Contemporary Central Asian Politics (JSISA 479/579, POL S 479/579)

Tuesday/Thursday 11:30-1:20
SAV 166

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***This syllabus can be found at https://catalyst.uw.edu/workspace/srad/24964/

This course is an overview of the politics and society of Central Asia (defined as the post-Soviet states of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan). It covers pertinent issues in contemporary politics, including democratization, religion, terrorism, civil society, economic reform, ethnic and identity politics, and international influences. Central Asia is a region that is poorly understood and beset by some unfortunate stereotypes. This course is intended to set straight these myths by digging deep beneath the surface of Central Asian politics. It analyzes Central Asia in comparative perspective in order to determine what, if anything, about Central Asia is unique and which characteristics it shares with other regions of the world. To that end, readings include theoretical social science literature addressing developments outside the region, especially in the postcommunist world.

Assignments

- Response papers (different for grads and undergrads—see below) analyzing and critiquing reading
- Policy memo analyzing a current topic and making recommendations to an influential decision maker (5-7 pp)
- Final or research paper

Grading

Grades will be determined by the following formula:

- Response papers—25%
- Class participation—15%
- Policy memo—30%
- Final exam (or research paper)—30%

Important Dates
The response papers are due on the day that we discuss those readings.
The policy memo is due on March 7, with an abstract on January 29.
Oral presentation of findings on March 12.
The optional research is due on the same day as the final: March 20.

Participation
Since this is a seminar, participation is a large part of the grade. Most of every class will be taken up by discussion. Students should complete the reading by the dates indicated below. Instructor reserves the right to administer unannounced quizzes if it appears students are not doing the reading.

Response Papers – for undergraduates

Starting in Week 2, every student will write 8 1-page response papers (anticipate having to do one for each class session with a handful of reprieves for busy days). Students will submit it in hard copy at the end of class. No late response papers will be accepted and you have to come to class to turn one in. Each paper should do 3 things:

1) Select one major reading of the day (i.e. a book chapter or scholarly article, not a newspaper article). In one sentence, state, in your own words, what you see as the main idea (thesis) of that reading. Then briefly interpret or define that argument/concept/idea and explain why it is important for understanding something about Central Asian politics.

2) Identify two key quotes from any/all of the readings that you find provocative, interesting, novel, or ridiculous, and note why you perceive it as such.

3) Devise two questions on the reading assigned for that day. The questions may be items that were not addressed but, you think, should have been. They may be framed as a challenge to a claim by an author that is not backed by the evidence, or that contradicts things other authors have argued. Or it might involve an implication of an argument, for example, whether the claim would stand up if taken to its logical conclusion. Or it might be an educated speculation about how the readings can be applied for policy purposes. Or something else entirely, as long as it comes out of the reading.

Be sure to indicate what text you are referring to, and page number if applicable, for each quote or reference. Full citations are not necessary; short-hand is OK.

The paper should not exceed 1 double-spaced 12-point font page. Indicate at the top which of your papers it is, i.e. “response paper #5”. Cleverer titles are optional. Variety is good. Don’t just specialize in one article.

Response papers – for graduate students

Starting in Week 2, graduate students will write brief (3 to 4-page; double-spaced, 12-point font) papers on the assigned reading for four sessions of your choosing. The papers are designed to help you engage scholarly arguments. They should not summarize the reading(s).

Instead, they should link the reading with broader themes addressed in the class. What is the broader significance of the readings? How do they advance our knowledge or frame an issue in a new way?

Each paper should evaluate the main argument(s) in the texts. Is the argument convincing and/or plausible? What evidence does the author bring to support it? What are the author’s assumptions or possible biases? If a claim seems problematic or unsubstantiated, how could it be corrected or further investigated? What additional evidence would strengthen the argument?

Papers should also compare and contrast the arguments in the readings. If there are readings assigned on that day by more than one author, compare them with each other. If only one author is assigned, compare the arguments to readings from previous weeks. Are the authors’ arguments complementary or contradictory? Why do they make different claims? Is it because they make assumptions that lead to different conclusions? Is it because they get their evidence from different sources or gather it in different ways? Is it because they were written at different times and had different amounts of knowledge upon which to build?

Related, how does the reading build on the reading from past weeks? What it is important to know in order to situate this week’s readings? How are the elements connected? Or alternatively, how does this research contradict the earlier reading?
In writing this paper, you have to be selective. Choose only a few points on which to compare and evaluate the arguments. You do not need to answer all the questions posed here. Feel free to take risks. Don’t spend time trying to divine the “right” answers, i.e., what the instructor wants to hear. Follow your ideas where they lead.

Policy memo
This 5-7 page paper should address a pressing issue on Central Asia and make concrete recommendations to a relevant decision maker, for example a political leader in the region, a philanthropist, or an international organization. Write as an expert on your chosen topic and as if your opinion will be taken seriously. The style will differ from the response paper.

It should first identify and give some background to the problem to be addressed. Why is it a problem? What historical or other details are necessary to consider in comprehending the problem and deciding how to address it? Whom does the problem affect? Why would it be good to solve? Who would benefit? How has it been addressed in the past? Why have those efforts been insufficient?

Second, it should propose a solution to the problem. What concrete steps should the policy maker take? Why would this work better than what has been tried before? Why is it better than other policies that one could conceivably propose? What kind of resources are necessary to carry it out? How costly (in terms of money, political capital, or time) will it be to mobilize these resources? What are some possible pitfalls or sources of resistance to this policy and how can they be overcome? How will we recognize if the policy is successful? By what metric?

Some points to keep in mind when writing your memo:
--Identify a specific problem and say why (and for whom) it's a problem.
--Note and briefly review strategies that have been tried before.
--Be realistic about what's possible and the resources available.
--Tailor the memo to the reader.
--Anticipate challenges to your strategy and sources of resistance and consider ways of dealing with them.
--Don't spend too much of your 5-7 pages giving background. Give only as much as is necessary.

Turn in a short summary of your proposed memo on 1/29.

Oral presentation
On March 12, students will make a 5-minute presentation of their research, using Power Point. It should summarize the problem and main findings/recommendations of the policy memo.

Final Exam
There will be a comprehensive final exam on March 20 at 4:30 consisting of two parts: i) short-answer identification of concepts, people, and events; and ii) essays from a list of study questions that will be handed out in advance

Optional Research Paper
Alternatively, students can choose to write a ~10-page research paper. Graduate students are especially encouraged to choose this option. Students should submit a one-paragraph abstract for approval by the instructor on 1/29.

Keeping up with Current Events
Students should try to keep up with current events in the region. The best websites are eurasianet.org, rferl.org (Radio Liberty), iwpr.net (Institute of War and Peace Reporting), ferghana.ru, and the blog registan.net.
Readings
Since this is a mixed graduate/undergraduate seminar, students will have a wide range of knowledge and experience with the subject matter discussed. There are no prerequisites for taking this class. Readings have been selected to cover both basic knowledge and advanced theoretical issues.

Most readings are on electronic reserve, while big files are on the website. The books are on sale in the book store, also on reserve in Odegaard library.

To access e-reserves, start at https://www.lib.washington.edu/. Then:
→ Course Reserves
→ Electronic Course Reserves for Seattle
→ click Electronic Reserves & Reserves Pages
→ Find the course either by department (International Studies-Area Studies) or Instructor (Radnitz)

Books
Adeeb Khalid, Islam After Communism (Berkeley: UC Press, 2007)

Jeff Sahadeo and Russell Zanca, Everyday Life in Central Asia (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007)


Week 1
Introduction 1/8

Studying Central Asia as a Region 1/10

Symposium on the Complexity of Central Eurasia:


“Post-mortem: One-man Stan” Atlantic, March 2007


Eric McGlinchey, “Central Asia Goes Wobbly,” Current History, October 2012,
**Week 2**

**Nation-formation 1/15**


**The Creation of New Elites 1/17**


**Week 3**

**The Emergence of New States 1/22**


**Threats to Stability 1/24**


**Week 4**

**Democratization or Autocratization?** 1/29 + summary due

Radnitz book, 58-76.


Turkmenbashi, *Ruhnama*, 9-32

**Nationalism 1/31**


Madeleine Reeves, “Travels in the Margins of the State: Everyday Geography in the Ferghana Valley Borderlands,” in Sahadeo and Zanca, 281-300.

Farangis Najibullah, “Central Asia: Name Debate Reflects Region's Mixed History,” RFE/RL, 4-4-07.

**Week 5**

**Subnational Identities and Networks 2/5**


Radnitz, Chapter 5 (103-30).


**2/7 instructor out of town**

**Week 6**

**Islam I: Cultural 2/12**


Sean R. Roberts, “Everyday Negotiations of Islam in Central Asia: Practicing Religion in the Uighur Neighborhood of Zarya Vostoka in Almaty, Kazakhstan,” and

Islam II: Political 2/14


Khalid, 140-67


Week 7

Civil Society 2/19


State-building or State erosion? 2/21


Wikileaks Cable: “MAFIA BOSS FIXES GOU TENDERS AND JOBS,” 5-5-06 [Link](http://cablesearch.org/cable/view.php?id=06TASHKENT902)

Wikileaks Cable: “BERDIMUHAMEDOV AND TURKMENISTAN'S RULING FAMILY,” 12-17-09, [Link](http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09ASHGABAT1633)

Week 8

Political Economy 2/26

Pauline Jones Luong, “Political Obstacles to Economic Reform in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan: Strategies to Move Ahead,” paper presented at the Lucerne Conference of the CIS-7 Initiative, January 20-22, 2003—read overview (4-9) and Uzbekistan case study.

Radnitz, 77-89.


**Informal Networks and Economies 2/28**


Radnitz, Chapter 2 (39-52).

“Cash Flow From Tajik Migrants Stalls,” NYTimes, 12-24-08

**Week 9**

**Foreign Policy 3/5**


**Development Aid and Democratic Dilemmas 3/7**


Richard A. Boucher, “U.S. Policy in Central Asia: Balancing Priorities (Part II),” Statement to the House International Relations Committee Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia, April 26, 2006.

Wikileaks Cable: CANDID DISCUSSION WITH PRINCE ANDREW ON THE KYRGYZ ECONOMY AND THE “GREAT GAME”, 10-29-08,  
http://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/10/08BISHKEK1095.html

Wikileaks Cable: “TURKMENISTAN CORRUPTION: WHAT HAPPENS IN ASHGABAT, STAYS IN ASHGABAT,” 12-14-07,  

Week 10

Presentations 3/12

Revolution, Backlash, and Instability 3/14


Ilan Greenberg, “Rough Year Ahead for Central Asia,” National Interest, 12-28-12,  
http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/rough-year-ahead-central-asia-7912