Course description: This course is designed to give a deeper understanding of the Post-Soviet space, focusing on the major geographic factors that define this enormous Eurasian realm, including modern and historical cultural landscapes, economy and politics of the region, demography and health, religious cultures, environmental crises, contested territories, and the most recent geopolitical developments in the region.

Grading policy: students must take 3 exams, each worth 33% of the total grade. Make-up exams will be allowed only in cases of medical emergency, with the written proof from the doctor’s office. There will not be a final exam.


Course schedule

Jan 17    Introduction to the course: 10 Defining Features of Russia
Aug 31   Natural environment of the FSU (D. Shaw)
Sep 2    Expansion of the Russian and Soviet empires (D.Trenin)
Sep 7    Asymmetrical Federation (Lynn & Bogorov; Hanson & Bradshaw)
Sep 9    Agricultural Roots of the Russian revolution (A. Wood)
Sep 14   Traditional religious cultures in Russia (J. Panhurst)
Sep 16   MacMafia a la Russe (M.Glenny)
Sep 21   Major health and demographic issues in Russia (M.Wines; M. Specter)
Sep 23   Asiatic Russia: the Siberian curse? (B. Jordan)
Sep 28   The Tuvans (“Genghiz Blues”) (Anna Reid)
Sep 30   Exam 1
Oct 5  ‘Near abroad’: Russia and the former union republics (D. Shaw)
Oct 7  Baltic states: new EU and NATO members (Valdes, A. et al.; M. Wines)

Oct 12  Ukraine, Belarus’ and Moldova (D. Marples; M. Wines)
Oct 14  The Caucasus: Shattered Region (handout material)

Oct 19  Georgia: Where Europe vanishes? (R. Kaplan; “Legacy”)
Oct 21  Baku and Yerevan: is the settlement possible? (Economist; Sadakhlo)

Oct 26  The future of the Caspian region (Dekmesian & Simonian)
Oct 28  EXAM 2

Nov 2  Central Asia takes center stage (C. Buckley)
Nov 4  Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (Economist)

Nov 9  Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan (“At the Crossroads”)
Nov 11  Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia (A. Rashid)

Nov 16  Ecocide: the Aral Sea Crisis (Ph. Micklin)
Nov 18  Managing Kara Kum canal (T. Hannan & S. O’Hara)

Nov 23  The New Great Game? The geopolitical future of the region (A. Rashid)
Nov 25  THANKSGIVING - NO CLASS!

Nov 30  Epilogue and review for exam 3
Dec 2  EXAM 3

Dec 9  Exams 3 back

THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE