Regime Changes in Post-Soviet Eurasia

Spring 2012

Professor Vladimir Gel’man (gelman@eu.spb.ru)

Classes: Tuesdays, 10am – 1.10 pm
Office hours: Tuesdays, 4-5 pm or by appointment

Essays:

Mid-term (1000-words book review) by March 30
Final (4000-words substantive text) by May 25

The course is focused on the emergence and development of political systems of post-Soviet countries within the context of regime changes and state-building. Starting with the Soviet system and collapse of the Soviet Union as a point of departure, the course traces making and unmaking of major political institutions in these newly-established states by examining the impact of various legacies of the past and the role of domestic and international political and economic actors. Special attention is devoted to patterns of political continuity and changes during the wave of so-called “color revolutions” and their aftermath.

Theme 1. Key concepts of Post-Communist political transformations (lecture Jan.31, seminar Feb.7)

Studies of Russian and Eurasian politics in East and West. Approaches and theories of regime change and their applications to Russian and Eurasian politics in a comparative perspective. Models of post-Communist political transformations.


Theme 3. Dilemmas of transition: political and economic reforms, state- and nation-building (lecture Feb.14, seminar Feb.21)

Russia: clash between President and parliament, its causes and consequences. Political conflicts in post-Soviet countries: their resolution and non-resolution. Constitution-making in post-Soviet states: constitutionalism and political practice.

Theme 4. The strong executive: presidents and governments in post-Soviet world (lecture Feb.21, seminar Feb.28)

Theme 5. The weak legislature: parliamentary politics in post-Soviet Eurasia (lecture Feb.28, seminar March 6)

Institutional frameworks and political performance of legislatures in post-Soviet Eurasia. The evolution of the State Duma in Russia: law-making and/or political representation? Legislatures strikes back: institutional changes and their political consequences. “No site for discussions”: do parliaments matter in post-Soviet politics?

Theme 6. The unrule of law: legal and judicial politics in post-Soviet Eurasia (lecture March 6, seminar March 13)


Theme 7. Electoral politics in post-Soviet Eurasia (lecture March 13, seminar March 20)

The background of post-Soviet electoral reforms. Key elements of electoral system: electoral governance and electoral formula. The politics of electoral authoritarianism in Russia and beyond: institutional changes and their political consequences. Electoral fraud: business as usual?

Theme 8. Political culture, mass participation and voting behavior in post-Soviet Eurasia (lecture March 20, seminar March 27)


Theme 9. Post-Soviet political parties (lecture March 27, seminar April 3)

The legacies of Soviet one-party state. The emergence of political movements during perestroika period and the formation of post-Soviet political parties. The dynamics of party systems: impacts of institutions and electoral behavior. Parties in post-Soviet parliaments and outside. “Parties of power”, their satellites, and others.

Theme 10. Interest groups in post-Soviet politics (lecture April 3, seminar April 10)


Theme 11. The transformation of post-Soviet political elites (lecture April 10, seminar April 17)

Concepts of political elites of Soviet period. The shift of vertical mobility of political elites in end 1980s – early 1990s. New and old elite groups and transformation of elites in post-Soviet period. From plan to clan in
post-Soviet elites: political capitalism, generation changes, and clientelist models. In search of elite unity: “parties of power”, leadership succession, and implicit competition of elites.

**Theme 12. Federalism, regionalism and local government: sub-national authoritarianism, rent-seeking and “power vertical” (lecture April 17, seminar April 24)**


**Theme 13. The politics of post-Soviet changes: “color revolutions” and their political consequences (lecture April 24, seminar May 3 – tbc)**


The final seminar will be focused on analysis of political dynamics and prospects of political development in post-Soviet Eurasia in a comparative perspective.
Readings

Core books (EUSP library reserve collection)

S.White et al. (eds.) Developments in Russian Politics 7 (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Theme 1.


Themes 2-3.


Themes 4-5.


Theme 6.

Theme 7.
M. S. Fish, Democracy derailed in Russia, pp. 193-246.
M. Myagkov et al., Fraud or Fairytales: Russia and Ukraine’s Electoral Experience, Post-Soviet Affairs, 2005, vol. 21, N2.

Themes 8-9.
V. Gel’man. From Feckless Pluralism to Dominant Power Politics: Transformation of Russia’s Party System. Democratization, 2006, vol.13, N4

Theme 10.

Theme 11.  
A. Steen, V. Gel’man (eds.). Elites and Democratic Development in Russia (Routledge, 2003), chapters 2, 3.  

Theme 12.  
V. Gel’man, Leviathan’s Return? Recentralization Policy in Contemporary Russia, C. Ross, A. Campbell (eds.). Federalism and Local Politics in Russia (Routledge, 2008).  
V. Gel’man. The Dynamics of Sub-National Authoritarianism: Russia in Comparative Perspective. APSA Paper, Toronto, 2009.  
K. Stoner-Weiss, Resisting the State: Reform and Retrenchment in Post-Soviet Russia (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 111-159  

Theme 13.  

Theme 14.  
M. S. Fish, Democracy Derailed in Russia, chapter 8.  