HNRS 230: Post-Soviet Life around the World

Syllabus

In this course, we will explore the “fall of communism” and how the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have transformed since 1989. What exactly happened in the late 1980s and specifically in 1989? Why did the Soviet Union end? We then turn to the ways that people have sought to survive and create new cultural and political practices within the market relations and commodification in the post-Soviet era. We will explore a wide range of topics, including oligarchs, commodification, criminality, nationalism, violence, vampires, workers, gender, the self, religion, vacation houses, and memory. We will compare experiences across post-Soviet space: Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the former Soviet Union (including Central Asia and the Baltics), Cuba, Nicaragua, and Mozambique. We will also consider the United States as part of post-Soviet life. Finally, how do people remember the socialist past? How are they reestablishing relations with the Soviet past to envision their future?

Course Objectives
By the end of this course, you should be able to
- Understand the historic events and the changing social life since 1980s in the former Soviet Bloc.
- Discuss major terms, themes, and debates in post-socialist studies.
- Analyze and evaluate scholarly readings, fiction, and film in the field.
- Learn basic information about a wide range of countries of the former Soviet Bloc.
- Explore post-Soviet life as a global phenomenon.
- Write a Fulbright application to study in the country of your choice.

Required Texts:
- The articles and book chapters listed in the course schedule are required and are available on Blackboard. All articles must be printed and brought to class.

Course Schedule and Readings

*Tues., Jan. 24*: Introduction to the course
I. What happened in 1989?

**Thurs., Jan. 26:** What was socialism?
- Country of the day: the Soviet Union

**Tues, Jan 31:** What was socialism?
- Ghodsee, “Preface” and “Introduction,” pp. ix-xv and 1-20. (27 pages)
- Country of the day: Bulgaria.

**Thurs., Feb. 2:** What was 1989?
- Country of the day: Czechoslovakia, Czech Republic, and Slovakia.

**Tues, Feb. 7:** What was 1991?
- Country of the day: Cuba.

**Thurs., Feb. 9:** Shock Therapy
- Country of the day: Russia.

**Tues, Feb. 14:** What was 1989?
- Country of the day: Yugoslavia.

II. What is/was the transition?

**Thurs., Feb. 16:** Survival
- Ghodsee, “Hair,” pp. 61-82. (21 pages)
- Country of the day: Mongolia.

**Tues., Feb. 21:** Transition?
- Country of the day: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.
Thurs., Feb. 23: Crisis
- Country of the day: Kazakhstan.

Tues. Feb. 28: Money
- Country of the day: Poland.

Thurs., March 2: Companies
- Country of the day: Hungary.

Tues, March 7: Freedom
- Country of the day: Belarus and Moldova.

*Thurs., March 9: Midterm*
*March 13-19: Spring Break*

III. Post-Soviet Individuals

Tues., March 21: Remaking the Self and Gender, Post-Socialist Workers
- Country of the day: Ukraine.

Thurs., March 23: Remaking the Self and Gender, Post-Socialist Workers
- Country of the day: Albania.

Tues., March 28: Remaking the Self and Gender, Post-Socialist Workers
- Country of the day: Kyrgyzstan.

Thurs., March 30: Remaking the Self and Gender, Post-Socialist Workers
- Country of the day: Latvia and Lithuania.
Tues., April 4: Vampires
- Country of the day: Turkmenistan.

Thurs., April 6: The Middle Class
- Country of the day: Estonia.

Tues., April 11: Putin
- Country of the day: Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia.

VI. Post-Soviet States and States of Mind
Thurs., April 13: Nostalgia
- Berdahl, Daphne. 1999. “’N(O)stalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things.” *Ethnos* 64(2):192-211. (19 pages)
- Country of the day: East Germany, West Germany, and Germany.

Tues., April 18: Organized Forgetting
- Country of the day: Mozambique.

Thurs., April 20: The State and NGOs
- Country of the day: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Tues., April 25: Common Space and Private Space
- Country of the day: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro.

Thurs., April 27: The Remnants of Global Socialist Trade
- Country of the day: Nicaragua.
Tues, May 2: Students’ Choice
- Reading TBA
- Country of the day: TBA

Thurs, May 4: Radical Democracy
- Country of the day: Slovenia and Croatia.
- Final exam.

*Tues., May 12: Final paper due.*

Course Requirements

- Class participation: 15%
- Midterm exam: 40%
- Final project (Fulbright application): 40%
- Final exam: 5%
- Extra-credit article/book check (4 out of 5): 1%
- Extra credit for volunteering/attending Southern Slavic conference: 1%

Class participation: Participation includes attendance, being on time, bringing the reading, asking questions, and participating in discussion. Also, you must meet with me once in office hours to talk about your final project, anytime on or before March 9th.

Final project: Students will complete (but not submit) a Fulbright application to a country in the former Soviet Bloc of their choice. In the midterm exam, students will state a country and a research topic for the Fulbright application, which they can change at any time before the final exam.

Midterm and final exams: These two tests are intended to evaluate your understanding of the main concepts in the course. The midterm exam will have multiple choice and essays, as well as a separate section in which to state your country and research topic chosen for the Fulbright application. The final exam will only be multiple choice.

Extra-credit article check
I will check to make certain that students have the required printed articles for the week four times during the semester. Three of these checks will go towards a 1% extra credit.

Extra credit for volunteering/attending Southern Slavic conference
The Southern Conference on Slavic Studies will take place in Alexandria, VA, April 6-8, 2016. If you volunteer at the conference and/or attend a panel (or more), you will receive this extra credit. The Conference organizers will provide you proof of your volunteering/attendance.
Additional Items:

- **Academic Integrity:** I will not tolerate plagiarism. Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

- **Mason Email Accounts:** Mason uses only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class. See [http://masonlive.gmu.edu](http://masonlive.gmu.edu) for more information.

- **Office of Disability Services:** If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services at 703.993.2474 or [http://ods.gmu.edu](http://ods.gmu.edu). All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

- **Writing Center:** A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200, [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)

- **University Libraries** “Ask a Librarian,”
  [http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html](http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html)

- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):** (703) 993-2380, [http://caps.gmu.edu](http://caps.gmu.edu)

- **University Policies:** The University Catalog, [http://catalog.gmu.edu](http://catalog.gmu.edu), is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at [http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/). All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

  - Last Day to Add (Full-Semester Course): January 30, 2017
  - Last Day to Drop (Full-Semester Course): February 24, 2017
  - Selective Withdrawal Period (Full-Semester Course): February 27 – March 31, 2017. (only)