Course Syllabus – Russia: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Course Information
Course number –GEOG 3382
Course title – Russia: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow
Term – Summer 2016
Section – 05A
Classroom – SOM 1.110
Time – Monday/Wednesday 1:00 PM-5:15 PM, there will be two short breaks.

Professor Contact Information
Name – Dr. Irina Vakulenko
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Office location – GR 3.213
Private Consultation – Monday at 5:15 pm; by request

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions
There are no formal prerequisites for this course. General academic skills of analytical thinking, comparison, essay writing, working with statistical material, map reading will be helpful. Lower division geography courses are not essential but definitely helpful for this course. If you have not taken any of these please let me know.

Course Description
The course covers information about Russian economy and politics, history and culture, tradition and innovation, Russian-American relations, and much more. It investigates the rise of Russia to prominence historically and in post-Cold War world, communist legacy in forming Russian present economic bias and social policies, Russia's place in the global order.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes
Students will learn about the largest country in the world, its geography, history, economy and people. They will explore characteristics of Russian society that side tracked capitalist development to the Soviet experiment. Analyze statistical information about current population and economic trends and make conclusions about Russian ascend into a global power. The study of rich Russian history, tradition and culture will help students to take a fresh look at a mysterious Russian soul. The students will be encouraged to make their own opinion if Russia is a friend or a foe. The skills of statistical information analysis, map reading and making, creative writing, discussion, and public speaking will be reinforced. Cognitive internet browsing and information selection skills to foster research are reinforced.

Required Textbooks and Materials
A Geography of Russia and Its Neighbors. By Mikhail S. Blinnikov. The Guilford Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-60623-920-9.

Optional: *From Nyet to Da: Understanding the New Russia,* 4th Edition by Yale Richmond, Intercultural Press, 2009. ISBN 978-1-931930-59-8

The rest of required reading will be placed on e-learning.

Suggested Course Materials
Students are expected to take notes during PowerPoint presentations and complete reading, maps, and assignments before due dates. Lectures shall be complimented by reading the assigned material.

Assignments & Tentative Academic Calendar

#	Class Date	Topic	Assignments
1	5/23/16	Introduction. Geographical and geopolitical position. Europe or Asia: both or neither? **Environment (1)** and resources. Exploration and use. Environmental degradation and pristine landscapes.	Blinnikov Chs.2-5. Notes, p.1-2, 12 (e-learning). Make a Sidetrip choice.
2	5/25/16	Some glimpses of Russian **history (2)** from pre-Christian times through Peter the Great: Kievan Rus as a cultural and spiritual center of Eastern Slavs. The fight for freedom from Mongol Tartars yoke and the impact of this struggle on the future development of Europe. Ivan the Terrible, Legacy of Russian early states. Rise of the Romanovs. Imperial Russia. Expansion of Russia to the East and South. Exploration of Siberia. Alaska Deal. Building Russian Empire: geographically, economically, and politically. Attempts to modernize Russia. Russian royal dynasties and their descendants and followers today.	Journal Entry 1 is due BEFORE the class. Sidetrip 1. Nature Blinnikov Ch.6. Map 1 is due.
3	6/1/16	20th century— new turmoil or perpetual movement? Economic and political situation. The development of capitalism in Russia. The socialist revolution, its leaders, supporters, and opposition. Origins of the Communist Party and reasons for their victory. The **Soviet (3)** Empire: its leaders and people. Stalinism: reforms and purges. Soviet Union in WWII. Main Soviet achievements and shortcomings. The Cold War. Demise of Soviet Empire. Khrushchev, Gorbachev. Disintegration of the Soviet Union. Eltsin, Putin and post-communist Russia. Latest political and economic changes. Is democracy and capitalism for Russia after all?	Journal Entry 2 is due BEFORE the class. Sidetrip 2. Pre-Soviet historical site. Blinnikov Chs.7-8. Notes, p.4-6 . Map 2 is due.
4	6/6/16	**Population (4)**. Demographics, distribution. Clusters and emptiness. Settlement patterns and economic development. Russian women. Learn to speak Russian. Multinational and multilingual composition of Russia. Religion in Russia. Russian Soul: myth or reality?	Journal Entry 3 is due BEFORE the class. Sidetrip 3. Soviet historical site. Blinnikov Ch.10. Y. Richmond p.

			22-27, 39-43, 45-50. Notes, p. 2-3, 11-12
5	6/8/16	Russian **cities (5)**: centers of economy and culture. Urban hierarchy and federal structure. Closed cities. Russian countryside. Moscow and St. Petersburg, their role in Russian life and places of interest.	Journal Entry 4 is due BEFORE the class. Map 3 is due. Blinnikov Ch.11. **Choose oblast for a paper.**
6	6/13/16	Test . **Economy (6)**: primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors and their prominence. Shifts in geography. Russian military. Transport, communications, and tourism. Informal economy, new Russians, and integration into global economy.	Journal Entry 5 is due BEFORE the class. Notes p. 9-11, 12-13, 14.
7	6/15/16	Russia is where East meets West: **cultural (7)** achievements, traditions and attitudes. Doing business in Russia. Russian contribution to the world literature, visual art, music, ballet and cinematography. Cultural life today. Decent.	Journal Entry 6 is due BEFORE the class. Sidetrip 4. Modern business enterprise. Blinnikov Chs.16-21. Map 4 is due.
8	6/20/16	**Finance, Politics, and Foreign Relations (8)** transformations. Privatization, nationalization, and foreign direct investment. Kremlin inside out. Russian politics is business as usual. Russian government. Role of state in nation building. The Russian Federation and problems of federalism. Regions of Russia. Trade patterns, and military alliances within Commonwealth of Independent States, with Europe, the rest of the world. Russian-American relations: rollercoaster or consistency? Sovietology and its role in development of these relations, negotiating the end of the Cold War and look into the future. Role of Russia in the modern world.	Journal Entry 7 is due BEFORE the class. Sidetrip 5. Russian billboard. Blinnikov Ch.9 Notes, p. 6-7, 9, 11, 12, 13-16.

9	6/22/16	Law and disorder: judicial system and human rights. Education, healthcare, social entitlements. **Quality of life (10)**. Meet Russian families. Everyday life in different place and among social groups: homes, food, leisure. Customs, traditions, and holidays. Do Russians and Americans share values? Is Russia a friend or a foe?	**Oblast Paper is due.** Journal Entry 8 is due BEFORE the class. Richmond, p. 71-90 Notes, p. 7-9, 12 Radzinsky. Blinnikov Chs.12, 14-15. Journal Entry 9 is due **on 6/23/16 (next day after the last class!)**
10	6/28/16	Final Exam time is TBA.	

Grading:

There are nine topics for discussion. After every topic is studied you are supposed to write a journal entry. It includes half a page (200-250 words) of comments of WHAT you learned and WHY it was important for your understanding of Russia. Every entry must be e-mailed to me before the next class. Total - 30 pts.

After 5 classes there will be an oral examination over studied material in a fashion customary in Russian universities. Detailed instruction will be provided in class and on e-learning*. – 20 pts.

Paper on one Russian oblast (administrative unit) is due 6/22/16. Detailed instructions can be found on-learning** – 10 pts.

Every student needs to sign up for one "side trip" to be presented in PowerPoint format in class on an assigned date, depending on the "destination" ***. – 10 pts.

Collection of 4 contour maps with completed assignments – 10 pts. (2.5 pts. each).

The Final Exam on **June 28, 2016** will make other **20%** of your grade. It includes 30 fact questions and a short essay.

*You will get a list of open end questions a week prior to the exam. At the Exam you will randomly pick a card with one of those questions, as well as a map question, and one word or phrase to translate into Russian (the list of phrases with a translation and transliteration will be posted). You will have about 5 minutes to prepare for your comments and then you will present them to the class.

The oblast paper is about 2-3 pages long covering relative geographical location, characteristics of environment, population, economy, and places of interest as if you plan to visit. Make conclusion by **comparing the oblast with the U.S. state similar either by the size of territory or population, or another parameter.

*** You have a day to spend at one location and unlimited budget. You need to turn in a 1-2 pages description of your experience by the date stated for the trip of your choice. You have to be ready to present your findings in class either in an oral form or with PowerPoint of 4-5 slides. Hard copy has to be turned in by due date.

A bonus point is offered for perfect attendance (no missed classes and maximum of two later arrivals/earlier leaves).

All graded material will be assigned a numerical value on a scale of 100. Letter Grades are given as follows: 98% and over A+; 93% to 97% A ; 90% to 92% A- ; 88% to 89% B+; 83% to 87% B; 80% to 82% B-; 78% to 79%C+; 73% to 77% C ; 70% to 72% C- ; 68% to 69% D+ ; 63% to 67% D ; 60% to 62% D; less than 60% F.

Course & Instructor Policies

Attendance is crucial for the successful learning and will be taken each class. My lectures and our discussions will include materials not found in the text. As a result a good set of class notes and contour maps will be extremely helpful if plan excelling in this course. To do the map assignments you need to have a pencil and colored pencils.

Attendance and class participation will be used as deciding factors for borderline students. No make ups. If a student misses any class time, it is that student's responsibility to obtain notes from other students in attendance. Although extra help will be provided to students, the professor will not hold alternate lectures or release lecture notes to students. Respectful discussions of the topics being studies are encouraged.

If you wish to look at the ancillary syllabus material, a link to that material is as follows http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies.

These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.