

EURR 4209A/PSCI 4504A
Politics of the Caucasus and the Caspian Basin
Thursdays, 11:35 AM - 2:25 PM (online)

Instructor: Dr. David Sichinava (davidsichinava@cunet.carleton.ca)

Format: Blended (asynchronous lectures and weekly online synchronous discussions)

Office Hours: Thursdays, 3:00–5:00 PM (Online, a sign-up link will be posted on Brightspace)

Course Description

The Caucasus and Caspian Basin region have long captivated the minds of travellers, scholars, writers, and politicians. An incredible diversity of languages, national and religious identities, coupled with a turbulent history and complicated contemporary geopolitical situation, have led to the fact that Western scholarship on the region remains fragmented. The aim of this course is to provide students with an overarching understanding of the politics and societies of the Caucasus and Caspian Basin region, with lectures grounded in a range of interdisciplinary academic literature, multimedia, news stories, and popular culture. The course is structured around weekly themes that analyze things such as the region's history of Russian imperialism and Soviet rule, issues of nationalism, and ethnopolitical conflict, global standings and contemporary political trends, as well as societal transformations.

Course Format

This course is offered in a mixed synchronous-asynchronous format. Weekly asynchronous lectures will provide students with a general overview and framing of the course topics. Online synchronous group discussions via Zoom will include student-led presentations and a broader, class-wide roundtable discussion.

All required readings and video lectures should be completed before class so that students arrive prepared to discuss the material. If you are unable to make it to a class due to illness or another reason, please email the instructor in advance of your absence to arrange for a make-up session.

Required Readings

There is no assigned textbook for the class. Instead, individual readings and other material corresponding to the weekly topics will be provided online through the course Brightspace. Apart from academic literature, many of the classes are accompanied by resources such as documentaries, music videos, podcasts, and journalistic stories tied to the relevant themes.

Course Components

Grading Breakdown

- **Participation (30%)**
 - Submission of weekly discussion questions on Brightspace (20%)
 - Attendance of online Zoom meetings (10%)
- **News brief (20%)**
 - Written summary (15%)
 - Class presentation (5%)
- **Data blog (10%)**
 - Written summary (5%)
 - Visualization (5%)
- **Final essay (40%)**
 - Essay pitch (10%)
 - Final Essay text (30%)

Participation (30%)

Participation is an integral part of this course and consists of two components. Twenty percent will be assigned for the submission of weekly discussion questions, due at on Brightspace at 9 PM the evening before our synchronous Zoom discussion. Ten percent will be allocated based on student participation in class discussions.

For the weekly discussion questions, before class, students will submit a list of at least three questions, based on the assigned readings and other course material. Questions can be related to content clarification or more open-ended and tied to thematic reflections. In general, students should come up with questions that relate to the full range of assigned materials. These questions will then help guide the class discussions. All discussion questions should be submitted online through Brightspace. Students need to only submit questions for ten out of thirteen sessions, with the other three being optional.

News Brief (20%)

For this assignment, students will prepare a 800-1,000-word news brief analysis () of an important current issue in the region. They will then present it during a short (5-7 minutes) presentation during our online Zoom class meeting. Class presentations will be held each week, starting from the third class. Each student is responsible for one news brief during the semester.

Data Blog (10%)

Expertise in the interpretation of data and its presentation has become an important skill for policy analysts, journalists, and academics alike. The Caucasus Data Blog assignment aims at familiarizing students with basic data interpretation and visualization skills. Using survey data from the annual Caucasus Barometer, collected by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC), students will write a short blog post (500-600 words) contextualizing an important political or social issue(s) in the South Caucasus. They will further prepare an infographic poster on the same topic.

For this assignment, students can use the free online data analysis website (caucasusbarometer.org), which has been developed by CRRC to provide users with accessible data analysis tools. Students will make their own infographic posters using the software of their choice. Freely available online tools include Canva, Picktochart, and Infogram. No prior knowledge of statistics, data analysis, or graphic design tools is necessary.

Final Essay: Journalistic long-read article (40%)

For the final assignment, students will be asked to submit a 3,000-word essay. Students should pick a topic that resonates well with the course themes, but they can tailor the topic to their individual interests. Nevertheless, topics should not replicate those already well covered in the course material. The aim is to provide in-depth reporting on a specific topic, focused on a particular geographic area in the Caucasus. For any questions about the suitability of your desired theme, please reach out to me during office hours.

The format of this assignment diverges slightly from traditional academic writing in that it should take the form of a journalistic long-read article. It should be a text that provides in-depth reporting in a widely accessible manner, with a broader audience in mind. Examples will be shown to the class closer to the due date.

This assignment is worth 40% of the total grade. Ten percent will be allocated to a half-page story pitch, while the remaining 30% will be based on the final submission.

A detailed rubric of the assignments will be posted on Brightspace.

Course Schedule

WEEK 1 (January 10-14) Introduction: Overview and Major Regional Issues

Compulsory readings:

- De Waal, Thomas. *The Caucasus: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2018. Chapter 1, "Among the Mountains"
- Tsutsiev, Arthur. *Atlas of the Ethno-Political History of the Caucasus*. Yale University Press, 2014. (pages 2 and 3)

Take a closer look... (optional resources):

- Custom Music playlist: Traditional sounds of the Caucasus
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLfrgB51IZm6OVhhRxreVkvjtjnGbZeMqSo>
- Custom Music playlist: Contemporary sounds of the Caucasus
https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLfrgB51IZm6M4_WJsq0QvO3e0VB-NtlF8

Assignments:

- Please note that no discussion questions are due this week; *Week 1 submitted with Week 2
- Students assigned News Brief presentations and sign up for a Zoom class discussion to lead

WEEK 2 (January 17-21) The Caucasus: The Region and the World

Compulsory readings:

- Shiryev, Zaur. 'NATO and the South Caucasus: The Impact of the Northern Distribution Network (NDN).' *Northern Distribution Network: Redefining Partnerships within NATO and Beyond*, Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2013, 135–68.
- Tsuladze, Lia. 'On Europeanisation, National Sentiments and Confused Identities in Georgia.' *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 50, no. 2 (June 2017): 125–33.
- Van Gils, Eske. 'Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy Strategies and the European Union: Successful Resistance and Pursued Influence.' *Europe-Asia Studies* 70, no. 5 (2018): 738–58.

- Vasilyan, Syuzanna. “Swinging on a Pendulum” Armenia in the Eurasian Economic Union and With the European Union.’ *Problems of Post-Communism* 64, no. 1 (2017): 32–46.
- Cooley, Alexander, and Lincoln Mitchell. ‘Abkhazia on Three Wheels.’ *World Policy Journal* 27, no. 2 (2010): 73–81.

Assignments:

- Discussion questions uploaded on Brightspace for Weeks 1 and 2

WEEK 3 (January 24-28) Conquest of the Caucasus, Genocide, and Memory

Compulsory readings:

- De Waal, Thomas. *The Caucasus: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2018. Chapter 2 “Russia’s South”
- Bloxham, Donald. ‘Internal Colonization, Inter-Imperial Conflict and the Armenian Genocide.’ In *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, 325–42. Berghahn Books, 2008.
- Tsutsiev, Arthur. *Atlas of the Ethno-Political History of the Caucasus*. Yale University Press, 2014. Map 2-21 (pages 4 to 56)

Assignments:

- Discussion questions for Week 3
- News brief presentations (ongoing)
- Caucasus Data Blog assigned

WEEK 4 (January 31-February 4) Soviet Rule in the Caucasus

Compulsory readings:

- Blauvelt, Timothy. “Kiaraz” and the Formation of an Early Soviet Ethnic Leadership Cohort.’ In *Clientelism and Nationality in an Early Soviet Fiefdom*. Routledge, 2021.
- Goff, Krista A. ‘Making Minorities and National Hierarchies’. In *Nested Nationalism*, 19–60. Cornell University Press, 2021.
- Flemming, William. ‘The Deportation of the Chechen and Ingush Peoples: A Critical Examination.’ In *Russia and Chechnia: The Permanent Crisis: Essays on Russo-Chechen Relations*, edited by Ben Fowkes, 65–86. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1998.
- Scott, Erik R. ‘Edible Ethnicity How Georgian Cuisine Conquered the Soviet Table.’ *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 13, no. 4 (2012): 831–58.
- Lehmann, Maike. ‘Apricot Socialism: The National Past, the Soviet Project, and the Imagining of Community in Late Soviet Armenia.’ *Slavic Review* 74, no. 1 (2015): 9–31.
- Tsutsiev, Arthur. *Atlas of the Ethno-Political History of the Caucasus*. Yale University Press, 2014. Maps 35-38 (pages 96 to 106)

Take a closer look... (optional resources):

- *Repentance*. A movie by Tengiz Abuladze. 1987. Full movie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdiZCRH9Vj4>.

Assignments:

- Discussion questions for Week 4
- News brief presentations (ongoing)

WEEK 5 (February 7-11) North Caucasus: Politics and Leadership

Compulsory readings:

- Ratelle, Jean-François, and Emil Aslan Souleimanov. 'A Perfect Counterinsurgency? Making Sense of Moscow's Policy of Chechenisation'. *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 8 (13 September 2016): 1287–1314.
- Yemelianova, Galina M. 'The North-Eastern Caucasus: Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia.' In *Routledge Handbook of the Caucasus*. Routledge, 2020.
- Yemelianova, Galina M., and Svetlana I. Akkueva. 'The North-Western Caucasus: Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Adygea.' In *Routledge Handbook of the Caucasus*. Routledge, 2020.
- Siroky, David S., Valeriy Dzutsev, and Michael Hechter. 'The Differential Demand for Indirect Rule: Evidence from the North Caucasus.' *Post-Soviet Affairs* 29, no. 3 (1 May 2013): 268–86.

Take a closer look... (optional resources):

- Loizeau, Manon, *Chechnya: War Without Trace*. Documentary. 2015. Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGTGacC3E8U>

Assignments:

- Discussion questions for Week 5
- News brief presentations (ongoing)

WEEK 6 (February 14-18) South Caucasus: Politics and Leadership

Compulsory readings:

- Bashirov, Galib. 'New Extractivism and Failed Development in Azerbaijan.' *Third World Quarterly* 42, no. 8 (3 August 2021): 1829–48.
- Ishkanian, Armine. 'Armenia's Unfinished Revolution.' *Current History* 117, no. 801 (1 October 2018): 271–76.
- Shubladze, Rati, and Tsisana Khundadze. 'Balancing the Three Pillars of Stability in Armenia and Georgia.' *Caucasus Survey* 5, no. 3 (2 September 2017): 301–22.

Take a closer look... (optional resources):

- Hovannisian, Garin. *I Am Not Alone*. Documentary. 2020. Teaser: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POHr1kOqez8>
- Auch, Jachim. *How German Politicians Have Aided the Aliyev Regime*. Documentary, 2021. Full documentary: <https://www.dw.com/en/how-german-politicians-have-aided-the-aliyev-regime/av-59036114>.

Assignments:

- Discussion questions for Week 6
- News brief presentations (ongoing)

WEEK 7 (February 21- 25) Winter break: no classes

WEEK 8 (February 28-March 4) North Caucasus: Society

Compulsory readings:

- Foxall, Andrew. 'Performing Ethnic Relations in Russia's North Caucasus: Regional Spectacles in Stavropol'krai.' *Central Asian Survey* 33, no. 1 (2014): 47–61.
- Brock, Maria, and Emil Edenborg. "'You Cannot Oppress Those Who Do Not Exist": Gay Persecution in Chechnya and the Politics of In/Visibility.' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 26, no. 4 (1 October 2020): 673–700.

Take a closer look... (optional resources):

- *Tesnota* (Closeness), a movie by Kantemir Balagov. The movie won the FIPRESCI prize at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival. Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMTOCM-VTBE>
- *Unclenching the Fists*, a movie by Kira Kovalenko. The movie was awarded the *Un Certain Regard* prize at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival. Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epxZzlkEBbQ>
- Schroeder, Katharina von. *Dagestan's Peaceful Warriors*, 2015. Full movie: <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/witness/2015/10/28/dagestans-peaceful-warriors>.

Assignments:

- Discussion questions for Week 8
- News brief presentations (ongoing)
- Data Blog assignment due

WEEK 9 (March 7-11) South Caucasus: Society

Compulsory readings:

- Kekoshvili, Vakhtang, and Gavin Slade. 'Prisoner Games Children Play.' *Problems of Post-Communism* 67, no. 3 (3 May 2020): 277–87.
- Shirinian, Tamar. 'The Nation-Family: Intimate Encounters and Genealogical Perversion in Armenia.' *American Ethnologist* 45, no. 1 (2018): 48–59.
- Bedford, Sofie, Ceyhun Mahmudlu, and Shamkhal Abilov. 'Protecting Nation, State and Government: "Traditional Islam" in Azerbaijan.' *Europe-Asia Studies* 73, no. 4 (21 April 2021): 691–712.

Take a closer look... (optional resources):

- *And Then We Danced*. A movie by Levan Akin. Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGwXoytT-qg>
- *Qadin (A Woman)*. A short movie by Tahmina Rafaella. Interview with the author: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUwzUEXuPLY>
- *Once Upon a Time in Shanghai*. A documentary directed by Leyli Ghafarova. Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhuPtBvzMf8>

Assignments:

- Discussion questions for Week 9
- News brief presentations (ongoing)

WEEK 10 (March 14-18) Conflicts in the Caucasus: Nagorno-Karabakh

Compulsory readings:

- Broers, Laurence. 'A Violent Unravelling.' In *Armenia and Azerbaijan*. Edinburgh University Press, 2019.
- Gamaghelyan, Philip, and Sergey Rummyantsev. 'The Road to the Second Karabakh War: The Role of Ethno-Centric Narratives in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict.' *Caucasus Survey* 9, no. 3 (26 October 2021): 320–36.
- Askerov, Ali. 'The Nagorno Karabakh Conflict The Beginning of the Soviet End,' 55–82, 2020.

Take a closer look... (optional resources):

- Jacob, François. *Under the Same Sun*. Documentary. Les Films de L'Autre, 2020.
- Conciliation Resources. *Parts of a Circle: History of the Karabakh Conflict*, 2020. <https://vimeo.com/407942633>.

Assignments:

- Discussion questions for Week 10
- News brief presentations (ongoing)
- Final essay pitch due

WEEK 11 (March 21-25) Conflicts in the Caucasus: Abkhazia and South Ossetia

Compulsory readings:

- Kolstø, Pål. 'Biting the Hand That Feeds Them? Abkhazia–Russia Client–Patron Relations.' *Post-Soviet Affairs* 36, no. 2 (3 March 2020): 140–58.
- Toal, Gerard, and Gela Merabishvili. 'Borderization Theatre: Geopolitical Entrepreneurship on the South Ossetia Boundary Line, 2008–2018.' *Caucasus Survey* 7, no. 2 (4 May 2019): 110–33.

Take a closer look... (optional resources):

- BBC World Services. 'The PR Battle for the Caucasus.' The Documentary Podcast. Accessed 28 November 2021. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02sbq12>.

Assignments:

- Discussion questions for Week 11
- News brief presentations (ongoing)

WEEK 12 (March 28-April 1) Political Economy and the Environment

Compulsory readings:

- Antadze, Nino, and Kety Gujaraidze. 'The Role of Traditional Rituals in Resisting Energy Injustice: The Case of Hydropower Developments in Svaneti, Georgia.' *Energy Research & Social Science* 79 (1 September 2021): 102152
- Gugushvili, Dimitri. 'Lessons from Georgia's Neoliberal Experiment: A Rising Tide Does Not Necessarily Lift All Boats.' *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 50, no. 1 (2017): 1–14.
- Barrett, Tristram. 'Notes on the Moral Economy of Gas in Present-Day Azerbaijan.' *Central Asian Survey* 33, no. 4 (2014): 517–30.

Take a closer look... (optional resources):

- *Mining in Armenia*, 2012. Full movie: <https://vimeo.com/49743180>.
- Jashi, Salomé. *Taming the Garden*. Documentary. Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dU0uz-JTSP4>

Assignments:

- Discussion questions for the week 12
- News brief presentations (ongoing)
- Final essay due on Friday, April 1, 23:59 EST on Brightspace

WEEK 13 (April 4-8) Migration, Diaspora and the Caucasus

Compulsory readings:

- Zurabishvili, Tamar, Maia Mestvirishvili, and Tinatin Zurabishvili. 'Georgian Women Migrants: Experiences Abroad and at Home.' In *Gender in Georgia: Feminist Perspectives on Culture, Nation, and History in the South Caucasus*, 181–93, 2017.
- Darieva, Tsypylma. 'Rethinking Homecoming: Diasporic Cosmopolitanism in Post-Soviet Armenia.' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 3 (2011): 490–508.
- Erciyes, Jade Cemre. 'Diaspora of Diaspora: Adyge-Abkhaz Returnees in the Ancestral Homeland.' *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 17, no. 3 (1 June 2014): 340–61.

Take a closer look... (optional resources):

- Azatutyun TV. *Migration Tales*. Documentary, 2016. Full movie: <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/27963382.html>.

Assignments:

- Discussion questions for the week 13
- News brief presentations (ongoing)

Regional Sources to consult (optional):

News sources

Eurasianet: Publishes a broad range of news from the entire former Soviet Union, has special reporting and ongoing research projects on Central Asia, and covers some more unusual topics such as arts and culture in some depth (<https://eurasianet.org>)

OC-Media: An independent online news outlet that published news and analysis from the Caucasus (<https://oc-media.org>)

International War and Peace Reporting: Caucasus. IWPR is a non-profit international organization that publishes fairly in-depth reports by local journalists

Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty: Excellent reporting and in-depth coverage of Caucasus. US-funded organization uses local stringers in reporting.

RFE/RL Caucasus Report

Transitions Online: Caucasus. An online news magazine covering the formerly communist world.

Caucasian Knot: English version of Russian website with news from around the Caucasus: treat with caution!

JAM News (<https://jam-news.net/>)

Chaikhana Media (<https://chaikhana.media/en>)

Research and analysis

Ponars Eurasia: New Approaches to Research and Security in Eurasia. Commentary and Policy Notes (<https://www.ponarseurasia.org/>)

Caucasus Research Resource Centers. Analysis and numerous databases on the region (<https://caucasusbarometer.org>)

Central Asia Caucasus Analyst. Analytical reporting on Central Asia and the Caucasus, mostly from a security perspective (<http://www.cacianalyst.org/>).

Human Rights Watch - Europe and Central Asia (<https://www.hrw.org/europe/central-asia>)

International Crisis Group: North Caucasus. In-depth journalistic reporting on key regional issues, aimed at policy makers and the broader publics

International Crisis Group: South Caucasus

International Organization for Migration: South Caucasus

Economist Intelligence Unit (use though Carleton library) See Individual Country Reports

United Nations Development Program - Eurasia

Silk Road Studies Program: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute (<https://www.silkroadstudies.org/>)

Caucasus Analytical Digest (<https://css.ethz.ch/en/publications/cad.html>)

Academic Accommodation

Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy Obligation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

Religious Obligation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. carleton.ca/pmc

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

<https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: students.carleton.ca/course-outline

Plagiarism

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, art works, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams,

constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one’s own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course or even suspension or expulsion from the University.

Submission, Return, and Grading of Term Work

Final standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points is:

Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale	Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale
90-100	A+	12	67-69	C+	6
85-89	A	11	63-66	C	5
80-84	A-	10	60-62	C-	4
77-79	B+	9	57-59	D+	3
73-76	B	8	53-56	D	2
70-72	B-	7	50-52	D-	1

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by an instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Carleton email accounts: All email communication to students from the Institute of European, Russian and Eurasian Studies will be via official Carleton university email accounts and/or Brightspace. As important course and university information is distributed this way, it is the student’s responsibility to monitor their Carleton and Brightspace accounts.

Official course outline: The course outline posted to EURUS website is the official course outline.