



New perspectives on contemporary Russian politics and society

10 ECTS credits PhD course at the Norwegian University Centre in St. Petersburg

21-25 October 2013

Objective

Provide students with insights in key elements of contemporary Russian political and economic development and introduce them to analytical approaches useful in their own research. The lectures will present alternative analyses and interpretations of developments, but also explain official thinking and doctrines.

Target group

Primary: Norwegian and Nordic students working on or planning a PhD-thesis related to contemporary Russian politics or society. Secondary: Nordic researchers and university teachers with interest in the field.

Format

One week session Monday-Friday. Three intensive lecture modules, in total 18 lessons - by recognized Russian professors. Appr. 1000 pages reading list. To achieve credit (10 ECTS) students must submit a paper after the course.

Modules

1) Russian foreign policy thinking and Russia's place in the international system

Alexander Sergunin, St. Petersburg State University

The module aims at explaining how Russia's foreign and security policies have radically evolved over the last two decades; what driving forces are behind these dramatic changes, and what are Moscow's current international strategic priorities. In particular, Russian foreign policy schools, such as Atlanticism, neo-Eurasianism, geopolitics, realism, liberalism, globalism and post-positivism will be described. The question to what extent the Russian

foreign policy discourse embraces the world-wide IR problematique, such as globalization, global governance, regionalization, devolution of power in the federative states, de-sovereignization, de-bordering, etc., will be addressed. Russia's threat perceptions and official foreign policy and national security doctrines will be critically examined. The evolution of the Russian international strategy under the Yeltsin, Putin-1, Medvedev and Putin-2 administrations will be analyzed in a comparative perspective. Special attention will be given to Russia's policies in two adjacent regions – the Baltic Sea area and the Arctic region. The questions whether Russia is a revisionist power and whether Moscow is able to be a 'soft power' in these regions will be addressed. The course will demonstrate that both Russian foreign policy thinking and international strategies are far from being set/solidified; rather they are still in the making.

2) Societal cleavages, political mobilization and electoral politics.

Dmitry Goncharov, Higher School of Economics, Department of Political Science, St. Petersburg

This module will present and discuss analytical frameworks for the study of contemporary Russia's political development. While the focus is on the evolution of the institutional structure of the Russian politics, the course examines in detail the social and cultural forces that have been shaping the life of Russians over the two recent decades. It will start with the basic discussion concerning the character of the Russia's post-communist social and political transformation and nature of the Russian regime. Special attention will be given to conceptualization of development of the civil society in modern Russia. This part will include critical assessment of the current civil society paradigm in democratization studies and examination of the social, cultural and institutional factors that determine the rich structure of uncivil (uncivic) solidarity networks in the Russian society. The course will also cover evolution of the post-Soviet political culture, major social aspects of initial economic reforms and further social and economic development, system of electoral mobilization and manipulation, and Russian territorial politics. It is expected that the module will provide participants with an adequate vision of societal cleavages and political structures in Russia as well as possible patterns of their interdependence.

3) The political economy of Russia

Andrey Shcherbak, Higher School of Economics, Department of Political Science, St. Petersburg.

This module explores complicated relations between political and economic issues in contemporary Russia with main focus on recent developments. One of the main topics of the course is the 'resource curse' theory perspective in Russian political and economic context including such issues as erosion of institutions, securing control over rents distribution and

change in state-business relations. We will also discuss direct and indirect effects of the resource curse on political/electoral competition, corruption and regional political developments. We will investigate how state-business relations were affected by the 'YUKOS affair'. We will discuss the effect of the global economic crisis on the Russian economy and politics. Despite one of the largest anti-crisis programs (as share of GDP) Russian GDP dropped by 8%. We will try to provide responses for certain questions. What anti-crisis policies did Russian government adopt? What was public debate in Russia about required economic policies? The Dmitrii Medvedev's presidency is analyzed through the 'conservative modernization' concept: as an attempt to launch modernization without any political reforms. In general, the course covers such topics as political economy of the Russian state, the "oligarchs" phenomenon, Putin's policies towards big business, corruption and property rights in contemporary Russia.

Reading lists will be available later.

Practical details

Latest arrival 21 Oct, noon, earliest departure 25 Oct. afternoon. Participants must order their own tickets.

Visa support, transportation from airport and hotel reservation and will be taken care of by the Norwegian University Centre. Accommodation and meals must be covered by the participants. The course itself is free.

Applications through the University of Oslo here:

<https://nettskjema.uio.no/answer/53338.html>

Application deadline: 15 June 2013

For more information, contact the course coordinator: Arild Moe, The Norwegian University Centre in St. Petersburg and Fridtjof Nansen Institute. arild.moe@fni.no

The Norwegian University Center in St. Petersburg is owned and financed jointly by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim and the Universities of Bergen, Oslo and Tromsø. The center is administered by the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Oslo on behalf of the four owners.

See also: <http://www.st-petersburg.uio.no/>