In this course we will examine Russian politics in the post-Soviet period, covering regime institutions and processes, policies and their effects, and the dynamics of political development. We will begin with an overview of Soviet and post-Soviet Russian political history—the periods of Soviet communist rule, the reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev, the breakdown of the Soviet state, and the transition to an independent Russian Federation. Then we will study the establishment of the present-day Russian regime, including the new constitution adopted under Boris Yeltsin, economic reform, the transition in leadership from Yeltsin to Vladimir Putin, the authoritarian trends of Putin’s regime, the 2011-2012 election cycle and the return of Putin as president. We will study Russian civil society, the values and outlooks of the Russian public, and the changing role of elections. We will also assess the outcomes of the economic reforms and counter-reforms of the 1990s and 2000s, as well as the effect of global trade and investment on Russian politics and society. We will ask how Russia’s dependence on exports of natural resources affects its political and economic development. Finally, we will examine Russia’s relations with its near-neighbors in the former Soviet Union, particularly Ukraine, the Transcaucasus, and Central Asia.

There will be one mid-term and one final exam, both of them combining short identification questions with essays. In addition, each student will write a 10-12 page paper discussing a critical decision made by a Russian leader of the Soviet or post-Soviet era. The paper is due on the last day of class, December 8. Further detail on the paper assignment follows the syllabus.

The mid-term exam and the paper will be weighted approximately 30% each in determining your final grade; the final exam will be weighted approximately 40%. Class attendance and participation, as well as improvement over the semester, will also be taken into account in determining the final grade.

Texts:
2. Anders Aslund, Sergei Guriev and Andrew Kuchins, ed., Russia after the Global Economic Crisis (Peterson Institute for Internal Economics, 2010) [RAGEC]
3. Thomas F. Remington, Politics in Russia, 7th ed. (Longman, 2012) [PIR]

Other items will be also assigned and will be available on Reserves Direct and the course Blackboard site.
Outline of topics and readings.

I. Political history, 1917-2014.
August 27. Introduction to the course. PIR, ch. 1

September 3. Soviet regime from Lenin to Stalin

Sept. 8. Stalinism
Zimmerman, RR, chs. 3-4, pp. 75-129.

Sept. 10. post-Stalin reform and stagnation
Zimmerman, RR, chs. 5-6, pp. 130-195.

Sept. 15. Denise of the Soviet Union
PIR, ch. 2

Sept. 17. Russia’s constitutional order
PIR, ch. 3

Sept 22. Crises of the 1990s
Zimmerman, ch. 7, pp. 196-217

Sept. 24. Restoration of order
Zimmerman, RR, ch. 8, pp. 220-266

Sept. 29. Elections of 2011-12
Zimmerman, RR, ch. 9, pp. 267-290

Oct. 1. Putin’s third term
RAGEC, ch. 2, Daniel Treisman, "Russian Politics in a Time of Economic Turmoil"

Oct. 6. Midterm review
Oct. 8. Midterm exam

II. The contemporary Russian political system

Oct. 15. Political culture
PIR, ch. 5
Oct. 20. Public opinion

Oct. 22. State and society
  PIR ch. 6, pp. 150-171

Oct. 27. Civil society
  Alfred B. Evans, Jr., Laura A. Henry, and Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom, eds., Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment, chs. 10-11 ("Soldiers' Rights Groups" and "Women's Organizations") (pp. 161-196)

Oct. 29. Social protest

Nov. 3. Parties and elections: United Russia and the dominant party regime
  PIR, ch. 6, pp. 171-184

Nov. 5. Mass media, social media, and political control
Nov. 10. Economy: Reform and stagnation
   PIR, ch. 7
   RAGEC: ch. 1. Sergei Guriev and Aleh Tsyvinski, "Challenges Facing the Russian Economy after the Crisis"

Nov. 12. Russia and the Natural Resource Economy
   RAGEC: ch. 6. Samuel Charap and Georgi V. Safonov, "Climate Change and Role of Energy Efficiency."
   RAGEC: ch. 7. Anders Aslund, "Gazprom: Challenged Giant in Need of Reform"

Nov. 17. Regions and regionalism
   Thomas Remington et al., "'There Is No Middle Class In This Oblast': Economic and Social Policy Trade-Offs in the Russian Regions," NCEEER Working Paper, 2011.
   RAGEC: ch. 3. Ekaterina Zhuravskaya, "Federalism in Russia"

Nov. 19. Ethnicity and Politics
   Daniel Treisman, The Return, ch. 8, "The Mountains"

Nov. 24. Legal institutions: formal
   PIR, ch. 8

Dec. 1. Corruption and political repression
   RAGEC: ch. 4. Timothy Frye, "Corruption and Rule of Law"

Dec. 3. Russia and the former Soviet space
   PIR, ch. 9
   RAGEC: ch 11. Dmitri Trenin, "Russian Foreign Policy: Modernization or Marginalization?"

On writing the "critical choice" paper for Political Science 336.

Your paper should analyze a critical juncture at which a Russian leader of the Soviet or post-Soviet era made a policy decision that had a lasting impact on the development of Russian policy or institutions. Your paper should present a clear summary of the circumstances under which the choice was made, the goals the leader intended to achieve, the major alternative courses of action available at the time, the political implications of those options, an assessment of the consequences of the decision, and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the decision in achieving the leader's objectives. The decision may concern a reorganization of political institutions or a major shift in policy. It may concern domestic or foreign policy. The leader may be the top leader of the state, a challenger for a high leadership position, or the head of a particular state structure or territorial unit. You must clear your choice of a topic with me.

The paper itself is due on the last day of class, December 8.

The paper will count as 30% of your total course grade.

Examples of questions suitable for the paper:

Why did Khrushchev deliver the "secret speech" denouncing Stalin at the 20th Party Congress in 1956?
Why did Gorbachev not act to preserve the communist regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989?
Why did Gorbachev pursue glasnost' in the late 1980s?
Why did Yeltsin and the leaders of Ukraine and Belarus dissolve the Soviet Union in December 1991?
Why did Yeltsin dissolve the Congress of People's Deputies in 1993?
Why did Putin annex Crimea in 2014?

The paper should be 10-12 pages long, including references. It will be graded on the quality of writing, argumentation, and evidence. It must reflect your own analysis based on the available factual evidence and scholarly literature on the subject.