

# Russian Politics and Policymaking

<b>Head Instructor</b>	Israel Marques, II (israel.marques.ii@gmail.com, Telegram: +7(985)829-7566)
<b>Class Details</b>	Tues. and Thurs 2:40 - 3:55
<b>Office Hours</b>	Monday and Friday 1000 - 1200, by appointment
<b>Educational Format</b>	Offline (for now)

## Course Description

Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine highlights many of the contradictions at the heart of autocratic regimes' ability to make and implement policy. On the one hand, Russia's centralized political system has enabled Russia to prosecute war with little oversight from its public. On the other hand, the Russian government has implemented a wide-range of policies to preempt social unrest, ranging from repressive media control to co-optation of key sectors. Thus, popular perceptions of an unconstrained Russia state are belied by the government's careful attention to managing public opinion. Far from being exceptional, however, such contradictions have been widely observed in Russia for years. This raises many questions of crucial importance to those seeking to understand Russia. How does the Russian government make public policy and who are its key actors? How does the Russian political system shape the incentives of its decision makers and those implementing policy? And crucially, when does domestic public opinion constrain Russian policy and shape the policymaking process?

## Learning Objectives and Structure

The key goal of this semester-long course will be to examine how policy is made and implemented in contemporary Russia. Doing so successfully, however, requires careful attention to the rapid political and economic changes the country has undergone since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Events such as the fall of the Soviet Union, repeated economic crises, and shifts in the nature and reach of Russia's electoral authoritarian regime have had important implications for Russian policy. To explore these dynamics, the course will draw on insights from historians and political scientists to examine how changing conditions have shaped the key groups of actors in the policymaking process, the political considerations that constrain them, their relative power, and their ability to ensure that policy is successfully

implemented. Because the only constant in Russian politics is change, however, a secondary goal of the course will be to put Russia into a broader perspective by providing more general tools to help compare Russia to other middle-income countries. By the end of the course, students should have the historical background and analytical tools needed to understand Russian policymaking, as well as to critically evaluate and develop explanations for it.

The course will lectures are designed to provide students with the necessary background (theoretical and historical) for understanding each topic. They are also designed to highlight competing explanations or interpretations that students should be aware of and evaluate. Substantively, the course will be broken into three modules. The first will provide a brief, general introduction to the study of public policymaking and its outcomes, as well as the major theories used to explain it. It will also provide a brief introduction to the Russian political system from a formalist perspective to help students understand its structure (both at the federal and regional levels) and how policy should be made de jure. The second module will focus on how policymaking functions in Russia in practice. It will introduce the major stakeholders and actors in Russian domestic politics, as well as the mechanisms by which they can influence policymaking. It will also trace the evolution of Russia's political regime and its recent history to examine how the shifting nature of the regime has shaped actors' incentives, their relative importance, and their ability to shape policy over time. The third section will then introduce a series of case studies of specific policy domains to help students to better understand how policymaking works in practice, as well as to understand how it differs across different types of policy. Specifically, we will explore economic reforms related to investment and business environments, the welfare state, and security policy. Finally, we will conclude by exploring what the study of Russian policymaking can tell us about the policy process in autocratic regimes more broadly.

## Grading System and Evaluation

Grades will consist of the following components:

Response Papers (2) .....	20%
Simulation Exercise .....	25%
Policy Paper .....	25%
Final Exam .....	20%
Participation .....	10%

**Response Papers (2):** In order to hone their analytical skills, students will turn in a total of two brief, 2 – 3 page critique essays covering two different assigned readings. Critiques are due BEFORE the beginning of the lecture in which selected readings will be discussed.

The essay should focus on an evaluation of the argument and the student's opinion of the scientific merit of the piece. It should contain the following elements:

1. A very brief (**one paragraph**) summary of the main research question, the main argument, and the types of evidence that the author presents to defend their position.

2. An evaluation of the argument and the evidence. This can be approached through a number of different questions. For each of these questions, it is important to explain why you answer the way you do and to carefully lay out the logic of your objections and suggestions.
  - Does the logic behind the argument make sense?
  - Does the evidence the author presents match the argument (i.e. do they prove what they say they will)? Are you aware of different sources of evidence that could contradict or support the argument? How could the author have made the argument more convincing?
  - How does the piece compare to others assigned for the topic? Are there major disagreements, or does there appear to be consensus?
3. An overall opinion on the piece. Do you find the argument convincing? Why or why not?

For each of the sections beyond the summary, it is important to explain why your answer the way you do and to carefully lay out the logic of your objections and suggestions. It is also important to focus on the substance of the reading, not style, and base responses on a careful reading. In some cases, this will require examining other materials related to the piece that are not assigned for the course to make sure that potential issues are not addressed elsewhere. For example, one might need to consult supplementary materials or later chapters in books. In cases where students' critiques are addressed elsewhere, the student must be clear on why the author's attempt to address the critique was insufficient despite attempts to do so. Further instructions will be provided in lecture and seminar.

**Simulation exercise:** Students will be split into small teams and assigned to represent various ministries, business associations, and the presidential administration of Russia shortly after the collapse of Communism. Each team will develop and present a set of reform proposals to be negotiated with the other groups over two class sessions. These plans should address questions related to state-building, economic reform, and the nature of the political regime that we will be studying throughout the semester and conform to the interests of the group each team represents. Before the first session, each team will turn in a short 5-page brief explaining their initial position and how it relates to the goals of the group they represent. Students will be evaluated based on the group paper and a short 2-page reflection on their contribution to the project. In the policy paper, students will explore the news on a policy area of their choice (education, welfare, national security, crime, etc.) in Russia over the last 5 years. Students will write a 4-5 page paper discussing the key challenges in this policy area over the period, the key actors interested in it, and the extent to which policies (and any reforms made) are addressing the challenges identified.

**Policy Paper:** Of the course of the semester, students will explore the news on a policy area of their choice (education, welfare, national security, crime, etc.) in Russia over the last 5 years. Students will write a 4-5 page paper discussing the key challenges in this policy

area over the period, the key actors interested in it, and the extent to which policies (and any reforms made) are addressing the challenges identified.

**Final Exam:** The final exam will be administered in a traditional, essay format. The questions are designed to assess students' understanding of the lectures and readings, as well as their ability to critically evaluate competing explanations within them. Students will be evaluated both for the depth of their substantive understanding and the quality of their arguments.

**Participation:** Classes will be conducted in a hybrid lecture/discussion format, with time set aside at the end of each sequence of lectures to discuss the readings and students' responses. As such, the grade for participation will reflect both attendance *and* the quality of answers and contribution to discussions. Students are granted one unexcused absence in each module. Students who expect to be absent during class for a legitimate reason should contact the seminar instructor prior to class to make arrangements and will be accommodated according to university policies. Only absences due to medical or family issues (with appropriate documentation) will be accommodated after the fact.

During class, students will generally be expected to contribute to discussions both proactively (by providing commentary or questions), as well as answering questions posed by me. Consequently, students are expected to do assigned readings for each topic and come prepared to discuss them and ask questions in class. More specifically, students should be able to briefly summarize the key arguments for readings, briefly identify how these arguments are supported by the authors, and provide their own opinions on the strength and weaknesses of these papers. Students should also come to class with questions on unclear terms, concepts, or events from the readings. This is important, since as a rule, if something is confusing for one member of the class, many other students will also find it confusing. Asking questions is therefore critical for a successful class.

Please note that students with difficulties in public speaking may contact me separately for an alternative to the in-class speaking portion of the participation grade. These cases will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

## Special Needs

Students with special needs of any type should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange for necessary accommodations. These will be handled on a case-by-case basis according to university policy.

## Academic Integrity

All work for this course is expected to be students' own and cheating on exams or the use of other's work (words or ideas) without acknowledgment (plagiarism) will not be tolerated.

Cases of either will be handled according to university policy and, where appropriate, referred to the relevant university authorities. When in doubt about whether conduct will violate university policy, please do not hesitate to ask me first.

Please be aware that it is often hard to tell the difference between sloppy punctuation or citation practices and intentional plagiarism. It is the responsibility of every student to be aware of proper citation procedures. For students with little experience writing course papers, or those that want to brush up on academic integrity, I would recommend the following resources:

- Roig, M. Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing. Available at: [http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/roig\\_st\\_johns/index.html](http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/roig_st_johns/index.html).
- Stolley, K., A. Brizee, and J. Paiz. "Avoiding Plagiarism". Available at: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>

Again, I am more than happy to answer any and all questions on topics related to academic integrity. Instructions on preferred citation format, etc. will be provided during our discussion of research paper design.

## Course Lecture Plan and Reading List

All course materials will be available at [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/b9e7si43v7ckhy4/AABZcUtmBdW1KONkGm\\_DWy9ua?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/b9e7si43v7ckhy4/AABZcUtmBdW1KONkGm_DWy9ua?dl=0), including the most up-to-date version of the course syllabus.

### The Study of Policymaking

1. Course Introduction and Policymaking Paradigms
  - Required Readings
    - None
2. Russia's Governmental Structure
  - Required Readings
    - Gill, G. and J. Young (2012). *Routledge Handbook of Russian Politics and Society*. New York: Routledge Ch.s 7, 8, 12 – 15.

### The Russian Policymaking Context: History and Stakeholders

3. The Soviet Collapse and the Problems of Reform
  - Required Readings

- Kotkin, S. (2003). *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse 1970-2000..* Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch. 1 and 2
- Aslund, A. (2007). *Russia's Capitalist Revolution: Why Market Reform Succeeded and Democracy Failed.* New York: Columbia University Press. Ch. 3
- Offe, C. (1991). Capitalism by Democratic Design? Democratic Theory Facing the Triple Transition in East Central Europe. *Social Research* 58: 865 – 92.
- Further Reading
  - Roland, G. (2000). *Transitions and Economics.* Cambridge: MIT Press. Ch. 1
  - Dimitrov, M., ed. (2013). *Why Communism Did not Collapse: Understanding Authoritarian Regime Resilience in Asia and Europe.* Ch. 1
  - Adam Przeworski (1991). *Democracy and the Market.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 4
  - Fischer, S. and A. Gelb (1991). The Process of Socialist Economic Transformation. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5: 91 - 105.

#### 4. Yeltsin and the Oligarchs

- Required Readings
  - Guriev, S. and A. Rachinsky (2005). The Role of Oligarchs in Russian Capitalism. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19: 131 – 150.
  - Volkov, V. (1999). Violent Entrepreneurship in Post-Communist Russia. *Europe-Asia Studies* 51: 741 – 754.
  - Hendly, K., B. Ickes, P. Murrell, and R. Ryterman (1997). Observations on the Use of Law by Russian Enterprises. *Post-Soviet Affairs* 13 (1): 19 – 41.
  - Feifer, G. (2000). Russia's Real Rulers. *World Policy Journal* 17 (3): 79 – 90.
- Further Readings
  - Hellman, J. (1998). “Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Postcommunist Transitions.” *World Politics* 50: 203 – 234.
  - Shleifer, A. (1997). Government in Transition. *European Economic Review* 41: 385 – 410.
  - Earle, J. and S. Gehlbach (2015). The Productivity Consequences of Political Turnover: Firm-Level Evidence from Ukraine's Orange Revolution. *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (3): 708 – 723.
  - Goldman, M. (2004). Putin and the Oligarchs. *Foreign Affairs*, 1 October 2004.
  - Rutland, P. and N. Kogan (2001). ”The Russian Mafia: Between Hype and Reality”, in Brown, A. ed. *Contemporary Russian politics: a reader.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## 5. Putin, the State, and the Siloviki

- Required Reading

- Treisman, D. ed. (2018). *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin's Russia*. Brookings Institute Press. Ch. 1, 2, 4.
- Goldman, M. (2008). *Petrostate: Putin, Power and the New Russia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. PP. 93 - 123.

- Further Reading

- Reuter, O. J. and G. Robertson (2015). Legislatures, Cooptation, and Social Protest in Contemporary Authoritarian Regimes. *Journal of Politics* 77 (1): 235 – 248.
- Gill, G. and J. Young, eds. (2012). *Routledge Handbook of Russian Politics and Society*. New York: Routledge. Ch. 18.
- Treisman, D. ed. (2018). *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin's Russia*. Brookings Institute Press. Ch. 6.
- Treisman, D. (2008). Putin's Silovarchs. *Orbis* 51 (1): 141 - 153.
- Taylor, B. (2017). The Russian Siloviki and Political Change. *Daedalus* 146 (2): 53 – 63.
- Bremmer, I. and S. Charap (2007). The Siloviki in Putin's Russia: Who They Are and What They Want. *The Washington Quarterly* Winter 2006-07.

## 6. The Russian Public's Opinions

- Required Reading

- Treisman, D. ed. (2018). *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin's Russia*. Brookings Institute Press. Ch. 8.
- Frye, T., S. Gehlbach, K. Marquardt, and O. J. Reuter (2017). Is Putin Really Popular? *Post-Soviet Affairs* 33 (1): 1 - 15.
- Beazer, Q. and O.J. Reuter (2019). Who Is to Blame? Political Centralization and Electoral Punishment under Authoritarianism. *Journal of Politics* 81 (2).

- Further Reading

- Robertson, G. (2011). *The politics of protest in hybrid regimes: Managing dissent in post-communist Russia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Frye et al. (2022). "Is Putin's Popularity (Still) Real? A Cautionary Note on Using List Experiments to Measure Popularity in Authoritarian Regimes". Ponars Policy Memo 773. Available at: <https://www.ponarseurasia.org/is-putins-popularity-still-real-a-cautionary-note-on-using-list-experiments-to-measure-popularity-in-authoritarian-regimes/>
- Person, R. (2014). Potholes, pensions, and public opinion: the politics of blame in Putin's power vertical. *Post-Soviet Affairs* 31 (5): 420 – 477.
- Shcherbak, Andrey (2022). Russia's "Conservative Turn" after 2012: Evidence from the European Social Survey. *East European Politics* Forthcoming.

- Treisman, D. (2011). Presidential Popularity in a Hybrid Regime: Russia under Yeltsin and Putin.
- American Journal of Political Science 55 (3): 590 - 609.

## 7. The Role of Parties and Elections

- Required Reading

- Stephen White. 2011. “Elections: Russian Style.” *Europe-Asia Studies*. 63(4).
- Reuter, O. J. (2017). *The Origins of Dominant Parties: Building Authoritarian Institutions in Post-Soviet Russia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch.s 5 and 8.
- Beazer, Q. and O. J. Reuter (2020). Do Authoritarian Elections Help the Poor? Evidence from Russian Cities. *Journal of Politics* Forthcoming.

- Further Reading

- Frye, T., O. J. Reuter, and D. Szakonyi (2014). Political Machines at Work: Voter Mobilization and Electoral Subversion in the Workplace. *World Politics* 66 (2): 195 - 228.
- Frye, T., Reuter, O. J., and Szakonyi, D. (2019). Vote brokers, clientelist appeals, and voter turnout: Evidence from Russia and Venezuela. *World Politics* 71 (4): 710 – 746.
- Greene, S. (2014). *Moscow in Movement : Power and Opposition in Putin’s Russia*. Stanford University Press.
- Harvey, C. (2016). Changes in the menu of manipulation: Electoral fraud, ballot stuffing, and voter pressure in the 2011 Russian election. *Electoral Studies* 41: 105 - 117.
- Smyth. R. (2020). *Elections, Protest, and Authoritarian Regime Stability Russia 2008–2020*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## Simulation Interlude

8. Simulation Exercise Sessions

9. Simulation Exercise Sessions

## Russian Policy Case Studies

10. The Post-Communist Welfare State

- Required Reading

- Cook, L. (2007). *Postcommunist Welfare States: Reform Politics in Russia and Eastern Europe*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. pp. 9-22, Ch.’s 3 – 4.

- Further Reading



- Wilson Sokhey, S. (2017). *The Political Economy of Pension Policy Reversal in Post-Communist Countries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## 11. Property Rights, Investment, and the Business Environment

- Required Reading

- Frye, Timothy. 2010. *Building States and Markets After Communism: The Perils of Polarized Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 7
- Frye, T. (2017). *Property Rights and Property Wrongs: How Power, Institutions, and Norms Shape Economic Conflict in Russia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 2
- Szakonyi, D. (2018). *Governing Business: The State and Business in Russia. FPRI Research Paper*. Available at: <https://www.fpri.org/article/2018/01/governing-business-state-business-russia/>
- Gans-Morse, J. (2017). Demand for Law and the Security of Property Rights: The Case of Post-Soviet Russia. *American Political Science Review* 111 (2): 338 - 359.

- Further Reading

- Treisman, D. (2016). “Russia’s Billionaires.” *American Economic Review* 106 (5): 236 – 241.
- Denisova, I., M. Eller, T. Frye, and E. Zhuravskaya. (2012). Everyone hates privatization, but why? Survey evidence from 28 post-communist countries. *Journal of Comparative Economics* 40: 44 – 61.
- Appel, H. (2004). *A New Capitalist Order: Privatization and Ideology in Russia and Eastern Europe*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Markus, S. (2015). *Property, Predation, and Protection: Piranha Capitalism in Russia and Ukraine*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

## 12. Russian Foreign Policy

- Required Reading

- Langdon, K. and V. Tismaneanu (2020). “Russian Foreign Policy: Freedom for Whom, to Do What?”, in *Putin’s Totalitarian Democracy: Ideology, Myth, and Violence in the Twenty-First Century*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 189-224.
- Treisman, D. (2016). Why Putin Took Crimea: The Gambler in the Kremlin. *Foreign Affairs* May/June 2016.
- Chmell, K. and I. Marques II (2022). Social Desirability and Russian Support for the Ukrainian War. *Mimeo*.
- Frye, T. (2018). Economic Sanctions and Public Opinion: Survey Experiments from Russia. *Comparative Political Studies* 52 (7), pp. 967-994.

- Further Reading

- Frye, T. (2021). *Weak Strongman: The Limits of Power in Putin's Russia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Ch. 9
- Popova, M. (2014). Why the Orange Revolution Was Short and Peaceful and Euromaidan Long and Violent. *Problems of Post-Communism* 61 (6): 64 - 70.
- Barbashin, A. and H. Thoburn (2015). “Putin’s Philosopher: Ivan Ilyin and the Ideology of Moscow’s Rule. *Foreign Affairs* September 2015.
- Stoner, K. (2021). *Russia Resurrected: Its Power and Purpose in a New Global Order*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, pp. 235-267.

## Russia in Comparison

### 13. Autocracy and Policymaking

- Required Readings

- Truex, R. (2017). Consultative Authoritarianism and Its Limits. *Comparative Political Studies* 50 (3): 329 – 361.
- Gehlbach, S. and P. Keefer (2011). Investment Without Democracy: Ruling Party Institutionalization and Credible Commitment in Autocracies. *Journal of Comparative Economics* 39 (2): 123 – 139.
- Malesky, E. and P. Schuler (2010). Nodding or Needling: Analyzing Delegate Responsiveness in an Authoritarian Parliament. *American Political Science Review* 104 (3): 482 – 502.

- Further Reading

- Reuter, O.J. and G. Robertson (2012) Subnational Appointments in Authoritarian Regimes: Evidence from Russian Gubernatorial Appointments. *Journal of Politics* 74 (4).
- Gueorguiev, D., and E. Malesky (2019). Consultation and selective censorship in China. *The Journal of Politics* 81 (4): 1539 - 1545.
- Stromseth, J. R., Malesky, E. J., and Gueorguiev, D. D. (2017). *China's governance puzzle: Enabling transparency and participation in a single-party state*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Svoboda, M. (2012). *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 6.