

BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

HI 383: MODERN HISTORY  
& GEOPOLITICS OF THE CAUCASUS  
Fall 2014

Professor Simon Payaslian  
Office: Room 508 @ 226 Bay State Rd.  
Office hours: T 12:00–1:30pm, Th 11:30am–1:00pm  
or by appointment

Class meetings: T & Th 2:00–3:30pm  
Room: SED 140

Phone: (617) 353–8313 / Email: [payas@bu.edu](mailto:payas@bu.edu)

Unless otherwise noted, your instructor checks his emails at least once a day.

#### COURSE SUMMARY

This course introduces the student to the history of the Caucasus from the early nineteenth century to the post–Soviet period. The Caucasus became a battleground for the three empires—Ottoman, Persian, and Russian—contending for regional hegemony, and Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Georgian cultural, political, and economic development took place within the context of the territorial conflicts among the empires. Further, the triangular imperial competition also attracted the Western powers, most notably Britain and France, each with its own imperial ambitions but with a common geostrategic objective toward the Caucasus: namely, the prevention of Russian expansionism farther south to the Middle East and the Mediterranean Sea. We explore the ethnic, cultural, and religious components of the region and its role in modern international political economy. We examine the emergence of Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Georgian nationalism and the impact of outside powers on their efforts toward modernization beginning in the early nineteenth century. Repeated invasions and counter-invasions by the Russian and Ottoman armies soon gave rise to intense hostilities toward both empires and inevitably between the Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Georgian peoples as the Russian empire annexed the entire region.

Students assess the success and failures of the three independent republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, which emerged in 1918 but were annexed, yet again, this time by the Soviet Union. We examine in some detail the Kremlin's policies toward the three republics from Lenin to Gorbachev, the clash between Communism and nationalism, and the events leading to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. We analyze the various problems associated with nation-building and state-building in the three republics since their (re)independence in 1991. We pay particular attention to the historical causes of some of the major military conflicts in the region (eg, Nagorno Karabagh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Chechnya) and to the geopolitical implications of Western investments to exploit Caspian oil. As in the nineteenth century, the major powers today continue to influence the politics of the region.

More than two decades have passed since Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia gained independence from the Soviet empire. How do we assess their current political and economic conditions? And their relations with the neighboring countries, the Middle East, the West, and the East? How successful have they been in securing territorial sovereignty in such a turbulent region? The course concludes by briefly exploring the prospects for conflict resolution and by reviewing some of the major events in recent years as well as efforts toward bilateral and regional cooperation.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

The following books are available for purchase at the BU bookstore:

- Leonidas T. Chrysanthopoulos, *Caucasus Chronicles: Nation-Building and Diplomacy in Armenia, 1993–1994* (Princeton and London: Gomidas Institute, 2002).
- R. Hrair Dekmejian and Hovann H. Simonian, *Troubled Waters: The Geopolitics of the Caspian Region* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003).
- Thomas de Waal, *The Caucasus: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- Christoph Zürcher, *The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict, and Nationhood in the Caucasus* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

Books on reserve at the Mugar Library:

- Levon Chorbajian, Patrick Donabedian, and Claude Mutafian, *The Caucasian Knot: The History and Geopolitics of Nagorno-Karabagh* (London: Zed Books, 1994).
- Ronald Gregory Suny, ed., *Transcaucasia, Nationalism, and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, rev. ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The final course grade for the course will be assessed on the basis of the following:

- |                              |     |                       |
|------------------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| • Attendance & participation | 15% |                       |
| • Midterm exam               | 30% | due: Tuesday, Oct. 21 |
| • Term paper & presentation  | 25% | due: Tuesday, Dec. 2  |
| • Final exam                 | 30% | due: Tuesday, Dec. 16 |

**Attendance and Participation (15%)**

Attendance and participation are essential and will be evaluated based on the student's contribution to the class discussions. As part of their attendance and participation, students will be required to contribute to class discussion by doing short presentations based on the assigned readings.

**Exams (Midterm 30%; Final 30; total 60%) 1,600 words each**

Both the midterm and the final are take-home exams. They cover the material presented in lectures and the readings. A week or so in advance, your instructor will hand out four or five essay questions, and students are required to write on one of them. The essay for each exam must be about 1,600 words in length.

**Term Paper (25%) 4,200 words**

The research paper examines a specific aspect of the history of the Caucasus. The paper must integrate material from primary sources if the student wishes to receive an "A" on the paper. This means four or five short quotes from primary sources—in addition to usual references to such sources. The paper topic is due on Tuesday, September 16, and a preliminary paper outline and bibliography are due on Thursday, October 16. The paper must be 4,200 words in length, typed in 12 font size, and double-spaced. The term paper is due on Tuesday, Dec. 2.

The research paper requires proper documentation (that is, footnotes or endnotes) and a bibliography—for example, see Kate Turabian’s *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Before submitting the final draft of your term paper, you should reserve sufficient time to reread and revise it.

Students are encouraged to become familiar with Mary Lynn Rampolla’s *A Pocket Guide to Writing History* and the classic handbook, *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White. These manuals are not “required texts” for this course, but they should remain on your desk during your college education and long thereafter.

**Presentation of Paper.** Each student will have an opportunity to present his/her paper in class for 15-20 minutes. There are several important reasons for this assignment. First, class presentations provide an opportunity to share your findings with colleagues in the class. Second, you learn how to present papers before your colleagues at major scholarly conferences (for example, the American Historical Association, the American Political Science Association) and professional meetings. Finally, class presentations encourage students—as leaders-in-training—to practice and improve on their public speaking skills. The development of both written and oral communication skills is an essential part of education, and the more you practice these skills, the more successful you will be in your career.

**Note on Extensions & University Academic Conduct Code**

Extensions for written assignments are strongly discouraged and will be allowed in extremely urgent emergencies only and with adequate documentation. Otherwise, 10 points will be subtracted from the grades for each day delayed after the scheduled due dates.

Students must adhere to all university standards of academic conduct. Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Students violating the rules of academic conduct will automatically fail the course. All such cases will be referred to the Dean’s Office. Please consult the Boston University Academic Conduct Code, copies of which are available in CAS 105 or at <http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>.

COURSE OUTLINE

In case we need to make any changes in the schedule for reading assignments below, your instructor will announce them in class.

Sept. 2, 4	INTRODUCTION TO COURSE The Caucasus: Regional characteristics and general background
Sept. 9, 11	CIVILIZATIONS, ETHNICITY, AND TERRITORY de Waal, <i>Caucasus</i> , Intro. & Ch. 1 (Pp. 1–36) Suny, <i>Transcaucasia</i> , Chapters by Garsoian, Thomson, Golden, Bournoutian, Rhineland, Chs. 1–5 (Pp. 7–104)

- Sept. 16, 18      **NATIONALISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE UNDER TSARIST RULE**  
                          de Waal, *Caucasus*, Ch. 2 (Pp. 37–70)  
                          Suny, *Transcaucasia*, Chapters by Suny, Ter Minassian, Libaridian,  
                          Altstadt, Chs. 6–9 (Pp. 109–209)  
                          Dekmejian, *Troubled Waters*, Chs. 1–3 (Pp. 3–27)  
**Tuesday, Sept. 16, Paper topic due**
- Sept. 23, 25      **NATIONALISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE UNDER TSARIST RULE [continued]**  
                          de Waal, *Caucasus*, Ch. 2 (Pp. 37–70)  
                          Suny, *Transcaucasia*, Chapters by Suny, Ter Minassian, Libaridian,  
                          Altstadt, Chs. 6–9 (Pp. 109–209)  
                          Dekmejian, *Troubled Waters*, Chs. 1–3 (Pp. 3–27)
- Sept. 30, Oct. 2    **REVOLUTION AND SOVIET TRANSFORMATION**  
                          de Waal, *Caucasus*, Ch. 3 (Pp. 71–97)  
                          Suny, *Transcaucasia*, Chapters by Swietochowski, Suny,  
                          Hovannisian, Arslanian, Chs. 10–13 (Pp. 211–306)  
                          Chorbajian, *Caucasian Knot*, Ch. 1, App. I–VB (Pp. 1–48, 174–179)
- Oct. 7, 9          **NATION-BUILDING, SOVIETIZATION, AND INDEPENDENCE**  
                          Suny, *Transcaucasia*, Chapters by Blank, Fairbanks, Suny, Saroyan,  
                          Chs. 14–17 (Pp. 307–426)
- Monday, Oct. 13, classes suspended, Columbus Day / Tuesday, Oct. 14, scheduled as **Monday**
- Oct. 16            **NATION-BUILDING, NATIONALISM, AND INDEPENDENCE**  
                          de Waal, *Caucasus*, Chs. 4–5 (Pp. 98–166)  
                          Zürcher, *Post-Soviet Wars*, Chs. 1–2 (Pp. 1–41)  
**Thursday, Oct. 16, Paper outline and bibliography due**
- Oct. 21, 23        **CONFLICT THEORY, CHECHNYA, AND GEORGIA**  
                          Zürcher, *Post-Soviet Wars*, Chs. 3–5 (Pp. 42–151)  
**Tuesday, Oct. 21, Midterm Exam due**
- Oct. 28, 30        **NAGORNO-KARABAGH AND THE GEOPOLITICS OF EMPIRES**  
                          Suny, *Transcaucasia*, Chapters by Dudwick, Jones, Schroeder,  
                          Anderson and Silver, Chs. 18–21 (Pp. 427–506)  
                          Chorbajian, *Caucasian Knot*, Chs. 2–3, App. (Pp. 49–108, 180–191)
- Nov. 4, 6          **NAGORNO-KARABAGH ON THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE**  
                          Zürcher, *Post-Soviet Wars*, Ch. 6 (Pp. 152–185)  
                          Dekmejian, *Troubled Waters*, Ch. 4 (Pp. 28–39)
- Nov. 11, 13        **TERRITORIAL CONFLICT AND THE SEARCH FOR PEACEFUL RESOLUTION**  
                          Chorbajian, *Caucasian Knot*, Ch. 4 (Pp. 109–170)

- Nov. 18, 20      **THE CAUCASUS AND THE REGIONAL CONTEXT**  
                     de Waal, *Caucasus*, Ch. 6 (Pp. 167–187)  
                     Dekmejian, *Troubled Waters*, Chs. 5–7 (Pp. 43–114)
- Nov. 25            **THE CAUCASUS, MAJOR POWERS, AND NON-STATE ACTORS**  
                     de Waal, *Caucasus*, Ch. 7 (Pp. 188–224)  
                     Dekmejian, *Troubled Waters*, Chs. 8–11 (115–174)  
**Thanksgiving Recess**, Wednesday, Nov. 26–Sunday, Nov. 30
- Dec. 2, 4         **THE CAUCASUS IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE: A DIPLOMAT’S VIEW**  
                     Chrysanthopoulos, *Caucasus Chronicles* [entire book]  
                     Zürcher, *Post-Soviet Wars*, Ch. 7 (Pp. 186–208)  
**Tuesday, Dec. 2, Term Papers Due**
- Dec. 9  
*Last day  
 of class*         **THE CAUCASUS AND ITS FUTURE**  
                     de Waal, *Caucasus*, Conclusion (Pp. 225–227)  
                     Suny, *Transcaucasia*, Conclusion (Pp. 507–512)  
                     Chorbajian, *Caucasian Knot*, Conclusion (Pp. 171–173)  
                     Dekmejian, *Troubled Waters*, Epilogue (Pp. 175–184)  
                     Zürcher, *Post-Soviet Wars*, Ch. 8, Conclusion (Pp. 209–230)

**Final Exam Due:** Tuesday Dec. 16, 2014. Time: 3:00–5:00pm.

Please bring (between 3:00–5:00pm) a hard copy of your exam to my office:

Room 508  
 Department of History  
 226 Bay State Rd.

Also, email your exam by 5:00pm.

**Last Day of Classes:** Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2014

**Study Period:** Thursday, Dec. 11–Sunday, Dec. 14, 2014

**Final Exam Period:** Monday, Dec. 15– Friday, Dec. 19, 2014