

Contemporary Russian and East European Politics

Second year module

Lecturer: [Dr David White \(/schools/government-society/departments/political-science-international-studies/staff/profiles/white-david.aspx\)](https://schools/government-society/departments/political-science-international-studies/staff/profiles/white-david.aspx)

The module focuses on political developments in Russia and Ukraine - as well as a more general treatment of the former Soviet Union as a whole - from the collapse of the USSR to the present day. Its theoretical frameworks are the concepts of nation building, state building, and authoritarianism and democratisation.

Contemporary Russian and East European Politics provides the empirical knowledge to deal with the conceptual questions. Furthermore, it provides a unique opportunity to investigate the collapse of a superpower and its aftermath. How is it that a state which, along with the USA, dominated global affairs for the latter half of the twentieth century, could so swiftly disappear? Of particular interest to political scientists, and to students of international relations, is the extent to which the legacy of the Soviet system continues to exert an influence through behavioural and institutional continuity in the Soviet successor states. Have today's Russia, and Ukraine thrown off their past and joined the West? Or do their political culture and geopolitical specifics, not to mention the institutional continuity of the Cold War era East and West, preclude such a possibility?

By the end of the course, students will be familiar with such concepts as democratic transition, institutional choice, electoral politics, and the role of political opposition, state- and nation-building and hybrid authoritarian regimes. Students will also have a detailed knowledge of the specifics of the Russian and Ukrainian polities within the diversity of the post-Soviet political experience.

Learning outcomes

Student will be able:

- To understand the key features of the USSR as a political system and the role of nationalist movements in the disintegration of the USSR.
- To apply and develop broad concepts of 'transformation' in the Russian and Ukrainian cases.
- To identify key political developments facing Russia and Ukraine since the break-up of the USSR.
- To identify major political forces in Russia and Ukraine and to identify their distinctive features.
- To conceptualise Europe from an eastern European perspective, and understand the dynamics of regional integration within the former Soviet Union.
- To develop key transferable skills of written and oral communication and group working and the ability to think critically about individuals, processes, events, ideas and institutions.

Assessment

- Term One: 1 essay x 2,000 word assessed work (50%)
- Term Three: 2 hour examination (50%)