



## Winter Semester 2020/21

### Seminar (BA) **Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft: Russian Government Politics**

Time: Thursdays, 14:00-16:00 (ct)  
Venue: online  
Start Date: 05.11.2020  
Registration in  
FlexNow!: 01.10.2020 – 01.11.2020 (Deregistration: 01.10.2020 – 15.11.2020)  
Instructor: Levan Kakhishvili, MSc

#### **Zulassungsvoraussetzungen/Entry Requirements:**

Very good knowledge of the English language is required.

#### **Erwerb eines Leistungsnachweises/Assessment:**

A portfolio consisting of at least 10 review essays of 500 words each (25%) and a term paper (75%)

ECTS credits: 6

The course consists of weekly seminars, which has two parts. First, the instructor provides a brief input on the topic of discussion of the week surveying the reading materials provided in the syllabus and identifying the key questions, problems or ideas that should be paid particular attention. This input is, however, not a substitute for reading materials and is designed to help the students with the second part of the seminar. During the second part of the seminar, the students will be asked to provide their input on how they approached the main question of the week. The main question of the week is provided by the instructor and can be found in the syllabus. The questions are designed in a way that they do not necessarily have right or wrong answers. Therefore, students are expected to demonstrate a complex understanding of the matter drawing on the mandatory and ideally on recommended reading materials.

Each student is expected to submit at least 10 review essays during the semester. Review essays should be about 500 words (+/-10%) and should review one required reading material of a student's choice (there can be more than one required reading material per week). A good review essay should briefly summarize the key points discussed in the reviewed article or a chapter. This should be followed by a student's critical evaluation of the original text in terms of the original argument, i.e. strength and weaknesses of the original argument. These strengths and weaknesses may relate but are not limited to the methodological, conceptual-theoretical and/or logical considerations. Given that there are more than 10 topics during the semester, it is up to

each individual student during which weeks they wish to submit their essays. However, only one essay per student will be accepted each week. Deadline for submitting review essays is Monday 23:59 each week.

Additionally, students are expected to write and submit a final term paper at the end of the semester. Students are allowed to choose one question from the list of the discussion questions provided by the instructor each week and use it as a research question for the final term paper. In case a student wishes to choose an original question of their own, this has to be discussed and approved with the instructor. Ideally, students should make good use of both required and recommended reading materials provided for the week from which the question was selected and additionally demonstrate that original literature review has been conducted beyond the provided reading materials. The question should be answered in a comprehensive manner and alternative ideas should be discussed in contrast with each other.

### **Programm/Course Description**

A Russian proverb claims, "There are no roads in Russia, only directions". This course is designed to provide students with "directions" for understanding Russia. For this purpose, the course is divided into four parts. The first part explores the origins of contemporary Russia in order to understand the broader context and a big picture defined by processes that took place in the twentieth century. This part covers topics from the idea of communism through the collapse of the Soviet Union to the political and economic transformation of the 1990s. The second part overviews institutions that comprise political and social structures in Russia. This part provides students with understanding of how things are done in Russia. The third part discusses identity politics in Russia and concerns the issue of what it means to be Russian and how these varied meanings were constructed. Additionally, it also overviews the concepts of "internal abroad" and "near abroad". Finally, the fourth part of the course puts Russia in a global context by exploring foreign relations and Russia's place in relation to the West and the region, in which Russia finds itself. Overall, the course aims to explore many different "meanings" of Russia from the points of view of various academic disciplines, including history, politics, economics, and international relations.

### **Recommended Reading:**

A detailed syllabus will be distributed in the first session.