National Research University Higher School of Economics

Department of Political Science

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**RUSSIAN SPACE AND RUSSIAN STATE**

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Brief Description

The subject matter of the course is Russian space. The course deals with its structure, topology, history, modes of appropriation and governance. It problematizes the idea of space as a key to understanding politics and governance of Russia, as well as national economy, society and culture.

The course begins with exploring the phenomenology of Russian space: its structure, topology and specific features, including notions of “enormity”. It then proceeds to explore Russian space in its relation to state power. It examines the ways in which geography shaped Russian history and politics. The enormous space has largely determined the format of Russian statehood; indeed, governance in Russia is largely about the relation between space and the state. The space-state relationship is reified on various levels: economy, politics and administration, security and social mobility, nationalism and imperialism, culture and language, habits and ways. The course looks into each of these levels, discovering specific ways of interaction between the space and the state.

Methodology

The principal methodology is critical political science. It is understood as an overarching discipline, looking for “political” in various aspects of state-space relations. Indeed, the course is an interdisciplinary exercise, drawing on theories of political geography, political economy, political science and international relations, as well as methods of cultural anthropology, semiotics and psychoanalysis.

The course is structured around lectures and seminars, with a large impact on independent work and class discussion. Each student is supposed to make a presentation in class and to write an essay.

Goals of the Course

* to introduce the idea of space as a key variable in politics and governance;
* to define main characteristics, topology and structure of the Russian space;
* to formulate the opposition between space and the state as a key problem of the Russian history, and of modern politics as such;
* to explore the parameters of modernity in Russian and Soviet history, in particular Russia’s modern statehood and modern territoriality;
* the examine the impact of space on Russia’s traditional economic model;
* to examine the impact of space on governance, administration and bureaucracy in Russia;
* to examine the impact of space on concepts and rituals of security in Russia;
* to explore the concept of Eurasia, and the practices of imperialism and governance in the wider Eurasian space;
* to explore the semiotics of Russian space, and ways of symbolic governance;
* to examine the impact of space on culture and social life, and on discourses of Russian identity;
* to learn and find codes and representations of Russian space in Russian art, film and architecture.

Target audience

The course is targeted at seniors and graduate students with some background in Russian history and politics. However, this is not a specifically area-studies course; the methodology of studying spatial governance is universal, and can be applied to many nations. In this sense, the course may be interesting to Russian students from various faculties of the HSE (applied political science, world economy and world politics, sociology, state and municipal governance, cultural studies), and especially to foreign students who would like to gain an original insight and a better understanding of Russian history, politics, society and art.

Requirements

Apart from the working knowledge of English language (including the ability to write and present in English), the course does not have specific requirements, although basic knowledge of geography of Eurasia, of Russian and Soviet history, and of contemporary Russian politics, is a plus.

The course is structured around lectures and seminars, with a large impact on independent work and class discussion. **Attendance is required**, along with **active participation in class discussion** which also contributes to the overall grade of a student. Each student is supposed **to make a presentation in class** leading to the Q&A in which he/she will defend his/her theses, and **to write an essay** (at least 3500 words).

An essential part of the course is the screening of contemporary Russian films dealing with the problem of space, and a walk through Moscow’s architectural landmarks representing different codes of spatial governance.

Grading

The grade consists of three elements:

* Class attendance and active participation 30%
* Presentation in class 30%
* Final examination/Essay 40%

The resultant grade amounts to 4,5 ECTS credits.

Readings

Based on an original methodology developed by Sergei Medvedev, the bulk of the readings are texts by this author, each exploring a different aspect of state-space relationship. Likewise, there are texts by contemporary Russian authors that present innovative theories of the Russian economy, politics and society: the “administrative market” by Vitaly Naishul and Simon Kordonsky, the theory of regionalization by Vladimir Kagansky, the theory of *khozyaistvo* by Vladimir Chervyakov, the theory of “Culture Two” by Vladimir Paperny, the idea of Russia as the space of the subconscious by Boris Groys. All texts are in English, and reading should be completed before class, in order to facilitate discussion.

Additional readings are available in Russian.

Course overview

Week 1. INTRODUCTION. The Problem of Russian Space: Its Topology and Structure

PART I. LEVELS OF SPACE GOVERNANCE

Week 2. Economic Governance: The Paradoxes of *Khozyaistvo* and the Administrative Market

Week 3. Territorial Governance: The Administrative-Territorial Division

Week 4. The Political Culture of Russian Space: Mobilization and Modernization

PART II. MODERNITY AT LARGE

Week 5. The Origins of Russian Modernity: The National-Security State

Week 6. The Soviet Modernity: The USSR as the Enlightenment Project

PART III. THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF SPACE

Week 7. The Social Dimension of Space: Culture One and Culture Two

Week 8. Symbolic Governance in Russian Space: The USSR as a Text

Week 9. Russia as the Space of the Subconscious

Week 10. CONCLUSION. The Future of Russian Space: Between Order and Chaos

Executive Summary

The problem of Russia’s territorial enormity traditionally belongs to the field of historical, literary and cultural studies; but the field of political science seems to neglect the problem of Russian space. In an attempt to fill this gap, this course addresses the phenomenon of Russian space in its relation to the state authority, political and economic governance, and social life.

Space is generally considered to be a major Russian asset, and a strategic resource, especially in the traditional Modern, Westphalian and geopolitical perspective. At the same time, it can also be seen as a liability. A vast borderless space has prevented Russia from developing civil institutions, civic society and the rule of law (*Rechtsstaat*) – indeed, from the entire concept of civility, from *civitas* as a European way of development by urbanization. Perpetual movement, the availability of new lands and resources took away the need to settle down and cultivate a land plot.

Russia’s territory is not just quantitatively vast, it’s qualitatively infinite, amorphous and contradictory. **WEEK 1** is the **Introduction** to the course; it problematizes the Modern idea of space and outlines the topology and structure of the space of Russia. In particular, it explores such problematic properties of the Russian space as:

1. Low population density, difficulties in implementing reciprocal action, and the costs of overcoming huge distances.

2. Savage nature. Russia is located in the north-eastern corner of the Eurasian landmass. Three quarters of its territory lies in the tundra or taiga, always in the grip of the permafrost. Barely a fifth of the territory is suitable for ploughing, and even here, a half of this area lies in the so-called zone of “risky agriculture”. Nearly all of the surrounding seas freeze over and most of the frontiers are unpopulated: these run across mountains or through dense forests.

3. Lack of borders. Amorphous Russian space tends to spread, since there are no natural limits and barriers, and no single mother-region (Eurasia can hardly be regarded as a single region). At the same time, while natural confines were lacking, the space was bound together by external isolation and/or internal repression; one can speak of an integration by coercion.

4. Marginality: Russian space is a conglomeration of peripheries. It includes peripheries of the European culture, Mediterranean and Near Eastern Christian culture, Near and Middle Eastern Islamic culture, Buddhist-Mongolian culture, Chinese culture, etc. Same refers to ethnic and language groups represented in the Russian space and having their historical centers outside it.

5. Contrasts in population distribution. Three-quarters of the population are concentrated in the European part of the country which itself comprises only one quarter of the total territory. The biggest proportion of the abundant resources for which Russia is known is situated far from the main industrial centers, and mainly in the far north. Centers and nuclei of the Russian space are essentially eccentric, almost on the frontier; the country looks like a hollow shell, it does not have a “middle”.

6. The “one-dimensional factor”. The developed part of the country is squeezed down towards the southern frontier and stretches west to east in a 10,000-km-long strip. Beyond the Urals, it barely has any thickness, and is situated within reach of the Transsiberian Railway.

7. Geographical contradictions. Rigid monocentric culture (in the USSR, over 60 percent of all economic links were going via Moscow) coexists with traditional autonomous, distant regions. Also, there is a disproportion in the level and nature of economic development: from pre- to post-industrial.

8. The ossification of administrative/territorial divisions, i.e. the cramming together of all forms of social life within the confines of *oblasts* and republics of the USSR, and the transformation of regional borders into “Chinese walls”.

9. A culture lacking a spatial sense. There is a weakness in Russian culture of a distinct reaction to space, i.e. relatively vague sense of distance, border and places. In part, this is linked to the particularities of natural conditions – distances are too great and natural boundaries are not delineated. This characteristic reconciles Russians to the centralized government, and they have become accustomed to define their geographical surroundings according to administrative/territorial divisions, rather than by historical/cultural regions, as do the majority of the world’s nations.

All of these factors have helped the Russians to widen the area of their settlement but have at the same time prevented them from mastering it. In fact, this is the basic dilemma faced by any expanding civilization: the more you expand, the less you control. A heterogeneous, diversified space has been, and remains, a major challenge for the authorities. It is not just center against periphery; it is order against anarchy, it is cosmos against chaos, it is structure against entropy.

Indeed, the entire Russian history is about the standoff, interplay and compromise between the power and the space, between the state and the territory. In its present shape, the interplay between authority and territory goes back to mid-16th century, the reign of Ivan IV, and his conquer of the Tartar capital of Kazan. It was at this historical point that *Rus*’ extended beyond its original confines, began to expand eastwards beyond River Volga and the Urals, and became *Russia*. It was at this period that the Moscow Prince became the Tsar, the Metropolitan of Moscow became the Patriarch, and that the country actually started turning into an empire (although the term “Russian Empire” was codified almost two centuries later, under Peter the Great). Finally, it was at this point that an uneasy relationship between the state authority and a vast, heterogeneous and ungovernable space emerged as a key contradiction of the Russian history and politics.

Statecraft in Russia can thus be interpreted as authority’s permanent quest for compromise with territory, with inexplicable, desirable and unattainable Russia. Any political action has a spatial meaning. The intercourse between authority and territory takes place simultaneously at several levels, each of which is studied in **PART I** of the course, titled **GOVERNANCE** **AND ADMINISTRATION**.

**WEEK 2** explores the **economic level of governance**, at which the authority, obliged by the long borders to defend, numerous neighbors to combat (until the 18th century, Russia had had to wage two wars annually on the average), and a vast territory to develop and sustain, had to withdraw a large portion of product from the turnover for these needs, i.e. for the purpose of controlling the space. Driven by the empire’s increasing military power, the state acted as a main customer of agricultural and industrial output. It was through the Treasury (*Kazna*) acting as a main buyer that the state, in fact, directly controlled production without any necessity whatsoever of worrying about the circulation sphere. The national economic model has thus put forward the figure of the producer to the detriment of the merchant, and relations of distribution (basically distribution in kind) to the detriment of exchange. Over the centuries, the Russian state has therefore emerged as a key economic agent, sort of a manager of the nation’s capital, and since 1917, also the legal proprietor of all this capital (on behalf of the “people”).

Later in the week, the course goes on to explore the specific form of power-space relationship, the Soviet **“administrative market”**. The dual alienating/distributing relationship between the Center and the periphery, coupled with the hierarchical subordination of territories, resulted in a situation when any two adjoining levels of the administrative and territorial hierarchy were in a state of permanent bargaining. It was this bargaining that essentially pertained to the proportions between the industrial, alimentary and raw material goods alienated from a lower level and distributed by a higher one that constituted the administrative market, another form of coexistence between authority and territory. The course studies the emergence, functioning, and the current transformation of the “administrative market” in the post-perestroika Russian society.

**WEEK 3** studies the **territorial level of governance**, at which the power tries to master space by setting up a system of multi-functional institutional districts: *Gubernias* in Russia and *Oblasts* in the USSR. The case of the Soviet “administrative-territorial division” (ATD) is given particular attention in the course. ATD was created to control the Soviet space with all its “contents”, to organize the operation of state institutions as well as people’s everyday life. The whole spectrum of state activities (law enforcement, military draft, ideology, education, health care, housing, day-to-day management of local industry and agriculture, etc.) were carried out entirely on the regional level, and almost never went beyond it. All state functions were concentrated in the regions, which became focal points, vital centers, and, as a matter of fact, principal institutions of the state.

However, this logic of administrative subordination contradicted with the natural logic of territorial relations; the former suppressed the latter. Instead of an organic regional system, which would respect all geographical, historical, ethnic, demographic differences and in which local communities could be interacting in a natural manner, it set up an artificial system of ATD in which any territorial or ethnic differences and natural interaction of localities were disregarded, and regions simply became functional units, agents of the universal state. Instead of promoting unity by nature, it imposed unity by order that turned out to be superficial and non-resistant to future transformations of the Soviet system.

Concluding the governance bloc, **WEEK 4** examines **Russian political culture**, as it has been shaped by space. Climate and geopolitics have made the imperative of survival absolutely paramount for the inhabitants of the East European forest, putting it above freedom and self-expression. Since the early Muscovite period, geography has been shaping Russian polity, in which individual subjectivity and sovereignty has been delegated above, to the community, and the leader. Added to the indigenous element, the patrimonial political culture, were three other elements coming from the open Eurasian space:

* the ideological element coming from the Byzantine “symphony” between the Church and the State;
* the despotic element, coming from the Tatars, mobilizing the population for strategic tasks;
* the bureaucratic element, borrowed from Germany, that implies the regular army and a well-ordered police state.

Discussion of Russia’s political culture leads into **PART II** of the course, **MODERNITY AT LARGE**, which studies how strategic spatial requirements, a territorial imperative of the state, have defined Russian and Soviet modernity. In studying Russian foreign policy, a special focus is made on territorial expansion, Russian imperialism and post-imperialism.

**WEEK 5** is devoted to exploring the **origins of Russian modernity**. Historically, the large authoritarian state had emerged as a strategic response to the challenge of space. Ever since the Moscow principality began its spatial expansion in the 16th century, the Russian state had to take on an increasingly strategic role – building roads and outposts, extending and defending borders, fighting mounted horsemen of the Great Steppe in the East and opposing regular armies of the West. By virtue of geography and nature, the state was promoted to the central role in the Russian history, suppressing the market economy, political and civil society, and stressing strategic, territorial and mobilization priorities. This phenomenon has been called the “national-security state”, pursuing total control, territorial expansion and messianic goals in different parts of the world (from the “Third Rome” to the Third International). This was the essence of what the historian Marshall Poe called the “Russian moment in world history”, a concept to be studied at this point of the course.

**WEEK 6**, **“The Soviet Modernity”**, goes on to illustrate how, following the Russian Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries, the logic of the “national-security state” had culminated in the Soviet Union, a quintessential product of the 20th century. The USSR was the ultimate modern experiment in history: secular, urban, rationally planned, militarized, and industrial. The entire country was catering to its imperial ambition – the world proletarian revolution in the 1920s and 30s, and the global competition with the West during the Cold War. However, by the 1970s and 80s, the Soviet state and its foreign policy had proven to be unsustainable. The economy was distorted in favor of heavy industry and military production, and growth stalled. The vast territory proved too costly to man and maintain. The cumbersome bureaucracy could not cope with the challenge of the information revolution, relegating the USSR to the technological periphery.

Finally, the Soviet global commitments, including arms race with the West, support of the vassal states and the world revolutionary movement, could no longer be sustained by the dwindling domestic resources, while the Soviet model had lost its attractiveness worldwide. The late Soviet Union became a textbook case of “imperial overstretch”, and entered a phase of historical decline.

The course goes on to explore the response of the country’s leaders in the past twenty years to this secular decline. They faced the challenge of transforming the obsolescent modern system and adapting Russia to new global rules of engagement in a post-industrial, postmodern world. Mikhail Gorbachev’s perestroika was essentially a project of socialist evolution of the country, without changing the fundamentals of the regime. When it failed with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Boris Yeltsin attempted to change Russia by means of an anti-communist revolution and “shock therapy”. However, largely due to the mismanagement of reform and the “stealing of the state” by powerful lobbies and oligarchs, his transformation project was stalled as well. Finally, Vladimir Putin’s early attempt at authoritarian modernization which brought back the state as a key economic and political player, effectively ending the chaos of the 1990s and the rule of the oligarchs, has, too, run into the ground. Rather than producing a developmental state, it ended up in a corrupt rentier state, a semi-authoritarian bureaucratic capitalism.

**PART III** of the course is devoted to the **SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF SPACE**, entertaining cultural, semiotic, and even psychoanalytical discourses in order to understand and conceptualize the everyday practices of life in/adaptation to Russian space. **WEEK 7** looks into specific **forms of coexistence of the Russian population with space, and government’s reaction to those**. Analyzing Russian history, the 19th-century Russian historians observed an inherent contradiction between the population’s desire to spread across the territory, and efforts of the authority to fix and settle people down. Moreover, according to Vasily Klyuchevsky, spread and stopovers are not just two trends, but rather *periods.* In this sense, Russian history can be interpreted as a sequence of twin cycles of spread, or spill-over (when space and chaos take the upper hand) and fixation, or “hardening” (government temporarily takes over).

Periods of spread (like the late 15th century; late 17th century, with its movement of schismatics into the north-west; the 1860s and 70s, following the abolition of serfdom; the 1920s; Khrushchev’s late 1950s and 60s, with millions going to the virgin lands of Kazakhstan, to the Komsomol construction sites, or joining in the subculture of mass tourism; or Gorbachevian late 1980s) can be interpreted as socio-spatial phenomena. Moving along becomes an act of free will, and often an act of protest. In this context, one can speak of a specific Russian “democracy in space”, like the American Frontier, which advanced democracy in the United States. In Russia, however, this spread of the population did not contribute to the democratic institutions: when people stopped (or were stopped), instead of forming local communities, they were turned into subjects of the State.

The State, for its part, sometimes tended to ride the wave of migration for the purpose of exploring and developing new lands, and even institutionalized it as a state service (see the institute of Cossackdom, used to protect southern and eastern borders of Russia from the Great Steppe, or Pyotr Stolypin’s policy of support to peasants moving to Siberia in the early 20th century); but more often than not, the Russian state tended to settle its subjects in controllable units, like landlords’ estates, or on controllable administrative (not historical or cultural!) territories, like *Gubernias* in Russia and *Oblasts* in the USSR.

The inclinations of spread and settlement can be further described as horizontal and vertical, centrifugal and centripetal, spill-over and crystallization, femininity and masculinity, heterarchy and hierarchy of the Russian space, Russian chaos and Russian cosmos. The course makes use of the dichotomy devised by Vladimir Paperny who called the culture accompanying the period of spread “Culture One”, and that corresponding to the period of settlement – “Culture Two”. Following these arguments, the course traces the interplay of Cultures One and Two during the last two decades – from perestroika until now. In a remarkable compression of history, Russia have undergone a full cycle of power-space relationship in twenty years: from revolution and spatial chaos of the late 1980s and early 1990s to the Thermidor and post-Soviet restoration of late 1990s and 2000s, with corresponding changes in domestic and foreign policies.

**WEEK 8** of the course is **about symbolic governance in Russian space**. At the semiotic level, the authority tries to master territory in symbolic form, by producing and circulating signs of power and control. Historically, the Russian Empire was a consequence and hostage to its geography: the boundless, insuperable and heterogeneous space lent itself not to practical (highly impractical, in fact) but rather to symbolic assimilation. Growth of Russia was not an act of economic, strategic or metaphysical necessity – it was a spatial and symbolic act. Signs like the “Russian Empire”, or the “Soviet Union” were simply words that had to be written down in the blank spaces on the map, and no one ever questioned whether they represented any feasible political, economic and ethnic reality at all. Russia has always been a playground for non-referential semiotics, symbolic exchange and simulation.

These principles have been elevated to a norm during the Soviet period. The new authority, unable to practically control the space in accordance with ideology, translated its revolutionary ambition into symbolic sphere, deploying a self-sufficient Soviet discourse. Everything external to this discourse was driven out of life. In retrospect, the Soviet power could have written on its banners the maxim of Jacques Derrida: “There exists nothing beyond text” – because everything actually *became* text. During this week, the USSR is studied as a space of total textuality, a purely semiotic form of relationship between authority and territory.

In post-Soviet period, especially in the 2000s, the authority expanded resources of symbolic exchange by introducing new designators (national unity, sovereignty, stability, etc.) that pretend to have national and organic character but are in fact as non-referential, as their Soviet internationalist predecessors. In other words, Russia continues to be managed by textual means.

The penultimate **WEEK 9**, **“Russia as the Space of the Subconscious**”, proceeds from the fact that many Russian philosophers, starting from Pyotr Chaadayev, have noted a certain irrationality and amorphousness of the national character. This description refers to the Russian soul, but also to Russian space: boundless, insuperable, lacking subjective creativity. In its own mind, Russia is often represented in figures of femininity and motherhood. Russia-the-endless-steppe, Russia-the-caring-Mother, Russia-the-loving-wife, Russia-the-big-family are all just various guises of the same unpronounced subconsciousness. These definitions are summarized in the Orthodox term *sobornost’*, literally meaning “conciliarity”, and implying a bunch of meanings, from communality to spirituality and irrationality; indeed, *sobornost’* is the Russian name for the subconscious.

However, while in mainstream Western discourse the words “unconscious” and “subconscious” sound ambiguous (i.e. irrational, out of control), in Russia figures of the subconscious are traditionally interpreted in a positive manner. Apart from the Orthodox *sobornost’*, other positive readings of the subconscious include *narodnost’* (nationality), the Bolsheviks’ *classovost’* (class consciousness) and *partiinost’* (adherence to the Party principles); Leo Tolstoy’s idealization of the “unconscious life” of the Russian peasant and Vladimir Soloviev’s Sofia; Lenin’s practical Nietzscheanism and Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of the carnival, in a way conceptualizing the irrationality of Stalin’s “Great Terror”, and finally, the anonymity of the Soviet political anecdote. In a sense, Russia is permanently describing and reformulating herself in terms of the subconscious by inventing various names for the communal, feminine, family-type belonging in an amorphous, endless, and speechless space.

The concluding **WEEK 10** looks into the **Future of Russian Space**. Building on the paradigm of Culture One and Culture Two, it asks the question of whether Russia is doomed to a vicious circle of change between destruction and construction, determined by cycles of spatial expansion and statist fixation. According to Yuri Lotman, the binary paradigm is typical of Russia. Binary structures are doomed to settle conflicts by way of catastrophes, their extreme components are pre-programmed for mutual destruction, for the demolition “to the basement”. Transition from the “old” to the “new” is perceived in the explosive terms of binarism.

In this sense, modernizations in Russia (Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, Lenin, Stalin, etc.) have almost always taken the form of a catastrophe; Andrei Fadin has called this phenomenon “modernization by a catastrophe”. The course will ask the question of whether a radical modernization is possible that would preserve the material culture of the past, like the Meiji modernization in Japan. In search for the answer, it will build the alternative scenarios for Russia and wider Eurasia, and will look into possible ways of adapting Russian space to the challenges of post-industrial, postmodern world.

Plan of Meetings

**WEEK 1. INTRODUCTION. The Problem of Russian Space: Its Topology and Structure**

Topics for discussion:

* Russian space as an asset. Russia-mythology and images of space. Space as the dominant of Russian modern history. Territory as a key marker of modernity. Westphalian territorial thinking: Space = resource = power.
* Russian space as burden. Problems of Russian space: Low population density, savage nature, marginality, amorphousness, lack of borders.
* Statecraft in Russia: A big state as a response to large space. Huge strategic requirements: spatial development (infrastructure), territorial control, territorial defense. Space vs. the State as the main opposition of the Russian history; takes place at various levels: politics, society, economy, culture, language.

Readings:

* Derluguian, Georgi and Immanuel Wallerstein. “Putting Russia in World-Systems Perspective”, in: Maria Lipman, Nikolai Petrov (eds). *Russia in 2020: Scenarios for the Future*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011, pp. 25-44. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGNXZJWUhwNUtUU00/edit)
* Trenin, Dmitri. “Chapter 1. The Spatial Dimension of Russian History”, in: Dmitri Trenin. *The End of Eurasia. Russia on the Border between Geopolitics and Globalization*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001, pp. 39-86. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGMGJjNTg5NDktYThlZC00Y2I0LTlhMDQtMzQ4MjhjMDY5OWUx/edit?hl=en_US)

**WEEK 2. Economic Governance: The Paradoxes of *Khozyaistvo* and the Administrative Market**

Topics for discussion:

* Traditional Russian economic model. Spatial/strategic: Long borders, militant neighbors, vulnerability of key centers. Mobilization of resources by the state: high taxation levels, unprecedented state expenditure on industrial production and capital. Concentration of land and human resources. State as a key economic agency: Role of Peter the Great.
* Russian political economy: *Khozyaistvo* instead of the economy, producer dependent on the state instead of an independent merchant, distribution instead of exchange.
* Economic functions of the state. Sectors of priority investment. Budgetary cycle in the USSR. USSR as a vertically integrated corporation: a single mechanism of resource allocation, a hierarchical organization. The administrative market: privatizing hierarchical positions and statuses.

Readings:

* Chervyakov, Vladimir. “The Russian National Economic Elite in the Political Arena”, in: Klaus Segbers and Stephan de Spiegeleire (eds). *Post-Soviet Puzzles: Mapping the Political Economy of the Former Soviet Union*, Vol. I, *Against the Background of the Former Soviet Union*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995, pp. 205-282.
* Etkind, Alexander. “Barrels of Fur: Natural Resources and the State in the Long History of Russia”, *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2011, pp. 164-171. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGZGRzSnFmS0FPUDg/edit)
* Kordonsky, Simon. “The Structure of Economic Space in Post-Perestroika Society and the Transformation of the Administrative Market”, in: Klaus Segbers and Stephan de Spiegeleire (eds). *Post-Soviet Puzzles: Mapping the Political Economy of the Former Soviet Union*. Vol. I, *Against the Background of the Former Soviet Union*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995, pp. 157-204.
* Shleifer, Andrei and Daniel Treisman. “A Normal Country: Russia After Communism”, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2005, pp. 151-174. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGUmlFRDlwczJMS1k/edit)

**WEEK 3. Territorial Governance: The Administrative-Territorial Division**

Topics for discussion:

* A system of multifunctional institutional districts (*Gubernias* in Russia, *Oblasts* in the USSR) to control space with all its contents. Organizing the operation of state institutions, and people’s daily lives, sanctioning ethnicity. *Oblasts* as key institutions of the state.
* Hyper-centralization within the regions. Regions as self-contained and self-sufficient units; seeds of disunity and regionalization.

Readings:

* Kagansky, Vladimir. “Russian Regions and Territories”, in: Klaus Segbers and Stephan de Spiegeleire (eds). *Post-Soviet Puzzles: Mapping the Political Economy of the Former Soviet Union*, Vol. II, *Emerging Geopolitical and Territorial Units: Theories, Methods and Case Studies*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995, pp. 49-56.
* Medvedev, Sergei. “Post-Soviet Developments: A Regional Interpretation. A Methodological Review”, in: Klaus Segbers and Stephan de Spiegeleire (eds). *Post-Soviet Puzzles: Mapping the Political Economy of the Former Soviet Union*, Vol. II, *Emerging Geopolitical and Territorial Units: Theories, Methods and Case Studies*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995, pp. 5-48. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGMTQ0M2YwZWYtODBkMi00YTQ3LTg2ZGItZjA0OWUzMGZhZTk3/edit?hl=en_US)

**WEEK 4. The Political Culture of Russian Space: Mobilization and Modernization**

Topics for discussion:

* Space and political culture. The role of climate, geography and geopolitics. Surviving in the East European forest: role of the state. The roots of patrimonialism and the imperative of survival.
* External elements: the ideological bloc (Byzantium), the despotic bloc (Tatars), the bureaucratic/policing bloc (West).

Readings:

* Keenan, Edward. “Muscovite Political Folkways”, *The Russian Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2, 1986, pр. 110-130. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGakpXUGtjT0tvX0E/edit)
* Malinova, Olga. “Russia and “The West” in the Twentieth Century: A Binary Model of Russian Culture and Transformations of the Discourse on Collective Identity”, in: Reinhard Krumm, Sergei Medvedev and Hans-Henning Schröder (eds). *Constructing Identities in Europe: German and Russian Perspectives*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012, pp. 63-79. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGZlJrY1g2UHI5T0E/edit)
* Poe, Marshall. *The Russian Moment in World History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 1-45.

**WEEK 5. The Origins of Russian Modernity: The National-Security State**

Topics for discussion:

* Defining Modernity: the philosophical, political and practical meanings. Political Modernity: the Westphalian State. Modernity and Statehood in Russia: borrowed or indigenous?
* Modernity and territoriality: filling the blank spaces. Russia’s “territorial imperative” and the “national-security state”.

Readings:

* Medvedev, Sergei. “Introduction” and “Part 1. Modernity at Large”, in: Sergei Medvedev. “Rethinking the National Interest. Putin’s Turn in Russian Foreign Policy”, *Marshall Center Paper*, No. 6, 2004, pp. 1-31. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGYWUxMWUwMDctZmM0Yy00OWE1LWFkMzktMjg3YzcxMzFkOTMx/edit?hl=en_US)
* Poe, Marshall. *The Russian Moment in World History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 46-104.

**WEEK 6. The Soviet Modernity: The USSR as the Enlightenment Project**

Topics for discussion:

* The USSR as the “modern Enlightenment”: secular, urban, rational, supranational and industrial project. The USSR as the high point of the European modernity. The Soviet civilization.
* Modes of production: Capitalism and Statism. Modes of development: Industrialism and Informationalism. The inability of Soviet statism to move to the information society.
* Structural problems of Soviet modernity: Extensive growth, technological retardation, territorial overstretch. The breakup of the USSR. Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin: Exit strategies from Soviet Modernity.

Readings:

* Castells, Manuel. “The Crisis of Industrial Statism and the Collapse of the Soviet Union”, in: Manuel Castells. *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. III, *End of Millennium*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, pp. 5-68. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGMWIyMzA4ZTAtMmNhNS00NTc0LTk0YWItNDkxOTU1ZmZkMTA2/edit)
* Trenin, Dmitri. “Chapter II. The Breakup of the USSR, A Break in Continuity”, in: Dmitri Trenin. *The End of Eurasia. Russia on the Border between Geopolitics and Globalization*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001, pp. 87-99. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGMGJjNTg5NDktYThlZC00Y2I0LTlhMDQtMzQ4MjhjMDY5OWUx/edit?hl=en_US)
* Fukuyama, Francis. “The Modernizing Imperative. The USSR as an Ordinary Country”, *The National Interest*, Vol. 20, Spring 1993, pp. 10-18. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGbldtcmxCR2FKYWM/edit)
* Kotkin, Stephen. “Afterword. Stalinism as a Civilization”, in: Stephen Kotkin. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, pp. 355-366. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGZTE3ZTRmZTctMTdiYS00OTMwLTlkZTQtM2ExZmExZTA4ODBh/edit?hl=en_US)

**WEEK 7. The Social Dimension of Space: Culture One and Culture Two**

Topics for discussion:

* Spread and settlement as different reactions to space by the population and by the authority.
* Theory of Culture One and Culture Two: Architectural representations of space and the state. Cultures of spread and settlement in the Russian history and politics. The 1990s as Culture One and the 2000s as Culture Two.

Readings:

* Paperny, Vladimir. *Architecture in the Age of Stalin:* *Culture Two*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 371 p.
* Medvedev, Sergei. “A General Theory of Russian Space: A ‘Gay Science’ and a ‘Rigorous Science’”, *Alternatives*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 1997, pp. 523-553. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGYjdiNzZiMGQtZWZiMS00NTY5LWFmZmMtYjAwNzkxZTg3MzVk/edit?hl=en_US)

**WEEK 8. Symbolic Governance in Russian Space: The USSR as a Text**

Topics for discussion:

* Russian Empire as a hostage to geography. Symbolic, rather than practical, assimilation of space. Growth of Russia as a symbolic act. The dominance of the word/sign in the Russian culture, “verbal vision”. Russia as a space of non-referential semiotics.
* The power of language in the making of the state. Monopoly on classification, discourse of power, symbolic violence.
* Crisis of representation in the USSR. The Soviet discourse: from deconstruction and elimination of reality to simulation of reality. Putin’s regime and post-Soviet simulation.

Reading:

* Groys, Boris. *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic, Dictatorship, and Beyond*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, 126 p. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGNmQ1YzMxMTctZDQ4ZS00MTc0LTk4ZjEtZjkyNmNjOTViMzU3/edit?usp=sharing)
* Medvedev, Sergei. “USSR: Deconstruction of the Text. At the Occasion of the 77th Anniversary of Soviet Discourse”, in: Klaus Segbers and Stephan De Speigeleire (eds). *Post-Soviet Puzzles: Mapping the Political Economy of the Former Soviet Union*, Vol. I, *Against the Background of the Former Soviet Union*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995, pp. 83-120. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGMDkxODAxZjktNDIxZS00OTNmLThjODctZjJlOGI1YTM2Yjky/edit?hl=en_US)

**WEEK 9. Russia as the Space of the Subconscious**

Topics for discussion:

* Self-definitions of Russia: irrational, feminine, spiritual, collectivist. Lack of subjectivity.
* Russia as the space of the subconscious. Positive meanings of irrationality: From the Church to the Bolsheviks, from Tolstoi to Bakhtin. Russia as the subconsciousness of the West?

Readings:

* Medvedev, Sergei. “Russia as the Subconsciousness of Finland”*, Security Dialogue*, Vol. 30, No. 1, March 1999, pp. 95-109. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGNkdTOFFTbkh5dkE/edit)
* Hellberg-Hirn, Elena. “Ambivalent Space: Expressions of Russian Identity”, in: Jeremy Smith (ed.). *Beyond the Limits. The Concept of Space in Russian History and Culture*. Helsinki: SHS, 1999, pp. 49-70.
* Pursiainen, Christer. “Space, Time, and the Russian Idea”, in: Jeremy Smith (ed.). *Beyond the Limits. The Concept of Space in Russian History and Culture*. Helsinki: SHS, 1999, pp. 71-94. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGSFpZT3FtZUg2TEU/edit)

**WEEK 10. CONCLUSION. The Future of Russian Space: Between Order and Chaos**

Topics for discussion:

* Is the interplay between Space and Authority, Culture One and Culture Two the perennial Russian choice?
* The space of places and the space of flows. What happens to Russian space in the postindustrial age?
* Russia’s alternative futures.

Readings:

* Trenin, Dmitri. “Conclusion. After Eurasia”, in: Dmitri Trenin. *The End of Eurasia. Russia on the Border between Geopolitics and Globalization*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001, pp. 313-338. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGMGJjNTg5NDktYThlZC00Y2I0LTlhMDQtMzQ4MjhjMDY5OWUx/edit?hl=en_US)
* Medvedev, Sergei. EU-Russian Relations: Alternative Futures, *FIIA Report*, No. 15, 2006, 53 p. [LINK](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwfD7z5bwAuGQjlXUXpJbzN5aFU/edit)

City Seminars

An essential part of the course is six seminars organized as guided city walks in central Moscow. The city is treated as a text and a model of the Russian space in which all forms of relations between space and state, the individual and the authority, are fully represented. Moscow has been shaped not only as a seat of power, but also as a symbolic locus of the Russian space, so its peculiar architecture and urbanism serve as good illustrations for the main themes of the course.

City seminars are an interactive exercise that requires from the students preparation and active participation. They six meetings are as follows:

1**. ST. BASIL’S: Emergence of the Russian Space under Ivan the Terrible**. The siege of Kazan and expansion into the Eurasian steppe. Visit to the Red Square, St. Basil’s Cathedral and the Kremlin. St. Basil’s as a symbolic map of action. The Red Square as a strategic territory of the state, the lack of squares as a civic institution in the Russian culture. The Kremlin as a seat of power and a state of exception.

2. **KITAI-GOROD: The markup and fencing of Russian space.** Visit to the Kitai-gorod, Lubyanka Sq. and the Boulevard Ring. Moscow as a system of defensive circles. Role of the fence in the Russian culture. Lubyanka as the symbol of state security.

3. **LEFORTOVO: Russia and Europe.** The catching-up modernization. Visit to Lefortovo district, the former German settlement, and Yekaterininsky Palace. The role of the West in creating the Russian state. The World-system and the Russian resource periphery. The Petrine modernization and the import of the police state. The Westernized elite and the patriarchal population.

4. **CHURCH OF CHRIST THE SAVIOR: Culture One and Culture Two, Spread and Settlement in the Russian Space.** A visit to the Church of Christ the Savior. The changing topographies of the place: the old Cathedral, Palace of the Soviets, the swimming pool, and a new Cathedral. The binary nature of Russian culture and elimination of the past.

5. **VDNKh: The Soviet Modernity**. A visit to the Space Monument, the Worker and the Peasant, and the VDNKh expo. USSR as an Enlightenment Utopia, a working model of the Russian space.

6. **TRETIAKOV GALLERY (20th CENTURY): The Crisis of Modernity and the Breakup of the USSR.** A visit to the 20th century art exhibition at Krymsky Val, and the Museion Sculpture Park. The evolution of Russian art from Avant-Garde to Socialist realism, non-conformism and postmodernity – a reflexion of the stages of the Soviet project.

Course Literature

* Castells, Manuel. “The Crisis of Industrial Statism and the Collapse of the Soviet Union”, in: Manuel Castells. *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. III, *End of Millennium*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, pp. 1-67.
* Chervyakov, Vladimir. “The Russian National Economic Elite in the Political Arena”, in: Klaus Segbers and Stephan de Spiegeleire (eds). *Post-Soviet Puzzles: Mapping the Political Economy of the Former Soviet Union*, Vol. I, *Against the Background of the Former Soviet Union*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995, pp. 205-282.
* Derluguian, Georgi and Immanuel Wallerstein. “Putting Russia in World-Systems Perspective”, in: Maria Lipman, Nikolai Petrov (eds). *Russia in 2020: Scenarios for the Future*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011, pp. 25-44.
* Etkind, Alexander. “Barrels of Fur: Natural Resources and the State in the Long History of Russia”, *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2011, pp. 164-171.
* Fukuyama, Francis, “The Modernizing Imperative. The USSR as an Ordinary Country”, *The* *National Interest*, Vol. 20, Spring 1993, pp. 10-18.
* Groys, Boris. *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic, Dictatorship, and Beyond*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, 126 p.
* Hellberg-Hirn, Elena. “Ambivalent Space: Expressions of Russian Identity”, in: Jeremy Smith (ed.). *Beyond the Limits. The Concept of Space in Russian History and Culture*. Helsinki: SHS, 1999, pp. 49-70.
* Kagansky, Vladimir. “Russian Regions and Territories”, in: Klaus Segbers and Stephan de Spiegeleire (eds). *Post-Soviet Puzzles: Mapping the Political Economy of the Former Soviet Union*, Vol. II, *Emerging Geopolitical and Territorial Units: Theories, Methods and Case Studies*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995, pp. 49-56.
* Keenan, Edward. “Muscovite Political Folkways”, *The Russian Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2, 1986, pр. 110-130.
* Kordonsky, Simon. “The Structure of Economic Space in Post-Perestroika Society and the Transformation of the Administrative Market”, in: Klaus Segbers and Stephan de Spiegeleire (eds). *Post-Soviet Puzzles: Mapping the Political Economy of the Former Soviet Union*, Vol. I, *Against the Background of the Former Soviet Union*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995, pp. 157-24.
* Kotkin, Stephen. “Afterword. Stalinism as Civilization”, in: Stephen Kotkin. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, pp. 355-366.
* Malinova, Olga. “Russia and “The West” in the Twentieth Century: A Binary Model of Russian Culture and Transformations of the Discourse on Collective Identity”, in: Reinhard Krumm, Sergei Medvedev and Hans-Henning Schröder (eds). *Constructing Identities in Europe: German and Russian Perspectives*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012, pp. 63-79.
* Medvedev, Sergei. “Post-Soviet Developments: A Regional Interpretation. A Methodological Review”, in: Klaus Segbers and Stephan de Spiegeleire (eds). *Post-Soviet Puzzles: Mapping the Political Economy of the Former Soviet Union*, Vol. II, *Emerging Geopolitical and Territorial Units: Theories, Methods and Case Studies*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995, pp. 5-48.
* Medvedev, Sergei. “A General Theory of Russian Space: A ‘Gay Science’ and a ‘Rigorous Science’”, *Alternatives*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 1997, pp. 523-553.
* Medvedev, Sergei. “Introduction” and “Part 1. Modernity at Large”, in: “Rethinking the National Interest. Putin’s Turn in Russian Foreign Policy”, *Marshall Center Paper*, No. 6, 2004, pp. 1-31.
* Medvedev, Sergei. “Russia as the Subconsciousness of Finland”, *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 30, No. 1, March 1999, pp. 95-109.
* Medvedev, Sergei. “USSR: Deconstruction of the Text. At the Occasion of the 77th Anniversary of Soviet Discourse”, in Klaus Segbers and Stephan De Speigeleire (eds). *Post-Soviet Puzzles: Mapping the Political Economy of the Former Soviet Union*, Vol. I, *Against the Background of the Former Soviet Union*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995, pp. 83-120.
* Medvedev, Sergei. EU-Russian Relations: Alternative Futures, *FIIA Report*, No. 15, 2006, 53 p.
* Paperny, Vladimir. *Architecture in the Age of Stalin:* *Culture Two*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 371 p.
* Poe, Marshall. *The Russian Moment in World History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, 136 p.
* Pursiainen, Christer. “Space, Time, and the Russian Idea”, in: Jeremy Smith (ed.). *Beyond the Limits. The Concept of Space in Russian History and Culture*. Helsinki: SHS, 1999, pp. 71-94.
* Shleifer, Andrei and Daniel Treisman. “A Normal Country: Russia After Communism”, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2005, pp. 151-174.
* Trenin, Dmitri. “Chapter 1. The Spatial Dimension of Russian History”, “Chapter II. The Breakup of the USSR, A Break in Continuity” and “Conclusion. After Eurasia” in: Dmitri Trenin. *The End of Eurasia. Russia on the Border between Geopolitics and Globalization*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001, pp. 39-86, 87-99, and 313-338.

Essay Topics

1. The influence of territory/geography on political regimes. Compare Russia with other countries.
2. The impact of space on society. “Community” and “Society”. Patterns of movement and settlement of the population. Compare Russia, Europe and the US.
3. Russia and the West. Is Russia a Western/European country? What does it entail being a Western country?
4. What is Modernization? Modernization in the West and in Russia. Agents of Modernization.
5. What are the key elements of the Russian political culture? Elaborate in detail on the key historical impacts on the Russian political culture. The impact of space on Russian political culture.
6. What is the role of the state in the economy in the West and in Russia?
7. What are the peculiarities of the Russian and Soviet administrative/territorial structure?
8. What is a “national-security state”? Give examples from the Russian history
9. What are the key reasons for the breakup of the USSR? Given the right policy, was it possible to preserve the Soviet Union in the 1990s?
10. Is Russia still an Empire? What is an Empire? Are there still Empires in today’s world?
11. Modern and postmodern states in today’s world. When did Modernity start and end? Modernity and Postmodernity in Russian politics.
12. What are the key elements of Russian culture, and how are they influenced by the Russian space?
13. How do you see the future of Russia? Is it capable of maintaining such a large territory in the 21st century? How does Russia fit into the global economy?
14. Characterize Russia’s political regime under Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev. How do you see Russia’s future in the next twenty years?

About the Course Author

Sergei Medvedev is Professor and Associate Dean at the Department of Political Science at the HSE. Born in Moscow, he studied at Universities in Moscow, Prague, and New York, and holds a Ph.D. in history. In the past 20 years, he has held research positions and professorships in Russia, Germany, Italy, and Finland, and lectured extensively across the world. He specializes in Russian and post-Communist studies, political geography, international relations and cultural anthropology. The list of his books includes: *Constructing Identities in Europe: German and Russian Perspectives* (Baden-Baden, 2012, with Reinhard Krumm and Hans-Henning Schröder); *Good Governance: A New Contract of the State, Business and Civil Society in Russia* (Moscow, 2008); *EU-Russia Relations: Alternative Futures* (Helsinki, 2006), *The Kaliningrad Partnership in EU-Russia Relations* (Moscow, 2005); *Russia and the West at the* *Millennium* (Berlin, 2003) and *Mapping European Security After Kosovo* (Manchester, 2002, with Peter van Ham).