Title: RUSSIA AND THE FORMER SOVIET UNION: POLITICS, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Course Code: HST3312
No. of Credits/Term: 3
Mode of Tuition: Sectional
Class Contact Hours: 3 hours per week
Category in Major Prog.: Elective
Prerequisites: None
Co-requisites: None
Exclusion: None
Exemption Requirement(s): None

Brief Course Description
The course will examine the final years of Soviet rule and the first period of independence of the post-Soviet republics. Student will acquire knowledge of the political, social and economic developments in the late Soviet and post Soviet space (approximately the period 1970-present). Particular attention will be devoted to the regions of the former Soviet Union most relevant to China’s economic and strategic interests: Russia and Central Asia.

Aims
The course will provide students with a historical background in order to understand the current political, economic and social situation of the post-Soviet republics, with a special focus on Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The course will help students using an interdisciplinary approach in order to analyze the political, economic and social situation of a number of important countries or the Eurasian continent. The course will also familiarize students with the main concepts social scientists use in order to study post-communist societies, economies and political systems.

Indicative Content
Week 1. The legacy of the Soviet Union (1): the political and institutional system: Communist party, Soviet state, secret services and civil society from Brezhnev to Yeltsin.
Week 2. The legacy of the Soviet Union (2): the economy and the infrastructures from Brezhnev to Gorbachev; the oil & gas sector; the industrial and technological decline.
Week 3. The legacy of the Soviet Union (3): the management of ethnic diversity during the Gorbachev period and beyond: nationalist mobilizations; the Tatarstan and Chechnya models.
Week 5. How the other republics became market economies—or maybe not? The collapse of the integrated Soviet economic system; the political economy of the peripheral republics in the 1990s.
Week 7. Caucasus crises (1): Karabagh and the Azeri-Armenian war, the Georgian civil war, the first Chechen war (1994-1996).
Week 10. The major economic actors in Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan in the years 2000s,
and the connection between economy and politics.


Week 14. China’s economic and political role in the post-Soviet space: Siberia, the Russian Far East, Central Asia.

Learning Outcomes

Students completing this course will be able to:

1. Recall, describe, discuss and explain the characteristics of the political and economic systems of the late- and post-Soviet world;
2. Independently retrieve information from the most reliable sources (online and print) about the region;
3. Synthesize information from various sources in order to construct, and evaluate, complex arguments;
4. Present and articulate arguments orally;
5. Analyze different sources of information within their political and cultural contexts;
6. Write effective analytical papers;
7. Connect current political and economic developments in the post-Soviet world with their historical background.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

(a) Quizzes will assess the degree of understanding of basic facts, timeline and terminology in the history of the late and post-Soviet area (L.O. 1 above)
(b) Participatory and structured discussions will assess the ability in retrieving and synthesizing information, in evaluating arguments found in the literature (L.O. 2 and L.O. 3 above) and in presenting them orally (L.O. 4 above).
(c) Written assignments will assess students’ ability in retrieving and analyzing primary and secondary sources, and using them in their own analytical arguments (L.O. 2, L.O. 3, L.O. 5 and L.O. 6 above); they will also assess the ability of connecting historical issues and the evolution of specific late Soviet and post-Soviet institutions with current developments (L.O. 7 above).

Assessment

This course is 100% continuous assessment, subdivided as follows:

Class Participation, Discussions: 25%
Quiz 1: 15%
Quiz 2: 15%
Draft of Final Paper: 10%
Final Paper: 35%
Required Readings


Supplementary Readings