
Tuesday/Thursday 1:30-3:20
MEB 243
Professor Scott Radnitz
Jackson School of International Studies
225A Thomson Hall
(206)543-2467
srad@u.washington.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday 10:30-12 or by appointment
Course website: http://faculty.washington.edu/srad/SIS490.shtml

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, fifteen new states were created. While this was celebrated in the west as a triumph over its longtime adversary, the people who lived through what (former) Russian President Vladimir Putin called “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century” endured new and varied hardships. The rapid collapse of an empire gave rise to outbreaks of nationalism and secessionism, mass migration and refugees, the decay of infrastructure and public services, and economic collapse. Some of the successor states endured civil war, while others simply remained fragile and corrupt.

This course is about security issues in the region—defined as the fifteen former Soviet republics. We will use a broad conception of security that encompasses not only conventional security issues such as interstate war, but also other large-scale processes that affect individual well-being.

Grades will be determined by the following formula:

- Two response papers—15%
- Class participation—15%
- Midterm—20%
- Policy memo—25%
- Final exam (or research paper)—25%

Important Dates

The response papers are due on the day that we discuss those readings, which you choose.
The midterm is on February 11.
The policy memo is due on March 2.
The optional research is due on the same day as the final, March 19.

Participation

Since this is a seminar, participation is a large part of the grade (15%). The instructor will begin each class with a short lecture to introduce the topic and provide
context. The rest of the time will be used for discussion. Students should complete the reading by the dates indicated below.

One student will sign up each class to talk for 5-10 minutes on one of the days for which they write a paper.

Response papers
Every student will write brief (3 to 4-page; double-spaced, 12-point font) papers on the assigned reading for two sessions of your choosing. The papers are designed to help you engage scholarly arguments. They should not summarize the reading(s).

Instead, they should link the reading with broader themes addressed in the class. What is the broader significance of the readings? How do they advance our knowledge or frame an issue in a new way?

Each paper should evaluate the main argument(s) in the texts. Is the argument convincing and/or plausible? What evidence does the author bring to support it? What are the author’s assumptions or possible biases? If a claim seems problematic or unsubstated, how could it be corrected or further investigated? What additional evidence would strengthen the argument?

Papers should also compare and contrast the arguments in the readings. If there are readings assigned on that day by more than one author, compare them with each other. If only one author is assigned, compare the arguments to readings from previous weeks. Are the authors’ arguments complementary or contradictory? Why do they make different claims? Is it because they make assumptions that lead to different conclusions? Is it because they get their evidence from different sources or gather it in different ways? Is it because they were written at different times and had different amounts of knowledge upon which to build?

Related, how does the reading build on the reading from past weeks? What it is important to know in order to situate this week’s readings? How are the elements connected? Or alternatively, how does this research contradict the earlier reading?

In writing this paper, you have to be selective. Choose only a few points on which to compare and evaluate the arguments. You do not need to answer all the questions posed here. Feel free to take risks. Don’t spend time trying to divine the “right” answers, i.e., what the instructor wants to hear. Follow your ideas where they lead.

Policy memo
This 5-7 page paper should address a pressing security-related issue in the FSU and make concrete recommendations to a relevant decision maker, for example a political leader in the region, a philanthropist, or an international organization. Write as an expert on your chosen topic and as if your opinion will be taken seriously. The style will differ from the response paper.

It should first identify and give some background to the problem to be addressed. Why is it a problem? What historical or other details are necessary to consider in comprehending the problem and deciding how to address it? Whom does the problem affect? Why would it be good to solve? Who would benefit? How has it been addressed in the past? Why have those efforts been insufficient?
Second, it should propose a solution to the problem. What concrete steps should the policy maker take? Why would this work better than what has been tried before? Why is it better than other policies that one could conceivably propose? What kind of resources are necessary to carry it out? How costly (in terms of money, political capital, or time) will it be to mobilize these resources? What are some possible pitfalls or sources of resistance to this policy and how can they be overcome? How will we recognize if the policy is successful? By what metric?

Midterm and Final Exam
There will be a midterm and final exam, each consisting of two parts: i) short-answer identification of concepts, people, and events; and ii) essays from a list of study questions that will be handed out in advance.

Optional Research Paper
Students can choose to write an 8-10 research paper instead of taking the final exam. Graduate students are especially encouraged to choose this option. Students should submit a one-paragraph abstract for approval by the instructor by week 5.

Keeping up with Current Events
Finally, students should try to stay informed on developments in the region. The best coverage on the former Soviet Union can be found on BBC (www.bbc.co.uk/), Radio Liberty (rferl.org), Eurasianet (eurasianet.org), Institute of War and Peace Reporting (iwpr.net); and English-language Russian sites Pravda (english.pravda.ru), RIA Novosti (en.rian.ru), and Itar-Tass (itar-tass.com/eng). We will sometimes discuss news in class.

Reading
Articles and book chapters are on e-reserve. Web articles and some documents will be available from http://faculty.washington.edu/srad/SIS490.shtml

There is one required book:


**Week 1) Introduction**

**Introduction: 1/5**

**Debating Security: 1/7**


http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1058630.html

Arnold Beichman, “Putin’s Russia: Stalin Lite.”  
http://www.hoover.org/pubaffairs/dailyreport/archive/2820756.html

**Week 2) Transition Legacies**

**Imperial Legacies: 1/12**


Download from http://faculty.washington.edu/srad/SIS490.shtml


**Nationalism: 1/14**

Zurcher, Ch. 2, 11-41


**Week 3) State Weakness**

**Economic decline in the 1990s: 1/19**


**Violence: 1/21**


**Week 4) Transitional Civil Wars**

**The Chechen Wars: 1/26**

Zurcher ch. 3-4, 42-114.


**The Georgia and Karabakh Wars: 1/28**

Zurcher chs. 5-6, 115-85

**Week 5) Political Economy of Weak States**

**Quasi-states: 2/2**


State Capture and Corruption: 2/4


Week 6) Exporting Corruption & Midterm

International Illicit Trade: 2/9


Midterm: 2/11

Week 7) Non-democratization

Authoritarian Backsliding: 2/16


**Energy, Politics, and Security: 2/18**


**Week 8) Russia and the Near Abroad**

**Ethnicity, Chauvinism, and Security: 2/23**


**Reimperialization?: 2/25**


Dmitri Trenin, “Russia’s Spheres of Interest, Not Influence,” *Washington Quarterly* 43(4), 2009: 3-22.


**Week 9) 1990s Redux**

**The South Ossetia War: 3/2**


From *The Economist*:

-- “South Ossetia is not Kosovo” and “Put out Even More Flags,” August 28, 2008.


**New Hotspots? Crimea and North Caucasus: 3/4**


TBD (Turkey-Armenia normalization and Karabakh?)

**Week 10) Now What?**
**A New Cold War?: 3/9**


**Economic Crisis: 3/11**


From New York Times:


TBD