Brown University International Relations  
Senior Seminar, Spring 2016

Time: Friday, 3-5:30 pm  
Location: TBD  
Office hours: By appointment  
Instructor: Maxim Boycko  
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Russia’s Escape from Communism

Description, Goals, and Objectives

The seminar will introduce students to the economic and political transformation of Russia from the early days of Gorbachev to current-day Putin. The course will be policy-oriented and empirical. There will be substantial reading assignments each week, students will participate in classroom discussions and make oral presentations, and prepare several writing assignments.

The course will cover:

- a brief overview of the later-stage Soviet economic and political system and Gorbachev's policies of "glasnost and perestroika";
- Yeltsin's breakthrough transformation of the political system and key economic reforms of the 1990's: liberalization, stabilization, and privatization;
- Putin's political trajectory; economic growth and development from 1999; the oligarchs; the energy sector; Russia's foreign policy.

And, at the end of the course, we will attempt to look into possible scenarios of Russia's future.

Course goals include:

- introducing students to rigorous analysis of reform and policy design in Russia
- developing an understanding why some reforms in Russia were more successful than others, while yet others failed to happen at all

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- describe the dynamics and key dimensions of Russian economic and political transformation
- identify political and administrative constraints on the design and implementation of economic and political reforms in Russia
A couple weeks into the course, each student will assume the role of an advisor to a Russian President (see examples A, C, and D below), or a US President (see example B), and select for an in-depth study a particular reform, or a policy issue, at a particular point in time. Research on the selected reform would in most cases involve reviewing the literature, analyzing data, writing the main paper and a succinct, non-technical “Memo to the President” or “Op-Ed” paper. Several students’ reform/policy proposals will go through “debates” in the classroom.

Example A: in early 1991, advise President Gorbachev on how to eliminate massive shortages in the Soviet Union.
Example C: in the spring of 1995, in advance of the 1996 presidential elections, advise President Yeltsin on alternatives to loans-for-shares privatization.
Example D: in the spring of 2014, advise President Putin on the likely economic and political consequences for Russia of Western economic sanctions.

Prerequisites
Introductory economics, introductory statistics.

Course Requirements and Grading Policy

Class Participation and Oral Presentations (35%) Attendance is mandatory for this discussion based course. Each student will make two-three presentations, including that of a recommended reading paper; and/or of her/his reform/policy proposal; and/or short “discussion” presentation. This component of the grade will also reflect participation in classroom discussions.

Reading Assignments (25%) Required readings for each class are the foundation of the course. Each week, students will prepare brief (2 page) summary of each required reading set and email to the instructor by midnight before the day of the class.

Writing Assignments (40%) include:

- (25%) the main “Reform/Policy Proposal” paper, 15+ pages, with a substantial empirical component
- (5%) “Memo to the President/Op Ed” paper, 2-3 pages
- (5%+5%) two brief “Discussion” papers, 3-5 pages each

Each student will receive feedback on the first draft of her/his main paper from “Discussion” papers of her/his fellow students. The final draft will be graded and will receive comments from the instructor.
Reading List

The two main books that would be used throughout the course are:

- Anders Aslund (2013): *How capitalism was built*
- Daniel Treisman (2011): *The Return: Russia’s Journey from Gorbachev to Medvedev*

Please consider buying them from amazon.com (at combined cost of $33 for the kindle editions) or other sources. They will be referenced below as Aslund (2013) and Treisman (2011), respectively.

Additionally, I strongly recommend for background reading on Russian political developments:

- Timothy Colton (2008): *Yeltsin: A Life*

For an in-depth analysis of US-Russian relations, please consult:

- Angela Stent (2014): *The Limits of Partnership*

Detailed required and recommended readings for each class are below (subject to further revisions).

Course Calendar:

1. Introduction to the Course and Overview of Russian Transition 29-Jan
2. The Soviet System and Gorbachev’s Glasnost and Perestroika 5-Feb
3. Yeltsin’s Transformational Politics 12-Feb
4. Price Liberalization and Stabilization 19-Feb
5. Privatization 27-Feb
6. Putin’s Politics 4-Mar
7. Russian Growth and the Energy Sector 11-Mar
8. Oligarchs and Corruption 18-Mar
9. Russia on the International Arena 25-Mar
10. Russian Reform Debates I 8-Apr
11. Russian Reform Debates II 15-Apr
12. The Unfolding Crisis of 2014 - 2016. *Quo vadis, Russia?* 22-Apr
Class 1: Introduction to the Course and Overview of Russian Transition

Required:
- Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Treisman (2014): Normal Countries, Foreign Affairs
  http://scholar.harvard.edu/shleifer/publications/normal-countries-east-25-years-after-communism
- Anders Aslund (2014): Russia: The Arduous Transition to the Market Economy; in: Anders Aslund and Simeon Djankov, eds The Great Rebirth, Chapter 5,

Recommended:
- Aslund (2013): Introduction
- Daniel Treisman: The Political Economy of Change after Communism; in: Anders Aslund and Simeon Djankov, eds (2014): The Great Rebirth, Chapter 14,

Class 2: The Soviet System and Gorbachev’s Glasnost and Perestroika

Required:
- Aslund (2013): Chapter 1, Communism and Its Demise
- Treisman (2011): Chapter 1, The Captain, and Chapter 5, The Unraveling

Recommended:
- Colton (2008): Chapter 6-7
- Yegor Gaidar (2007), Collapse of An Empire, Chapters 4-8
- Alexander Solzhenytsin (1962), One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, New American Library

Class 3: Yeltsin’s Transformational Politics

Required:
- Aslund (2013): Chapter 8
- Colton (2008): Chapter 8-11
- Treisman (2011): Chapter 2

Recommended:
• Timothy Colton (2008): Chapters 9-16

Class 4: Price Liberalization and Stabilization

Required:
• Aslund (2013): Chapter 4 and 5
• From the New York Times coverage of Russia in 1992:
  o The Fear in Russian Eyes: [http://nyti.ms/1FjJ4dX](http://nyti.ms/1FjJ4dX)
  o Russia’s Ruble Gamble: [http://nyti.ms/17iwD3k](http://nyti.ms/17iwD3k)
• Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Treisman (2000): Without a Map, Chapters 3 and 4.
• Fraser Institute: Economic Freedom of the World: 2014 Annual Report [Executive Summary; Chapter 1; Russia Country Table (p.142)] [RTB970 Readings: Fraser EFW2014.pdf]

Recommended:
• Heritage Foundation Index of Economic Freedom [http://www.heritage.org/index/country/russia](http://www.heritage.org/index/country/russia)
• Refresh: N. Gregory Mankiw, “Money Growth and Inflation”, Chapter 30, *Principles of Economics* (7th ed.) (or any introductory or intermediate macroeconomics textbook on inflation and money)

Class 5: Privatization

Required:
• Maxim Boycko, Andrei Shleifer, Robert Vishny (1995): *Privatizing Russia* (Chapters 1,2 and 4,5,7)
• Daniel Treisman (2010): Loans for Shares Revisited, *Soviet Affairs*
• Aslund (2013): Chapter 6, Privatization: The Establishment of Private Property Rights

Recommended:
• Maxim Boycko, Andrei Shleifer, Robert Vishny (1995): *Privatizing Russia* (Chapters 3,6)

Class 6: Putin’s Political Trajectory

Required:
• Treisman (2011): Chapter 3 and 7
• Kotkin (2015): The Resistible Rise of Vladimir Putin, *Foreign Affairs*

Recommended:
• Treisman (2011): Chapter 9, Falling Apart

Class 7: Russian Growth and the Energy Sector

Required:
• EBRD Transition Report (2009): Chapter 4, Development based on commodity revenues? (On google drive. You can skip “Policy goals and tools” section and material in the boxes)
• Daniel Yergin (2011): The Quest, Chapter 1 and 16 (This is easy reading. I don’t expect lengthy summaries.)

Recommended:
• Frederick van der Ploeg (2011): Natural Resources: Curse or Blessing?, Journal of Economic Literature

Class 8: Oligarchs and Corruption

Required:
• Aslund (2013): Chapter 6 (pp. 201-211) and Chapter 9 (pp 292 – 300)

Please choose one of the following three. Please let me know 48 hours in advance of the class which paper you have chosen:

Please choose one story to read out of ten in the series. Please let me know 48 hours in advance of the class which story you have chosen

Recommended:
Class 9: Russia on the International Arena

Required:
- Treisman (2011): Chapter 9
- Myers (2015): Chapter 17, 23
- Angela Stent (2014): The Limits of Partnership, Prologue, Chapters 1-3, 5-6

Recommended:

Class 10 – 11: Russian Reform Debates

- Schedule of presentations and readings will be provided after selection of reform projects

Class 12: The Unfolding Crisis of 2014 – 2016: Quo vadis, Russia?

Required:
- Treisman (2011): Chapter 10 The Russia That Has Returned. (The required sections are: “Markets Emerging”; “Politics in the Foggy Zone”; “Demographic Catastrophe”; “What Do Russians Want”. But the other sections are good too, consider them “recommended”.)

Recommended: