

Department of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley  
 Fall 2022  
 Political Science 141A  
 Prof. Steven Fish  
 TuTh 3:30-5 Mulford 159  
 Office hours: Tu 5:30-7:30, Social Sciences Bldg 744  
 GSIs: Junius Brown and Abigail Doerr

## RUSSIAN POLITICS

This course presents a broad introduction to contemporary politics and society in Russia. What was the Soviet Union, and why did democracy fail in Russia after the USSR fell apart? What kind of regime has Vladimir Putin constructed? What do we know about public opinion and the lives and values of ordinary Russians? How does the Russian economy work? How may we understand Russia's invasion of Ukraine? What is behind Russia's descent from relatively soft authoritarianism into hard dictatorship?

Requirements consist of three exams and attendance at all lectures and discussion sections. Students are expected to do the readings for the week in their entirety by the time of their discussion section on Wednesday. All course readings are available electronically on the bcourses site. There will be a short quiz on the readings for the week each Thursday at the beginning of lecture, with the exception of weeks 1, 6, and 11, when there will not be a quiz, and week 14, when the quiz will be on Tuesday rather than Thursday. The ten top quiz grades (and only the ten top grades) will count toward the course grade. No quizzes may be made up for any reason. The first preliminary exam is on September 29; the second preliminary exam is on November 3; and the final exam is on December 16 at 7-9 pm.

Grades will be determined on the basis of a 100-point scale. Each preliminary exam counts for 20 points; the final exam counts for 30 points; the quizzes count for 2 points each (for 20 points in total); and 10 points will be determined by attendance at lectures and attendance and participation in discussion sections. The third and final exam will be cumulative in coverage of course material.

All correspondence regarding the course, including administrative and logistical questions, should be carried out with your GSI. Students who wish to consult with Professor Fish should do so during office hours.

Use of laptop computers, cell phones, and any other communications or internet devices in lecture is prohibited. Use of such devices will result in a ten-point reduction (roughly one letter grade) in the final course grade for each infraction.

Our books for the course are:

Bill Browder, *Freezing Order: The True Story of Money Launderers, Murder, and Surviving in Putin's Russia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2022).

Timothy J. Colton, *Russia: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, new and expanded ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2015).

Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2014).

Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, *The Red Mirror: Putin's Leadership and Russia's Insecure Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).  
 Brian D. Taylor, *The Code of Putinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).  
 Joshua Yaffa, *Between Two Fires: Truth, Ambition, and Compromise in Putin's Russia* (New York: Crown, 2021).

## *Syllabus*

### **PART I: RUSSIA IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

#### Week 1 (Aug 25): Studying Russia

Colton, *Russia*, chs. 1-2.

Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*, Act 1.

#### Week 2 (Aug 30 & Sept 1): What Was the Soviet Union?

Ronald Grigor Suny, "The Stalin Revolution"; and "From Autocracy to Oligarchy," in Ronald Grigor Suny, ed., *The Structure of Soviet History: Essays and Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 151-164, 329-30.

Colton, *Russia*, ch. 3.

Sharafutdinova, *The Red Mirror*, preface and chs. 1 & 3.

#### Week 3 (Sept 6 & 8): Collapse, Crisis, and the Struggle for Power

Ronald Grigor Suny, "The Road to Revolution"; and "The Second Russian Republic and the 'Near Abroad,'" in Ronald Grigor Suny, ed., *The Structure of Soviet History: Essays and Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 403-406, 476-478.

Colton, *Russia*, ch. 4.

Hill and Gaddy, *Mr. Putin*, chs. 2-3.

Sharafutdinova, *The Red Mirror*, ch. 4.

### **PART II: THE REGIME AND THE RULER**

#### Week 4 (Sept 13 & 16): Forging Autocracy

Colton, *Russia*, ch. 5.

Sharafutdinova, *The Red Mirror*, chs. 2 & 5.

Farida Rustamova, "Putin Rules Russia Like an Asylum," *New York Times*, May 23, 2022.

Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, "Putin's New Police State," *Foreign Affairs*, July 27, 2022.

Week 5 (Sept 20 & 22): The Autocrat

Hill and Gaddy, *Mr. Putin*, chs. 1, 4-9.

Sean Illing and Brian Klaas, "How Putin Became the Victim of His Own Lies," *Vox*, March 24, 2022.

Week 6 (Sept 27 & 29): Putinism

Taylor, *The Code of Putinism*, introduction and chs. 1-3.

M. Steven Fish, "What Has Russia Become?," *Comparative Politics* 50, 3 (April 2018), pp. 327-346.

"Vladimir Putin Is in Thrall to a Distinctive Brand of Russian Fascism," *The Economist*, July 28, 2022.

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29: FIRST PRELIMINARY EXAM (COVERS MATERIAL WEEKS 1-6)**

Week 7 (Oct 4 & 6): How the Government Works

Taylor, *The Code of Putinism*, ch. 5.

Natalia Forrat, "Shock-Resistant Authoritarianism: Schoolteachers and Infrastructural State Capacity in Putin's Russia," *Comparative Politics* 50, 3 (April 2018), pp. 417-434.

"The Inner Workings of Vladimir Putin's State," *The Economist*, December 18, 2018.

Sharafutdinova, *The Red Mirror*, chs. 6-7.

Masha Gessen, "Inside Putin's Propaganda Machine," *The New Yorker*, May 18, 2022.

Yaffa, *Between Two Fires*, ch. 1.

**PART III: ECONOMY AND SOCIETY**

Week 8 (Oct 11 & 13): The Economy and Its Owners

M. Steven Fish, "The Roots of and Remedies for Russia's Racket Economy," in Stephen S. Cohen, Andrew Schwartz, and John Zysman, eds., *The Tunnel at the End of the Light: Privatization, Business Networks, and Economic Transformation in Russia* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Roundtable on the International Economy, 1998), pp. 86-137.

Taylor, *The Code of Putinism*, ch. 4.

Miriam Lansky and Dylan Myles-Primakoff, "The Rise of Kleptocracy: Power and Plunder in Putin's Russia," *Journal of Democracy* 29, 1 (January 2018), pp. 76-85.

Kathryn Stoner, "How Putin's War in Ukraine Has Ruined Russia," *Journal of Democracy* 33, 3 (July 2022), pp. 37-44.

Max Seddon, "Pointless': Russia's Oligarchs Are Powerless to Stop Putin," *Financial Review*, March 2, 2022.

Catherine Belton and Greg Miller, "Cracks Emerge in Russian Elite as Tycoons Start to Bemoan Invasion," *Washington Post*, April 29, 2022.

Josh Lipsky, "Why Russia's Economy Is More Resilient Than You Might Think," Atlantic Council, June 30, 2022.

Ksenia Svetlova, "Russia's Economy Hasn't Tanked Yet, But It Is Inevitable That It Will," *The Jerusalem Post*, July 11, 2022.

#### Week 9 (Oct 18 & 20): How Russians Think about and Engage in Politics

Hill and Gaddy, *Mr. Putin*, ch. 10.

Yaffa, *Between Two Fires*, prologue.

Anne Applebaum, "Navalny Has a Lesson for the World," *The Atlantic*, April 22, 2021.

Jan Matti Dollbaum, Morvan Lallouet, and Ben Noble, *Navalny: Putin's Nemesis, Russia's Future?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 1-56, 71-138.

Valerie Hopkins, "Looming Question for Putin Opponents: Can You Change Russia from Jail?," *New York Times*, July 27, 2022.

#### Week 10 (Oct 25 & 27): Society and the State I

Yaffa, *Between Two Fires*, chs. 2, 3, & 5.

Kenneth Wilson and Jaechul Lee, "Questioning Putin's Popularity: Presidential Approval in an Electoral Authoritarian Regime," *Problems of Post-Communism* 67, 1 (2020), pp. 37-52.

Joshua Yaffa, "Why Russia Hasn't Cracked Down on COVID-19," *The New Yorker*, November 23, 2021.

Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*, Act II.

Alexei Navalny's conversation with his would-be assassin, December 14, 2020, YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeQXci82rIA>.

### Week 11 (Nov 1 & 3): Society and the State II

Yaffa, *Between Two Fires*, chs. 6-7.

Joshua Yaffa, "Why Do So Many Russians Say They Support the War in Ukraine?," *The New Yorker*, March 29, 2022.

### **THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3: SECOND PRELIMINARY EXAM (COVERS MATERIAL WEEKS 7-10)**

### **PART IV: RUSSIA AND THE WORLD**

#### Week 12 (Nov 8 & 10): The View from Moscow

Angela E. Stent, *Putin's World: Russia against the West and with the Rest* (New York: Twelve, 2019), pp. 1-43.

Taylor, *The Code of Putinism*, ch. 6.

Mitchell Orenstein, *The Lands In Between: Russia vs. the West and the New Politics of Hybrid War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), chs. 2, 3, 6, 7.

Joshua Yaffa, "The Historical Dispute behind Russia's Threat to Invade Ukraine," *The New Yorker*, January 25, 2022.

Daniel Beer, "Russia's War with the West," *The New Statesman*, March 17, 2022.

Anne Applebaum, "'They're Not Human Beings'," *The Atlantic*, June 2022.

#### Week 13 (Nov 15 & 17): The Operative in the World

Hill and Gaddy, *Mr. Putin*, chs. 11-14.

David Remnick and Stephen Kotkin, "The Weakness of the Despot," *The New Yorker*, March 11, 2022.

Paul Berman, "The Intellectual Catastrophe of Vladimir Putin," *Foreign Policy*, March 13, 2022.

Week 14 (Nov 22): Russia and America

Jane Mayer, "How Russia Helped Swing the Election for Trump," *The New Yorker*, October 1, 2018.

Browder, *Freezing Order* (entire).

**NOTE: QUIZ FOR THIS WEEK IS ON TUESDAY**

Week 15 (Nov 29 & Dec 1): Reflections and Prospects

Hill and Gaddy, *Mr. Putin*, coda.

Colton, *Russia*, ch. 6.

Taylor, *The Code of Putinism*, ch. 7.

Yaffa, *Between Two Fires*, epilogue.

Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*, Act III.

Oleg Kashin, "Who Will Get Rid of Putin? The Answer Is Grim," *New York Times*, August 18, 2022.

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16: FINAL EXAM (COMPREHENSIVE IN COVERAGE OF COURSE MATERIAL)**

## Extra Credit: Movies, Interviews, and Documentaries

Each exam will contain short extra credit questions on the films listed below. Students can earn up to one point per preliminary exam and two points on the final exam.

### Preliminary Exam 1:

*One extra credit question will be offered for each of these two films:*

Kolyma – Birthplace of Our Fear (2019)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=001WouI38rQ&t=5s>

Putin: A Russian Spy Story - Part 1 (2020)

<https://documentaryheaven.com/putin-russian-spy-story/>

### Preliminary Exam 2:

*One extra credit question will be offered for each of these two films:*

Leviathan (2014)

<https://www.justwatch.com/us/movie/leviathan-2014>

Putin: A Russian Spy Story - Part 2 (2020)

<https://documentaryheaven.com/putin-russian-spy-story/>

### Final Exam:

*One extra credit question will be offered for each of these two films and one interview:*

Putin's Revenge (2017)

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/putins-revenge/>

Putin: A Russian Spy Story - Part 3 (2020)

<https://documentaryheaven.com/putin-russian-spy-story/>

“Yashin: Being against Putin, but Staying in Russia” (Ilya Yashin interviewed by Yuri Dud),  
June 16, 2022

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4wkozuN2Bs>