 6 pages. On reserve.

4/29 **Whither Russian Democracy? Reports from
SDT 4 and SDT 5**

Reading:

S.K. Wegren et al., "Prospects for Managed Democracy in Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies*, September 2007. On reserve

MAY 4 Research paper due
Hard copy to me or in Political Science office mailbox
By 2:00 p.m. at the latest

MAY 11: Final Exam
5:00 – 7:30 pm
MM 218

Short Paper Assignment

Choose ONE of the following two topics and write a 5-8 page paper, due in class on Tuesday, March 9th. Note: the material from both *Under Western Eyes* and *Darkness at Noon* will be included in the midterm exam but you need choose only one of the novels for your short paper.

1. *Under Western Eyes*, short paper topic:

Razumov is an allegory for the weakness and eventual demise of political liberalism in Russia at the time of the Bolshevik revolution. Like the liberals at the time, he was caught between the forces of autocracy and the forces of revolution and he was not strong enough to chart his own course. We heard the relevance of this for current-day Russia in the words of the student from Moscow State University in the video during the first week of class: even Russians who believe that political liberalism is the best form of government lament that it may not be possible in Russia. They base their assessment, in large part, on Russian political culture. Conrad, through the characters of Razumov, Natalie, Natalie's mother, and some of the revolutionaries explains the il-liberal nature of this political culture and illustrates how it leads to the downfall of Razumov and a liberal political system

Using Conrad's novel as a reference point, write a paper explaining the failure of political liberalism in Russia at the end of the 19th/start of the 20th century. Use material from class lectures, class readings, and the documentary and integrate literary allusion from Under Western Eyes to support your points.

2. *Darkness at Noon*, short paper topic:

This is the story (based on the author's own life) of a fiercely dedicated communist, who believes that as a top member of the Soviet Communist Party he has a duty to implement the "revolutionary forces of History" in the USSR even if this means murdering whole classes of people and brutally slaughtering anyone who opposes the Party. Only "the Party" understands the forces of History and is capable of turning them into policies that will eventually attain the goal of communism. When his own Party turns against him, however, he is forced to assess his whole life's work and that of the Party. As he faces his own demise, he wonders if his obsession with "History" has destroyed his understanding of the importance and inherent dignity of the "Individual" (the "I" or "grammatical fiction" mentioned in the novel).

Using class notes, readings, the film *Burnt by the Sun*, and Koestler's novel, write a paper explaining how "History" was more important than the "Individual" in the Russian Revolution in both the Lenin and Stalin periods (with emphasis on the latter) and how this assumption manifested itself in the USSR from 1917 through 1953. What were the achievements and the tragedies of this revolutionary, il-liberal philosophy? How could honest, committed people like Rubashov (*Darkness at Noon*) and Kotov (*Burnt by the Sun*) devote themselves to the cause of "History" when they knew it involved the murder of innocent individuals? What does the fate of Rubashov, Kotov, and the victims of Stalin's blood purges tell us about the assumption that "History" is more important than "the Grammatical Fiction" (the Individual) as the foundation for a political system? Who, after all, interprets the mandates of History?