

Honors 525:112:01

Dr. Laurie Bernstein

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Fall 2016

TTh 11-12:20 in CS 203

Office hours TTh 1:45-2:45 in 429 Cooper St., #202

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Syllabus¹ on Putin's Russia

Vladimir Putin has been the ruler of Russia since the start of the new millennium. Despite accusations from the liberal opposition that Putin is a power-hungry demagogue, he remains extremely popular. This is not simply due to his PR-machine and his administration's control of the mass media: most Russians credit Putin for bringing them back from the brink of economic ruin and other humiliations that set in after the end of the Cold War. As one college student told a Hungarian journalist, "It had been the tsar before and now it's Putin, he is like God to me.... He is a perfect man—politician, sportsman, family man!"



Our class will study the man and his milieu in the context of recent Russian history. Who is Putin? What can we make of contemporary Russia? As we address questions about Putin's personality, policies, and plans, we will also explore the legacy of the Soviet Union and communism; Russian politics and foreign policy; attitudes toward gender and sexuality; the status of non-Russian minorities; and environmental and economic challenges. As a class, we will take a field trip to a Russian bookstore and supermarket in Northeast Philadelphia, and eat a meal in a Russian restaurant.

¹ Please keep in mind that a syllabus is like a contract: it tells you what you should expect from this course, and what is expected from you. As a student in a college-level classroom, you are expected to meet the requirements specified below. If any of this poses a problem for you, please consider taking a different course.

Required reading:

- Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets* (Random House, 2016) ISBN13 978-0399588808
- Anne Garrels, *Putin Country: A Journey into the Real Russia* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016) ISBN13 978-0374247720
- Masha Gessen, *The Man without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin* (Riverhead Books, 2013) ISBN13 978-1594486517
- Nataliya Gevorkyan, Natalya Timakova, and Andrei Kolesnikov, *First Person: An Astonishingly Frank Self-Portrait by Russia's President* (Public Affairs, 2000) 978-1586480189

All additional readings are listed below and available on Sakai Resources

Requirements:

Conduct, attendance, and participation (10 points)

Students are expected to attend every class; to arrive on time; to come prepared in terms of the reading and writing assignments; and to participate civilly in class discussions. Students are also expected to remain in the classroom during our sessions – exceptions will be made for emergencies *so long as I am notified in advance*. Electronic and mobile devices do not have a place in this class, except during presentations. There are no excused absences. Courtesy dictates students who cannot attend a scheduled class should let me know via email or voicemail prior to that class. *NB*: When you send me an email, please keep in mind that these are not texts among friends, but rather communications between professionals. In other words, emails should begin with a polite and formal address (like “Dear Dr. Bernstein,”); they should be written carefully, grammatically, and with attention to correct spelling; and they should be signed with a student’s full name.

Quizzes on the three assigned books (35 points total)

At the start of each class set aside to discuss Garrels; Gessen; and Gevorkyan, Timakova, and Kolesnikov, there will be a short quiz worth five points on the assigned pages.

Comments on the reading assignments in Alexievich and the materials on Sakai Resources due November 8, 15, 29, and December 6 (26 points total)

Before the start of class on the dates designated below, students are to submit via Sakai Assignments a double-spaced and carefully written paper that (1) puts something particularly striking from the assigned pages *in their own words with page references inside parentheses*; (2) contains a brief comment on the issue(s) at hand; and (3) includes a relevant question derived from the reading assignment for our class discussion. (This question will not count if it’s something that can easily be looked up with a Google or other search.) Each short paper that adheres to all the guidelines will receive up to two points. If students are absent, I will accept their papers as long as the comments arrive on Sakai *prior* to the start of that day’s class.

Student presentations on developments in contemporary Russia (20 points)

During the last four weeks of class, teams of students will be responsible for finding, posting, presenting, and analyzing a recent newspaper article or video clip on that class's theme from a *reliable* news source. Reliable links to articles and clips need to be posted on Sakai Resources no later than 10 pm on the night before scheduled presentations. Each week one designated team will have the chance to find, post by 10 pm, present, and analyze something from an *unreliable* news source. This is a first-come, first-serve exercise: if a team has already posted something another team hoped to use, the other team needs to find, post before the deadline, and be prepared to present and analyze another relevant article or clip. Teams that fail to post their article or clip on time will automatically lose one point of five possible points; they will still have the chance to present and analyze on the designated day.

Final paper (10 points)

Students will write an 8-10-page paper that draws on the reading for our course and addresses *both sides* of a question about the ways in which Putin is good for Russia and its people – and the ways in which he is not. Specific guidelines will be posted on Sakai Resources.

NB: Students with documented physical, mental, and learning disabilities should contact our Office of Disability Services for reasonable accommodations and services. Call the coordinator Timothy Pure (856-225-6442) or email him at tpure@rutgers.edu.

When you complete this course you will have learned:

The basic contours of recent Russian history and politics
How historians interpret and read primary and secondary sources
How to analyze contemporary Russian developments in their historical context

Introduction to the course

Tuesday, September 6

Svetlana Alexievich's introduction to Russia

Thursday, September 8

Read Alexievich, pages ix-38

Comments must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 11 am

Introduction to "The Man without a Face"

Tuesday, September 13

Read Gessen, pages 1-100

Short quiz worth 5 points on the reading

Thursday, September 15

Read Alexievich, pages 41-90

Comments must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 11 am

Tuesday, September 20

Read Gessen, pages 101-198

Short quiz worth 5 points on the reading
Thursday, September 22
Read Alexievich, pages 91-141
Comments must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 11 am
Tuesday, September 27
Finish Gessen, pages 199-316
Short quiz worth 5 points on the reading
Thursday, September 29
Read Alexievich, pages 142-186
Comments must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 11 am

Introduction to “Putin Country”

Tuesday, October 4
Read Garrels, pages 3-116
Short quiz worth 5 points on the reading
Visit from RUC alumnus and former Chelyabinsk resident Frank Gorman
Thursday, October 6
Read Alexievich, pages 187-235
Comments must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 11 am
Tuesday, October 11
Finish Garrels, pages 117-225
Short quiz worth 5 points on the reading
A return visit from Frank Gorman
Thursday, October 13
Read Alexievich, pages 236-281
Comments must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 11 am

Putin on Putin

Tuesday, October 18
Read *First Person*, pages vii-82
Short quiz worth 5 points on the reading
Thursday, October 20
Read Alexievich, pages 287-336
Comments must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 11 am
Tuesday, October 25
Finish *First Person*, pages 83-end
Short quiz worth 5 points on the reading
Thursday, October 27
Read Alexievich, pages 337-402
*Please note that this reading assignment is longer than usual
Comments must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 11 am
Tuesday, November 1
Finish Alexievich, pages 403-470
*Please note that this reading assignment is longer than usual
Comments must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 11 am

Philadelphia à la russe

Thursday, November 3

*Instead of meeting for our usual class, we will take a midday trip on Saturday, November 5 to northeast Philly for a visit to Knizhnik and Bell's Market, and then a late lunch/early dinner at a Russian restaurant

Contemporary politics and foreign policy

Tuesday, November 8

Read articles in Sakai Resources folder labeled "Politics and foreign policy"
Comments must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 11 am

Teams need to post relevant articles or clips on Sakai before 10 pm on November 9

Thursday, November 10

Student presentations

Contemporary attitudes and laws regarding gender and sexuality

Tuesday, November 15

Read articles in Sakai Resources folder labeled "Gender and sexuality"
Comments must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 11 am

*Teams need to post relevant articles or clips on Sakai before 10 pm on November 21

Thursday, November 17

No class today - Dr. Bernstein will be at the annual meeting of the Association for East European, Eurasian, and Slavic Studies (ASEEES)

Tuesday, November 22

Student presentations

Thursday, November 24

No class today - Thanksgiving

Contemporary status of non-Russian minorities

Tuesday, November 29

Read articles in Sakai Resources folder labeled "non-Russian minorities"
Comments must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 11 am

*Teams need to post relevant articles or clips on Sakai before 10 pm on November 28

Thursday, December 1

Student presentations

Contemporary economic and environmental questions

Tuesday, December 6

Read articles in Sakai Resources folder labeled "Economy and environment"
Comments must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 11 am

*Teams need to post relevant articles or clips on Sakai before 10 pm on December 7

Thursday, December 8
Student presentations

Review - что такое Владимир Путин?
Tuesday, December 13

Final paper due no later than day of final exam