

<b>Course Title</b>	:	RUSSIA AND THE FORMER SOVIET UNION: POLITICS, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY
<b>Course Code</b>	:	HST3312
<b>No. of Credits/Term</b>	:	3
<b>Mode of Tuition</b>	:	Sectional
<b>Class Contact Hours</b>	:	3 hours per week
<b>Category in Major Prog.</b>	:	Elective
<b>Prerequisites</b>	:	None
<b>Co-requisites</b>	:	None
<b>Exclusion</b>	:	None
<b>Exemption Requirement(s)</b>	:	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.

### **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.

## **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 4.* How Russia became a market economy—or maybe not? “Shock therapy”, deindustrialization, oligarchs, default (1991-1998).

*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 6.* *Mafyia*: the “second economy”, private protection, and the rise of organized crime

*Week 7.* Caucasus crises (1): Karabagh and the Azeri-Armenian war, the Georgian civil war, the first Chechen war (1994-1996).

*Week 8.* Caucasus crises (2): the second Chechen war (1999-2009), the Russian-Georgian war (2008).

*Week 9.* “Virtual democracies”, contested political systems, and dictatorship: Putin’s Russia; Ukraine and the “Orange revolution”; Lukashenko’s Belarus.

*Week 10.* The major economic actors in Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan in the years 2000s, and the connection between economy and politics.

*Week 11.* Minorities abroad: coexistence, discrimination, violence (Russians in the Baltics, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan; Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan).

*Week 12.* Water and politics (1): disputes over the division of the Caspian Sea. Stable regimes in downstream Central Asian states: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and the politics of oil and cotton.

*Week 13.* Water and politics (2): disputes for the division of Central Asian water resources. Unstable regimes in upstream Central Asian states: the civil war in Tajikistan and regime transition(-s) in Kyrgyzstan.

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

## **Teaching Method**

There will be lectures and group discussion in each class meeting. The lectures will provide the broad historical background, and the group discussion, led by the instructor, will focus on primary materials, both textual and visual, from the history of Russia and the former Soviet Union.

## **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**

Kotkin, Stephen, *Armageddon Averted: the Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* (Oxford UP, 2008<sup>2</sup>).

Beissinger, Mark R., *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, (Cambridge UP, 2002).

Khalid, Adeb, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (University of California Press, 2007)

Ledeneva, Alena, V., *How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices That Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business* (Cornell Univ. Press, 2006).

Zürcher, Christoph, *The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict, and Nationhood in the Caucasus* (NYU Press, 2009)

### **Supplementary Readings**

Aslund, Anders, *Building Capitalism: The Transformation of the Former Soviet Bloc* (Cambridge UP, 2001).

Bunce, Valerie, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and Destruction of Socialism and the State* (Cambridge UP, 1999)

Clifford, Gaddy and Ickes Barry, *Russia's Virtual Economy* (The Brookings Institution, 2001).

Derluigian, Georgi M., *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-System Biography* (University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Ellman, Michael and Kontorovich, Vladimir (eds). *The destruction of the Soviet economic system: an insiders' history* (Armonk, N.Y., 1998).

Frye, Timothy, *Brokers and Bureaucrats: Building Market Institutions in Russia*, (University of Michigan Press, 2000).

Gaidar, Yegor, *Collapse of an Empire: Lessons for Modern Russia* (Brookings Institution Press, 2007)

Gall, Carlotta and de Waal, Thomas. *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus* (New York University Press, 1999).

Hedlund, Stefan, *Russia's "Market" Economy: A Bad Case of Predatory Capitalism*. (UCL, 1999)

Herrera, Yoshiko M., *Imagined Economies: The Sources of Russian Regionalism*, (Cambridge UP, 2005)

Herspring, Dale R. (ed.). *Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain* (3rd edition) (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

Hough Jerry, *The Logic of Economic Reform in Russia* (Washington DC: Brookings, 2001)

Jones Luong, Pauline, *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet*

- Rule to Independence* (Cornell University Press, 2003)
- Lieven, Anatol, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (Yale University Press, 1999).
- Olcott, Martha Brill, *Central Asia's Second Chance* (Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, 2005)
- Seabright, Paul, *The Vanishing Rouble: Barter Networks and Non-Monetary Transactions in Post-Soviet Societies* (Cambridge UP, 2000)
- Shleifer, Andrei and Treisman, Daniel, *Without a Map: Political Tactics and Economic Reform in Russia* (MIT Press, 2000)
- Solnick, Steven L. *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions*, (Harvard University Press, 1998).
- Tishkov, Valery, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society* (University of California Press, 2004).
- Varese, Federico, *The Russian Mafia* (Oxford University Press, 2001).
- Volkov, Vadim, *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism* (Cornell University Press, 2002).
- Wilson, Andrew, *Virtual politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World* (Yale UP, 2005)
- Woodruff, David, *Money Unmade: Barter and the Fate of Russian Capitalism* (Cornell University Press, 1999).

Important Notes:

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.