



**Course No.:** 029

**Course Name:** Russia's Political Culture and National Strategy

**Academic Year:** 2023-2024

**Lecturer:** Prof. Anna Geifman

**Program:** Strategy, Diplomacy, and War

**Format:** Lecture

**Course Duration:** Semester B, 2 academic hours/week

**Credits:** 2

**Pre-Requisites:** אסטרגיות-על בעידן המודרני

**Lecturer's E-Mail Address:** [annageifman@hotmail.com](mailto:annageifman@hotmail.com)

**Course Objectives:**

The course's purpose is to provide the students with intellectual tools and methods of understanding key features of Russia's unique national tradition, its multiple crises, and their effect on the country's relationship with the outside world. Special attention will be devoted to the traditional conception of power, to political elites' efforts to formulate national identity and ideology, as well as to intricate relations among the state, society, and foreign forces. At the end of the course students will be familiar with the country's objectives and strategies, analyzed within the broader context of its development from a traditional society to Communist dictatorship to the breakdown of the USSR and official attempts to maintain international superiority of post-Communist Russia.

**Course Description:**

This course examines a turbulent political culture manifested in and defining the imperial, Communist, and post-Communist Russia. Topics for discussion include national myths, identity-formation, and messianic aspirations (such as Russia as the "Third Rome" and Communist paradise). A special emphasis is on the largely unsuccessful efforts to deal with political and psychosocial transitions and compensatory uses of power. Equally important will be a pivotal paradigm of the national "teenage mentality and behavior," central to understanding the traditional

attitudes and behaviors. Students will learn how Russian political culture affects national and foreign security policies and strategies for affirming the perpetually sought-after worldwide preeminence.

**Requirements:**

Class Participation: 10%

Research and Class Presentation: 40%. 15-minute-presentation on an approved topic

Final Paper: 50%. 5-7-page analytical paper on an assigned topic based on required readings and class discussions

**Passing Grade: 60**

**Subjects and Required Reading per Lesson:**

**Session no. 1: Introduction: Outlines of Russian Political Culture and Mythological Origins of the State**

Required Reading:

Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997), pp. 3-44.

Recommended Reading:

1. *The Russian Primary Chronicle* (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1953) (selections, 5 pp.),

<http://www.mgh-bibliothek.de/dokumente/a/a011458.pdf>

2. Edward L. Keenan, "Moscow Political Folkways," *The Russian Review* 45:2 (April 1986), pp. 115-137. (handout)

**Session no. 2: Russian Orthodoxy as State Religion; National Ideology: Moscow as the "Third Rome"**

Required Reading:

Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, *The Slave Soul of Russia* (New York: New York UP, 1996), pp. 19-65.

Recommended Reading:

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett (Digireads.com Publishing, 2017), “The Grand Inquisitor” (4 pp.), <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pol116/grand.htm>

**Session no. 3: The Russian Intelligentsia and Efforts of Political Transformation**

Required Reading:

Ivan Turgenev, “Hamlet and Don Quixote,” trans. Moshe Spiegel, *Chicago Review* 17:4 (1965), pp. pp. 92-109,  
[http://www.donquixote.com/uploads/4/3/9/6/43962907/turgenev\\_-\\_hamlet\\_and\\_don\\_quixote-libre.pdf](http://www.donquixote.com/uploads/4/3/9/6/43962907/turgenev_-_hamlet_and_don_quixote-libre.pdf)

Recommended Reading:

Aleksandr Radishchev, “Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow,” *Russian Intellectual History: An Anthology*, ed. Marc Raeff (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978), pp. 261-279.

**Session no. 4: The State-Society Relationship and Attitudes toward Authority in the Russian Culture**

Required Reading:

Konstantin Pobedonostsev, “The Falsehood of Democracy,” *Readings in the Russian Civilization*, ed. Thomas Riha (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1964), vol. 2, pp. 390-401.

Recommended Reading:

Petr Chaadaev, “Apology of a Madman,” *Russian Intellectual History: An Anthology*, ed. Marc Raeff (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978), pp. 302-314.

**Session no. 5: The Radical Archetype and the “Russian Revolt”**

Required Reading:

1. Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer* (New York: Perennial Library, 1989), selections from pp. 13-35, 44-55, 64-81.
2. Sergei Nechaev, “Catechism of the Revolutionary” (1969) (2 pp.), <http://www.marxists.org/subject/anarchism/nechayev/catechism.htm>

Recommended Reading:

Anna Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), Introduction: pp. 3-10; chapter 1: pp. 11-44.

**Session no. 6: The Russian Revolution and Its Global Impact**

Required Reading:

1. Richard Pipes, *The Three "Whys" of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), pp. 3-30.
2. Eugene Zamyatin, "The Cave," *The Slavonic Review* 2:4 (1923), pp. 145-153.

Recommended Reading:

John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (selections)

**Session no. 7: Stalin's "Great Terror" and the Building of "Soviet Bloc"**

Required Reading:

Anna Geifman, "Did Soviet Citizens Love Stalin?" *Clio's Psyche* 10:4 (March 2004), pp. 141-144.

Recommended Reading:

Varlam Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales* (New York: Penguin, 1994). (selected stories)

**Session no. 8: The Cold War Before and After the "de-Stalinization"**

Required Reading:

Krushchev's "Secret Speech 'On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences,' Delivered at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," February 25, 1956 (Wilson Center Digital archive), pp. 1-10,  
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115995.pdf?v=3c22b71b65bcbbe9fdfadead9419c995>

Recommended Reading:

1. Nina Tumarkin, *The Living & the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), pp. 125-157.
2. Harrison E. Salisbury, *The 900 Days: The Siege of Leningrad* (New York: Da Capo Press 1969).

## **Session no. 9: The National Security Dimension: Russia's High Threat Perception at Home and Abroad**

### Required Reading:

Stephen Blank, "Threats to and from Russia: An Assessment," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 21:3 (2008), pp. 491-526.

### Recommended Reading:

1. Peter J.S. Duncan, "Changing Landmarks? Anti-Westernism in National Bolshevik and Russian Revolutionary Thought," *Russian Nationalism: Past and Present*, ed. Geoffrey Hosking and Robert Service (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 1998), pp. 55-76.
2. Margot Light, "In Search of an Identity: Russian Foreign Policy and the End of Ideology," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 19:3 (2003), pp. 42-59.

## **Session no. 10: The Stagnation Period and Compensatory Uses of Power as Foreign Policy Strategy**

### Required Reading:

1. Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, "Ethnonationalism and Political Stability: The Soviet Case," *World Politics* 36:4 (July 1984), pp. 555-580.
2. Simon Saradzhyan, "7 Lessons Russian Strategists Learned from Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan," *The Moscow Times*, 10 January 2020 (4 pp.), <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/12/23/seven-lessons-russian-strategists-inferred-from-soviet-intervention-in-afghanistan-a68726>

### Recommended Reading:

Stephen F. Cohen, "Was the Soviet System Reformable?" *Slavic Review* 63:3 (Autumn 2004), pp. 459-489.

## **Session no. 11: Glasnost' and Perestroika**

### Required Reading:

1. Lilia Shevtsova, "Post-Communist Politics: Revolution or Continuity?" *The New Russia: Troubled Transformation*, ed. Gail W. Lapidus (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 5-36.
2. David G. Rowley, "Imperial versus National Discourse: The Case of Russia," *Nations and Nationalism* 6:1 (2000), pp. 23-42.

### Recommended Reading:

1. Vadim Radaev, "Corruption and Violence in Russian Business in the Late 1990s," *Economic Crime in Russia*, ed. Alena V. Ledeneva and Marina Kurkchiyan (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2000), pp. 63-82.
2. Caroline Humphrey, "Dirty Business, 'Normal Life', and the Dream of Law," *Economic Crime in Russia*, ed. Alena V. Ledeneva and Marina Kurkchiyan (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2000), pp. 177-190.

## **Session no. 12: Collapse of the USSR and Putin's Regime**

### Required Reading:

1. Anna Geifman and Yuri Teper, "Russia's New National Identity Under Putin's Regime," *BESA Center Perspectives*, Paper No. 279 (December 29, 2014), pp. 1-4.
2. Vera Tolz, "The Search for a National Identity in the Russia of Yeltsin and Putin," *Restructuring Post-Communist Russia*, ed. Yitzhak Brudny, Jonathan Frankel, and Stefani Hoffman, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), pp. 160-180.
3. Geoffrey Hosking, "Can Russia Become a Nation-State?" *Nations and Nationalism* 4:4 (1998), pp. 451-452.

### Recommended Reading:

1. Peter Rutland, "Putin's Path to Power," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 16:4 (October-December 2000), pp. 313-354.
2. Vladimir Gel'man, "Regime Transition, Uncertainty and Prospects for Democratization: The Politics of Russia's Regions in a Comparative Perspective," *Europe-Asia Studies* 51:6 (1999), pp. 939-956.

3. Amy Knight, "The KGB, Perestroika, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 5:1 (Winter 2003), pp. 67-93.

### **Session no. 13: Russian Foreign Policy as Messianic Process**

#### Required Reading:

1. Anna Geifman, "Putin's 'Sacred Mission' in Syria," *BESA Center Perspectives*, paper No. 335 (March 27, 2016), pp. 1-5.
2. Bertil Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia. Putin's Foreign Policy towards the CIS countries*, pp. 24-46

#### Recommended Reading:

1. Anna Geifman, "The Russians Are... Leaving?," *The Jerusalem Institute for Strategic Studies*, January 2 2018, pp. 1-2, <http://jiss.org.il/en/the-russians-are-leaving/>
2. Vladimir Putin, "The Ethnicity Issue," *Izvestia*, January 23, 2012, pp. 1-2, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/vladimir-putin/russias-national-question b 1223786.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/vladimir-putin/russias-national-question-b-1223786.html))