CIEE St. Petersburg, Russia

Course title: Comparative Cultural Studies: The United States and Russia
Course code: POLI 3001 RLPR / RAST 3001 RLPR
Programs offering course: Russian Language
Language of instruction: Russian
U.S. semester credits: 3
Contact hours: 45
Term: Fall 2020

Course Description

Through the introduction of key cultural, social and political issues and discussions based on texts and documentaries this course gives CIEE students the opportunity to learn more about the contemporary Russian political sphere. Topics include citizen and state, values and norms, political and social processes. Texts are primarily by Russian authors and include both academic secondary sources and articles from the mass media. The analysis of current political issues will provide students with the tools to understand contemporary Russia and give an outlook of future developments. Classes are conducted in Russian, though English is used for explanatory purposes.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

Describe key sociopolitical and social-cultural developments in Russia and the former Soviet space since 1991;

Evaluate and describe key processes in the post-Soviet world and their challenges, including democratization and the development of a public sphere;

Analyze post-Soviet realities from an interdisciplinary perspective, employing concepts from disciplines of political science, history, sociology, and cultural studies;

Improve their ability to present their ideas in writing and verbally in front of their peers;
Compare the post-Soviet Russian experience to those of contemporary America to better understand global challenges and communication processes.

Course Prerequisites
None

Methods of Instruction
The coursework will consist of lectures, seminars and site visits. Students are expected to come to class having completed their readings by the assigned date and to participate actively in the classroom discussions.

Assessment and Final Grade
1. Quizzes 20%
2. Paper and Presentation 30%
3. Final Exam 30%
4. Class Participation 20%
   TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements
Quizzes
Two quizzes will be given during the semester. These quizzes will test your knowledge of the material acquired at the lectures and through the readings and will be a combination of multiple choice questions and several open questions.

Paper and Presentation
Your presentation and your paper for this course will require you to apply some of the theoretical material from the readings in analyzing a contemporary Russian event, cultural or political phenomenon, meme, blog post, journalistic piece, speech, work of literature, movie etc. selected from societal perspective. Students chose the topic for their presentation and paper, based on their own interests and then discuss it with the instructor for final approval. Your paper should be 7-10 page long, double-spaced between lines along with 1" margin on all sides and it should use 12-point Times New
Roman font. Before submitting the paper to the instructor, each student will give an oral presentation on the chosen topic, as a way to share her/his findings with the rest of the class and receiving feedback from peers and the instructor. Your presentation should last 15 minutes. Supporting visuals in the form of handouts, PowerPoint or other forms are welcome.

Final Exam

The final in-class exam is given during the last week of the semester and it tests your knowledge of course concepts, theories and facts. It is a combination of multiple-choice questions, open questions and a short essay on a proposed topic.

Class Participation

Attendance

Attendance is crucial for successful completion of the class. Students are allowed to have two unexcused absences for each course for the whole semester program. These allowed unexcused absences should be used for situations such as minor illnesses without a doctor's note or personal situations that prevent the student from attending the class. Allowed unexcused absences should not be used in a planned way for travel or other activities. Unexcused absences beyond the limit of two will lower a student’s grade by 2 points on the 100 point scale each. For example, if your overall score in the class is 90 (an equivalent of A-) and you have had three unexcused absences, your final score will be 88 (B+).

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Class 1.1 Introduction and Introductions

Lecture: ‘Political Culture’ concept and theoretical approaches to political culture studies.

Week 2

Class 2.1

Lecture: “Perestroika” and fall of the USSR.
Class 2.2

Seminar: The disintegration of the USSR.

Readings:

<http://russiancouncil.ru/library/library_rsmd/rossiyadvukhtysyachnykh-stereoskoŋ assessed January 10, 2019

Week 3
Class 3.1

Lecture: Russia in Transition. Yeltsin’s domestic policy and liberal reforms of the 1990s.

Class 3.2


Readings:

<http://russiancouncil.ru/library/library_rsmd/rossiyadvukhtysyachnykh-stereoskoŋ assessed January 10, 2019

Week 4
Class 4.1

Lecture: Putin’s policy of “stabilization” and Medvedev’s “modernization”
Seminar: Russia “Special Path” concept and American Exclusiveness

Quiz 1

Readings:


Week 5
Class 5.1

Lecture: Structure of Russian Public Authorities.

Class 5.2

Site visit: Museum of History of Russian Democracy, Saint Petersburg

Week 6
Class 6.1

Lecture: Federal and regional levels of governance; self-governance in Russian Federation

Your paper topic is due

Class 6.2

Seminar. Decision-making process in Russia. American Federalism and Federalism in Russia.

Readings:

Week 7
Class 7.1

Lecture: Social stratification in Russian Federation. Social groups and social values in Russia and the US

Readings:

“Social structure and dynamics,” in Sakwa, R. Russian Politics and Society, pp. 314-324

Class 7.2

Seminar: Political culture of contemporary Russian society compared to American: participation, voting and absenteeism

Readings:


Week 8
Class 8.1

Lecture: Party system and leadership: role of ideologies and rational choice in Russia and US

Readings:

Quiz 2

Class 8.2

Seminar: Higher education in Russia and US: communication, civic society, academic freedom and democratic involvement.

Readings:


Week 9

Class 9.1

Lecture: Press and media in modern Russia.

Class 9.2

Seminar: Limitations and obstacles to freedom of speech in Russia and the US.

Readings:

Lecture: Political humor. Peculiarities of Russian and American types of political humor: anecdotes, caricatures, parodies.

V: Kukly [Puppets] TV Show

Student presentations

Class 10.2.

Seminar: Role of stereotypes in attitude to foreign people: Russia and USA.

Readings:


Student Presentations

Week 11

Class 11.1.

Lecture: Foreign affairs: relations between Russia and other countries. Russia and US

Student Presentations

Class 11.2.

Seminar: Foreign affairs issues: Migrants and xenophobia

Readings:

Your paper is due

Week 12
Class 12.1

Seminar: Civil society and activism in Russia and the US

Readings:


Class 12.2 Final Exam

Course Materials
Readings


Kumar, Vijay, “Political Culture and Democratization in Russia” in Comparative Politics, 3 (17), 2014, pp 60-67.


Rossiia “dvukhtysiachnykh”: stereoskopicheskyy vzgliad. Moscow, pp. 163-178


Online Resources


Official site of Russian President, http://www.president.kremlin.ru


Official sites of Russia’s political parties:

- United Russia: https://er.ru
- Communist Party: https://kprf.ru
- Spravedliavaia Rossiiia, www.spravedlivo.ru
- LDPR, www.ldpr.ru
- Yabloko, www.yabloko.ru

Russian Public Opinion Research Center, https://wciom.ru


World Values Survey, www.worldvaluessurvey.org/