Course Description

The European Union's eastern members and their neighbors represent a zone of contact and of contestation, a meeting point between cultures, communities and social spaces. It is a ‘playground’ for political and socio-economic transformations in which states and diverse societal groups must navigate between the EU and Russia, between varied economic and political integration projects, and between different values, ideas and visions of society. Power relations in this Eastern zone influence the opening, closing, and transformation of political possibilities for EU integration.

This Summer School, organized by the Jean Monnet BEAR Network (“Between the EU and Russia: Dimensions of Diversity and Contestation”) in collaboration with CÉRIUM, examines two aspects of this larger issue: the EU and Russia as transnational actors in regards to regional integration and “soft power”, as well as societal activism in response to these integration projects. This Summer School thus addresses the following broad questions:

• In what respects are the EU and Russia’s regional connectivity/integration projects competitive vs. complementary?
• How does the "soft power" of the EU and Russia affect local perceptions of threat or belonging?
• How does real and/or prospective EU integration affect protest dynamics and the likelihood of violence?
• To what extent are the claims and dynamics of social movements in one state in the region affected by those in neighboring states, and with what ramifications for European integration?
Readings
Readings are mandatory for all students. We expect that students will have read the assigned articles and chapters before the start of the summer school in order for them to be able to actively participate in the discussions. Readings will be made available through our StudiUm site, the Université de Montréal online platform.

Evaluation ¹

Course requirements for the 3-credit summer school (and for BEAR-sponsored international students) include the following elements:

- **Two reading reports (2 x 15%)**
  These are analyses of 750 words each on the theme of an am or pm session of the student’s choice, based on the required readings. This is not a summary of the texts; it offers a critical reflection on the debates proposed by the texts and is organized around a question and an argument. It should link the texts and compare/contrast their arguments. Reports are due at the beginning of the chosen session.

- **Research Paper (50%)**
  The research paper must be a maximum 4,500 words long (excluding the bibliography) on a topic approved by the instructors. The papers are due by July 15. Excellent papers may (with permission) be featured on the BEAR website.

- **Active participation (20%)**
  Students are expected to have done the assigned readings before class, to actively participate to the discussions with the presenters.

For the 1.5 credit class, evaluation constitutes of the following:

- **Four reading reports (4 x 20%)**
  These are analyses of 750 words each on the theme of an am or pm session of the student’s choice, based on the required readings. This is not a summary of the texts; it offers a critical reflection on the debates proposed by the texts and is organized around a question and an argument. It should link the texts and compare/contrast their arguments. Reports are due at the beginning of the chosen session.

- **Active participation (20%)**
  Students are expected to have done the assigned readings before class, to actively participate to the discussions with the presenters.

¹ Students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. / Chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.
Schedule & Readings

Friday, June 15
FOR CREDITED and BEAR STUDENTS ONLY

4pm – 6pm: Preparation session
Juliet Johnson and Magdalena Dembinska
Presentation of the syllabus and the objectives of the course.

Monday, June 18
Regional Integration Project I: NATO, the European Union and its eastern neighbours

9am-12pm: NATO enlargement, 1990-2018
Frédéric Mérand, Université de Montréal

Although relations with the EU have deteriorated since the Ukrainian crisis, NATO enlargement remains the biggest bone of contention between Russia and Western powers. For some commentators NATO has simply agreed to the demands made by new democracies which sought to secure their sovereignty. For others, the West has betrayed a commitment made after German reunification not to enlarge NATO further to the East, thus putting Russia under threat. Before discussing current issues in the NATO-Russia relationship, this presentation will analyze how Western IR scholars have tried to make sense of this academic debate with significant political implications.

Readings

1:30-4:30pm: The EU’s Eastern Policy and the Limits to Transformative Power
Joan DeBardeleben, Carleton University

In response to Russia’s reaction to the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU pursued a two track policy in its eastern neighbourhood – one track involving those countries included in the Eastern Partnership policy and one track involving Russia. This session will explore the nature and effectiveness of the EU's policy in these two arenas. First, we will look at the similarities and differences between the EU’s Russia policy and its
Eastern Partnership policy, and how these policies might be explained theoretically. Second we will consider some of the challenges and characteristics of the EU’s cooperation with specific countries in the region, as well as factors that affect the effectiveness of the EU’s ‘transformative power’ with these partners. Finally, we will explore how formation of the Eurasian Economic Union has affected the EU’s approach, and options available to the EU in response. For the second component students will be asked to complete one reading from a list of and be prepared to summarize and comment on that reading.

Readings

- Esther Ademmer, Laure Delcour & Kataryna Wolczuk (2016) Beyond geopolitics: exploring the impact of the EU and Russia in the “contested neighborhood“, Eurasian Geography and Economics, 57:1, 1-18

Tuesday, June 19
Regional Integration Project II: the Eurasian Union and its western neighbours

9am-12pm: Integration projects in Eurasia and the “integration of integrations” idea
Yulia Nikitina, Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO)

The Eurasian Economic Union’s launch coincided with the crisis in Ukraine and crisis in Russian relations with the West in general, thus, the Western attitudes towards the EAEU are quite skeptical and critical. However, it is not the first attempt to develop economic integration in Eurasia since the fall of the USSR, but the previous attempts remain largely unknown for the general audiences, both in the West and in Eurasia itself. In this session, we will look at different trajectories of integration projects in Eurasia since 1991. In addition, we will explore the idea of “integration of integrations” suggested by the Russian leadership in 2015 to better understand Russian visions of the European economic and security architecture.

Readings

  From this volume:
  o Chapter Four. Thoughts on Inclusive Economic Integration. Esther Ademmer and Yaroslav Lissovolik.
  o Chapter Six. Cooperative Transregionalism and the Problem of the "In Betweens". Yulia Nikitina
External factors have always played an important role in the evolution of post-Soviet integration. On the one hand, the Eurasian integration project has over the years become increasingly more assertive in geopolitical terms and is now often presented as a competitor to the European Union. This has obvious repercussions for the relations between the EU and Russia, as well as other countries in the region. The consequences of this rivalry have been particularly significant in the case of the Eastern Neighbourhood countries, whose foreign policy and even domestic politics is now framed as a ‘choice’ between the EU and EaEU, between Europe and Russia. This has serious consequences for the quality of institutions, the progress of reforms, and democratic representation in those in-between countries, which in turn directly and indirectly affects EU–Russia relations.

On the other hand, the Eurasian Economic Union has been explicitly modelled on the EU. It originates in Russia’s perpetual desire to achieve recognition in (and by) Europe as an equal and legitimate player, as a European great power. Partly (but only partly) this can be explained by the economic disparities between the West European core and Russian semi-periphery. The economic and normative dependence, combined with the geopolitical ambition, creates an explosive mix that adds fuel to the geopolitical conflict and is to a large extent responsible for the current deadlock.

Readings

Europeanization – conceived as both the physical expansion of the European Union and the larger diffusion of European norms and practices—has had a profound influence on political competition in post-communist Europe. Although the impact on party development has been indirect, in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) the strength of popular support for EU accession created an incentive for mainstream parties to frame political mobilization in pro-European and liberal democratic terms. Nationalism remained a powerful ideology, but right-wing populism did not become a defining feature of electoral campaigns before EU accession. In the post-EU accession period, however, the societies that had been in the forefront of democratic consolidation and Europeanization during the 1990s (Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic) became fore-runners of un-democratization in the 2010s. This session will address the questions of why and how a shift from democratic consolidation to un-democratization takes place in CEE. The discussion will focus on the way mainstream parties (and incumbent governments) use nationalist populism successfully to construct and sustain loyal electoral camps. We will discuss the role of nationalism in the process, the usefulness of “populism” as an analytical concept, and lessons from CEE for other parts of Eastern Europe and beyond.

Readings

Thursday, June 21
The impact of the EU and the Russian regional powers on civil society and law

9am-12pm: The Weaponization of Law and the Death of Democracy
Maria Popova, McGill University

 Democracies used to die through military coups or through “an election to end all elections”. Russia’s 1990s democracy died a slow death by a thousand cuts inflicted by weaponized court decisions. More recently governments in East Central Europe have also weaponized the law against political opponents. The weaponization of law is the (ab)use of the law to gain a power benefit and improve one’s immediate position in the political competition arena. When used offensively, a weaponized legal act undermines political opponents or competitors. When used defensively, a weaponized legal act deflects attacks by opponents and helps the weaponizer herself or her allies. Weaponized legal acts can also bolster the perpetrator’s position in the competition process by showcasing her strength or facilitating her political grandstanding. How does weaponization of law kill democracy? It can be used to undermine and hollow out democratic institutions (elections, free media, civil society, party competition). It also sows mistrust among political competitors. It reduces the legitimacy of democratic competition in the eyes of the electorate—they come to think that important decisions are taken behind the scenes and communicated through court decisions, rather than arrived at transparently through the democratic process.
Readings:

1:30-4:30pm: People After Communism: Exit, Voice, and Loyalty
Virginie Lasnier, Université de Montréal

While nationalist and social movements played an important role during the final days of the USSR, citizens seemed to disengage from political life afterward, contributing to the received wisdom that postcommunist civil societies are essentially weak. Yet, during the first half of the 2000s, powerful mass movements, known as the color revolutions, swept through the region, especially in Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005). After these events, many authors spoke of an awakening of postcommunist civil societies, getting closer to the European model. However, participation in public life remains uncertain in many of these countries. In the meantime, reacting to what was perceived as Western manufactured social movements, the Kremlin created pro-regime movements and governmental organized NGOs (GONGOs), further complicating the discussion on civil society and social movements in the region. Building on Albert Hirschman’s famous typology of exit, voice, and loyalty, this session will address the different ways in which citizens in postcommunist countries engage and disengage from political participation, paying particular attention to the color revolutions and their consequences.

Readings:

Friday, June 22
Issues of sovereignty between the EU and Russia: de facto states and diasporas

9am-12pm: Russian compatriot policies and the ‘diaspora(s)’
Ammon Cheskin, University of Glasgow
In recent years, there has been sustained academic and political scrutiny of externally-located ‘kinsfolk’: that is, groups of individuals located outside of a nominally national ‘kin-state’, and over whom the state in question lays claim to various forms of symbolic and/or legal jurisdiction. Typically, kin-state policies are enacted by states to construct diasporic identities that create strong identificational bonds between co-ethnics and their supposedly external homeland. Owing to the scale of its potentially diasporic kinspeople, the Russian Federation stands out globally as a significant agent of kin-state nationalism. Indeed, in recent years the Russian authorities have directed substantial resources towards kin-state activities, even codified Russian-speaking ‘compatriots’ as central elements of the country’s assertive foreign policy.

In these sessions we will therefore critically explore trends in how ‘Russian speakers’, located outside of Russia, respond to Russia’s kin-state policies and diasporising practices. To this end, we will examine the issue first from the perspective of the Russian state, mapping the development of compatriot policies and discourses. Secondly, we will try to examine how ‘Russian speakers’ themselves conceptualise their relationship with Russia: as an external homeland, a foreign entity, or as something in-between.

Readings:


1:30-4:30pm: Between the EU and Russia: internal dynamics of de facto states

_Magdalena Dembińska, Université de Montréal_

In September 2015, South Ossetia celebrated the 25th anniversary of its “independence” with official guests from its patron-state Russia, kin North Ossetia as well as from Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria and the two de facto states in-the-making, Luhansk and Donetsk Peoples’ Republics. The ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine has much in common with the early 1990s civil wars in Georgia, Azerbaijan and in Moldova that ended with the de facto separation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Transnistria, respectively. Since then, these conflicts’ resolution is “frozen.” Meanwhile, the separatist regions developed all features of statehood but - not being recognized as such de jure - they constitute so called “de facto states.” To survive and gain popular support for their separatist cause, de facto states embark on a twofold political project of state- and nation-building. This institutionalization process makes reintegration into the central state unlikely. However, de facto state’s stability and security is largely possible because of external backing. The literature considers the presence of a patron state as necessary for a de facto state to emerge and survive. Still, as the particular case of Transnistria shows, economic and political entrepreneurs have to adjust to an external environment where the West matters more than before.

Readings


Saturday, June 23
The EU and EEU in action

9am-12pm: In-Class Simulation on EU-Russian Relations
Juliet Johnson, McGill University
Tatiana Romanova, St. Petersburg State University (TBC)

1:30-4pm
Closing BEAR conference
Tatiana Romanova, St. Petersburg State University (TBC)

4-6pm
Closing cocktail (CÉRIUM)