

Spring 2017
Tues/Thurs 3:00-4:15pm
Enterprise 274
Office Hours: Tues. 1-2pm, Thurs 1:30-2:30pm,
or by appointment.

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HNRS 230: Post-Soviet Life around the World

Syllabus

In this course, we will explore the “fall of communism” and how the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have transformed since 1989. What exactly happened in the late 1980s and specifically in 1989? Why did the Soviet Union end? We then turn to the ways that people have sought to survive and create new cultural and political practices within the market relations and commodification in the post-Soviet era. We will explore a wide range of topics, including oligarchs, commodification, criminality, nationalism, violence, vampires, workers, gender, the self, religion, vacation houses, and memory. We will compare experiences across post-Soviet space: Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the former Soviet Union (including Central Asia and the Baltics), Cuba, Nicaragua, and Mozambique. We will also consider the United States as part of post-Soviet life. Finally, how do people remember the socialist past? How are they reestablishing relations with the Soviet past to envision their future?

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to

- Understand the historic events and the changing social life since 1980s in the former Soviet Bloc.
- Discuss major terms, themes, and debates in post-socialist studies.
- Analyze and evaluate scholarly readings, fiction, and film in the field.
- Learn basic information about a wide range of countries of the former Soviet Bloc.
- Explore post-Soviet life as a global phenomenon.
- Write a Fulbright application to study in the country of your choice.

Required Texts:

- Ghodsee, Kristen. 2011. *Lost in Transition: Ethnographies of Everyday Life after Communism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- The articles and book chapters listed in the course schedule are required and are available on Blackboard. All articles must be printed and brought to class.

Course Schedule and Readings

Tues., Jan. 24: Introduction to the course

- Ghodsee, “Comrades, 2000,” pp. 101-106. (6 pages)

I. What happened in 1989?

Thurs., Jan. 26: What was socialism?

- Suny, Ronald. 2011. "Reform and the Road to Revolution." Pp. 479-514 in *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States*. Oxford University Press. (35 pages)
- Country of the day: the Soviet Union

Tues, Jan 31: What was socialism?

- Shevchenko, Olga. 2012. "Socialism." *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization*, edited by George Ritzer. (4 pages)
- Ghodsee, "Preface" and "Introduction," pp. ix-xv and 1-20. (27 pages)
- Country of the day: Bulgaria.

Thurs., Feb. 2: What was 1989?

- Krapfl, James. 2013. *Revolution with a Human Face: Politics, Culture, and Community in Czechoslovakia, 1989–1992*. Cornell University Press. (pages TBA)
- Country of the day: Czechoslovakia, Czech Republic, and Slovakia.

Tues, Feb. 7: What was 1991?

- Gorbachev, Mikhail. [December 25, 1991] 2014. "Speech of Resignation." Pp. 537-540 in *The Structure of Soviet History*, edited by Ronald Suny. New York: Oxford University Press. (4 pages)
- "Castro Interviewed on Soviet Collapse, Stalin," June 3, 1992, *El Nuevo Diario*. (4 pages)
- Country of the day: Cuba.

Thurs., Feb. 9: Shock Therapy

- Murrell, Peter. 1993. "What is Shock Therapy? What did it do to Poland and Russia?" *Post-Soviet Affairs* 9(2): 111-140. (29 pages)
- Country of the day: Russia.

Tues, Feb. 14: What was 1989?

- Ghodsee, "Contraband, 1990," pp. 21-35; "Tito Trivia," pp. 155-159. (20 pages)
- Woodward, Susan L. 1995. "Introduction." Pp. 1-20 in *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War*. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution. (20 pages)
- Country of the day: Yugoslavia.

II. What is/was the transition?

Thurs., Feb. 16: Survival

- Ghodsee, "Hair," pp. 61-82. (21 pages)
- Country of the day: Mongolia.

Tues., Feb. 21: Transition?

- Yurchak, Alexei. 2003. "Soviet Hegemony of Form: Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45(3): 480-510. (30 pages)
- Country of the day: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

Thurs., Feb. 23: Crisis

- Shevchenko, Olga. 2009. *Crisis and the Everyday in Post-socialist Moscow*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 35-61, pp. 172-177. (30 pages)
- Country of the day: Kazakhstan.

Tues. Feb. 28: Money

- Pine, Frances. "Dealing with Money: Zlotys, Dollars and Other Currencies in the Polish Highlands." Pp. 75-97 in *Markets and Moralities: Ethnographies of Postsocialism*. Berg Publishers. (23 pages)
- Country of the day: Poland.

Thurs., March 2: Companies

- Burawoy, Michael and Pavel Krotov. 1992. "The Soviet Transition from Socialism to Capitalism: Worker Control and Economic Bargaining in the Wood Industry." *American Sociological Review* 57(1): 16-38. (23 pages)
- Country of the day: Hungary.

Tues, March 7: Freedom

- Ghodsee, "Her Love in Cuba, 1999," pp. 47-60.
- Country of the day: Belarus and Moldova.

Thurs., March 9: Midterm

March 13-19: Spring Break

III. Post-Soviet Individuals

Tues., March 21: Remaking the Self and Gender, Post-Socialist Workers

- Siegelbaum, Lewis H. and Daniel J. Walkowitz, eds. 1995. *Workers of the Donbass Speak*. New York: SUNY Press, pp. 147-150, 159-181. (25 pages)

Country of the day: Ukraine.

Thurs., March 23: Remaking the Self and Gender, Post-Socialist Workers

- Kideckel, David. 2002. "The unmaking of an East-Central European working class." Pp. 114-132 in *Postsocialism*, edited by C. M. Hann. Routledge. (18 pages)

Country of the day: Albania.

Tues., March 28: Remaking the Self and Gender, Post-Socialist Workers

- Isakov, Baktybek and John Schoeberlein. 2014. "Animals, Kinship, and the State: Kyrgyz Chabans Rebuilding Herds and Reorienting Belonging after the Soviet Collapse." *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 32(2): 33-48. (15 pages)

Country of the day: Kyrgyzstan.

Thurs., March 30: Remaking the Self and Gender, Post-Socialist Workers

- Ozolina-Fitzgerald, Liene. 2016. "A state of limbo: the politics of waiting in neo-liberal Latvia." *British Journal of Sociology* 67(3): 456-475. (20 pages)

Country of the day: Latvia and Lithuania.

Tues., April 4: Vampires

- Lukyanenko, Sergei. [1998] 2006. *Night Watch*. New York: HarperCollins Publisher, pp. 3-8, 16-27, 49-55. (23 pages)
- Country of the day: Turkmenistan.

Thurs., April 6: The Middle Class

- Yurchak, Alexei. 2003. "Russian Neoliberal: The Entrepreneurial Ethic and the Spirit of 'True Careerism,'" *The Russian Review* 62:72-90. (18 pages)
- Country of the day: Estonia.

Tues., April 11: Putin

- Wood, Elizabeth. 2016. "Hypermasculinity as a Scenario of Power: Vladimir Putin's Iconic Rule." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 18(3): 329-350. (21 pages)
- Country of the day: Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia.

VI. Post-Soviet States and States of Mind

Thurs., April 13: Nostalgia

- Berdahl, Daphne. 1999. "'N(O)stalgie' for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things." *Ethnos* 64(2):192-211. (19 pages)
- Berdahl, Daphne. 2001. "'Go, Trabi, Go!': Reflections on a Car and its Symbolization over Time." *Anthropology and Humanism* 25(2):131-141. (11 pages)
- Country of the day: East Germany, West Germany, and Germany.

Tues., April 18: Organized Forgetting

- Pitcher, M. Anne. 2006. "Forgetting from Above and Memory from Below: Strategies of Legitimation and Struggle in Postsocialist Mozambique." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 76(1): 88-112. (25 pages)

Country of the day: Mozambique.

Thurs., April 20: The State and NGOs

- Phillips, Sarah D. 2009. "Civil Society and Disability Rights in Post-Soviet Ukraine: NGOs and Prospects for Change," *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 16(1): 275-291. (16 pages)

Country of the day: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Tues., April 25: Common Space and Private Space

- Shevchenko, Olga. "Putting the Public into the Public Goods: Space Wars in a Post-Soviet Dacha Community." (28 pages).
- Country of the day: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro.

Thurs., April 27: The Remnants of Global Socialist Trade

- Berrios, Ruben. 1985. "Relations between Nicaragua and the Socialist Countries." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 27(3): 111-139. (28 pages)
- Country of the day: Nicaragua.

Tues, May 2: Students' Choice

- Reading TBA
- Country of the day: TBA

Thurs, May 4: Radical Democracy

- Razsa, Maple and Andrej Kurnik. 2012. "The Occupy Movement in Žižek's Hometown: Direct Democracy and a Politics of Becoming." *American Ethnologist* 39(2):238-258.
- Country of the day: Slovenia and Croatia.
- Final exam.

Tues., May 12: Final paper due.

Course Requirements

- Class participation: 15%
- Midterm exam: 40%
- Final project (Fulbright application): 40%
- Final exam: 5%
- Extra-credit article/book check (4 out of 5): 1%
- Extra credit for volunteering/attending Southern Slavic conference: 1%

Class participation: Participation includes attendance, being on time, bringing the reading, asking questions, and participating in discussion. Also, you **must** meet with me once in office hours to talk about your final project, anytime on or before March 9th.

Final project: Students will complete (but not submit) a Fulbright application to a country in the former Soviet Bloc of their choice. In the midterm exam, students will state a country and a research topic for the Fulbright application, which they can change at any time before the final exam.

Midterm and final exams: These two tests are intended to evaluate your understanding of the main concepts in the course. The midterm exam will have multiple choice and essays, as well as a separate section in which to state your country and research topic chosen for the Fulbright application. The final exam will only be multiple choice.

Extra-credit article check

I will check to make certain that students have the required printed articles for the week four times during the semester. Three of these checks will go towards a 1% extra credit.

Extra credit for volunteering/attending Southern Slavic conference

The Southern Conference on Slavic Studies will take place in Alexandria, VA, April 6-8, 2016. If you volunteer at the conference and/or attend a panel (or more), you will receive this extra credit. The Conference organizers will provide you proof of your volunteering/attendance.

Additional Items:

- **Academic Integrity:** I will not tolerate plagiarism. Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.
 - **Mason Email Accounts:** Mason uses only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.
 - **Office of Disability Services:** If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services at 703.993.2474 or <http://ods.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.
 - **Writing Center:** A114 Robinson Hall;(703) 993-1200, <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>
 - **University Libraries** "Ask a Librarian,"
<http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>
 - **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):** (703) 993-2380,
<http://caps.gmu.edu>
 - **University Policies:** The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.
- Last Day to Add (Full-Semester Course): January 30, 2017
 - Last Day to Drop (Full-Semester Course): February 24, 2017
 - Selective Withdrawal Period (Full-Semester Course): February 27 – March 31, 2017.
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