GEOGRAPHY OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

REE 345 (meets with GRG 327)

Spring 2013

Instructor: Dr. Bella Bychkova Jordan
Office hours: Tue, Thu 2:00-3:00
Office: Calhoun 3

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.

Basis for the grade:

1) students must take 2 exams, each worth 25% of the totals grade. Students will write a term paper, worth 30% of the final grade. The paper must be 10-12 pages long, double-spaced, typed in 12-point font. The bibliography should contain scholarly publications, including books and articles from peer-reviewed journals.

2) Students will prepare an oral presentation on a topic related to the term paper and approved by the instructor. The presentation’s length should not exceed 15 minutes.

Course policies:

1) Make-up exams will be allowed only in cases of medical emergency, with the written proof from the doctor’s office. There will be no final exam.

2) late term papers will not be accepted. All the term papers must be submitted on May 3.

3) Observation of religious holidays: according to the University of Texas at Austin regulations religious holidays are observed accordingly. The students need to notify the instructor in advance.

4) Plagiarism will not be tolerated and students might face severe consequences in cases of plagiarism. Students must use their own ideas and words only and cite their sources very carefully.

5) Cell phones must be put away during class time and computers may be used only for note taking or class activities.

6) Though there are no points assigned for class attendance, attending lectures is strongly recommended as a prerequisite for success in this class.

7) The University of Texas at Austin will provide accommodations for students with disabilities.

**Course schedule**

Jan 15  Introduction to the course
Jan 17  Natural environment of the FSU (Textbook: 1-50)
Jan 22  Environmental degradation and conservation (Textbook: 50-64)
Jan 24  Ten Defining Features of Russia (lecture materials)
Jan 29  Expansion of the Russian and Soviet empires (Textbook: 67-120)
Jan 31  Asymmetrical Federation (lecture materials)
Feb 5   Demographics and population distribution (Textbook: 137-166)
Feb 7   Social Issues: wealth, health, poverty, and crime (Textbook: 167-182)
Feb 12  Cultures and languages (Textbook: 183-198)
Feb 14  Traditional Religious cultures (Textbook: 199-218)
Feb 19  Economic geography (Textbook: 261-299; 317-336)
Feb 21  Regional geography of Russia (Textbook: 369-382)
Feb 26  The Ural region and beyond (Textbook: 383-407)
Feb 28  Exam 1
March 5  Baltic States: the new NATO and EU members (Textbook: 408-414)
March 7    Ukraine, Belarus’ and Moldova (Textbook: 415-423)

March 11-16  **SPRING BREAK**

March 19    The Caucasus: The Shatter Zone (Textbook: 369- 382)
March 21    Baku and Yerevan: is the settlement possible? (handouts)
March 26    Georgia: Where Europe vanishes (handouts)
March 28    Oil and caviar: the future of the Caspian region (handouts)

April 2    Central Asia: Introduction (Textbook: 424-433, handouts)
April 4    Kazakhstan (Guest speaker from Kazakhstan)
April 9    Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan (handouts)
April 11   **Exam 2**
April 16   Student presentations and discussion
April 18   Student presentation and discussion
April 23   Student presentation and discussion
April 25   Student presentations and discussion
April 30   Student presentations and discussion
May 2      Student presentations and discussion/ Term papers due

**Late term papers will not be accepted!**

**This syllabus is subject to change**