

PLS100 Introduction to the Politics of Central Asia

Spring 2021

Professor: Dr. Hélène Thibault

Schedule: Asynchronous. Online lectures will be posted at the beginning of every week.

Virtual office hours and Q&A: Wednesdays 19:00. [Use this link.](#)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course will introduce key concepts and theories in political science that will be useful for the study of Kazakhstani and Central Asian politics such as the state structure and legal and political systems. In particular, we will discuss the different aspects of contemporary politics such as institution-building, political economy, gender and religion, foreign policy, civil society dynamics, etc. The course will pay a special attention to the Soviet legacies to better understand the transition to independence and the countries' institutional and nation-building processes. At the end of the class, students will be able to make a critical judgment on the evolution of Kazakhstani and Central Asian politics since independence and analyse current dynamics in light of theoretical concepts related to power, legitimacy, and identity. The course will be asynchronous, and the professor will upload short video recorded lectures on Moodle every week.

CLASS POLICIES

Late submissions

You must submit your assessments on the day of the set deadline unless you have been formally granted a discretionary postponement. The deadline for receipt of assessment tasks is noon (Nur-Sultan local time) on the cut-off date. NU operates a grace period of 12 hours so work submitted before midnight on the cut-off date will be accepted without penalty. If your submission is received up to 24 hours after the grace period, the assessment will be accepted but the task score will be reduced by up to 10 percentage points. For example, if the deadline is Monday at noon, you have until midnight on Monday to send it without penalty. If you send it before midnight on Tuesday, it will still be accepted, but 10% will be taken away from your grade. Submissions received beyond this point will not be marked and you will not be considered to have completed the assessment task. You will not be offered another opportunity.

Grades

Your final grade is final. It is not a basis for negotiations. By trying to negotiate your grade, you make yourself look unprofessional. You are entitled to receive feedback and I will try to be as detailed as possible in my comments.

According to the [SSH's Handbook](#), if a student believes that he or she has received an unfair or erroneous grade, the student may appeal. The student must first provide a written account of the appeal to the instructor within 10 working days of receiving the contested grade (that time may be extended in the event the instructor is shown to have been unavailable during the period following the student's receipt of the grade in question). In the event that the student is still dissatisfied, he or she may appeal to the Dean of the relevant School or the Dean's designee (usually Vice Dean for Academic Affairs) within 7 days. The Dean or designee shall consult with the Instructor before making any decision. The decision of the Dean shall be final. Students should not expect that grade

appeals will result in changed grades except in exceptional circumstances. Abuse of this system will be considered misconduct.

Readings

Readings are available on Moodle.

Beware of Academic Fraud!

Academic fraud is an act committed by a student to distort the marking of assignments, tests, examinations, and other forms of academic evaluation. Academic fraud is neither accepted nor tolerated by the University. **Academic fraud in this class will result in an automatic failure for this class and anyone found guilty of academic fraud is liable to other severe academic sanctions.**

In recent years, the development of the Internet has made it much easier to identify academic plagiarism. The tools available to your professors allow them to trace the exact origin of a text on the Web, using just a few words.

Here are a few examples of academic fraud:

- presenting an author's argument or ideas as your own without quoting him or her;
- engaging in any form of plagiarism or cheating;
- presenting falsified research data;
- handing in an assignment that was not authored, in whole or in part, by the student;
- submitting the same assignment in more than one course.
- Not providing references for a direct quote or statistics.
- Students who share their work with others are also subject to an academic misconduct penalty. If someone asks for a writing sample for this course, you should direct him/her to the instructor. **DO NOT** give your draft to other students in and outside of the course.
- participation in a group whose aim is to share answers during an exam.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

Language quality

You will be judged on your writing abilities for written assignments. I understand that English is not your first language, but it is your responsibility to take the appropriate measures to avoid mistakes in your written assignments. You could be penalized to up to 5%, to the professor's discretion.

Reading annotations 10% (Deadline: each Friday of every week)

With the help of Perusall, you will have to annotate the readings in this class. This concerns almost all mandatory readings in the class, unless otherwise indicated. Every week, you will have to click on the Perusall assignment on Moodle to start reading and annotating the texts. Be careful, you have until Friday of every week to do that. Failure to engage with the text **on time** will significantly lower your grade.

Why annotate?

Many students tend to skip the mandatory readings or go through superficially. Annotating helps you understand the content of a text and keeping track when you go back to it. Try to focus on the things/ideas that you find the most interesting or challenging. What do you agree/disagree with?

What you should do:

- Underline or highlight important terms and definitions.
- Try to identify the research question and the author's main arguments.
- Write key words and definitions in the margin.

- Highlight passages that you don't fully understand/that are unclear to you.
 - Ask questions in the margins when something strikes you as curious.
 - Add your own thoughts as you read.
 - Make connections to other texts, films, or materials you have read.
- Deadline: Ongoing.

Quiz 5%

Students will have to answer a set of questions on Moodle during Week 3 based on the mandatory readings. Therefore, students have to read the texts *before starting* to answer the quiz. It will consist of multiple-choice questions and short answer questions. The quiz will open on Moodle on Wednesday 27 at noon and will have to be completed before Thursday 28 at noon. You will have a limited time to complete the quiz once started.

Deadline: Thursday, January 28, noon.

Movie review #1 15%

You will watch the Kazakhstani tv serie *Сәке*, episodes 1-2, 11-12 (available for free [here](#)) and write a review to reflect on the concepts of power in Kazakhstan. Your task will be to write a short summary of the plot and present the main characters as well as present an analysis by using the concepts found in some of the readings, in particular, those of Weeks 5, 6 and 7. The word limit is from 800-1000 words. Additional information about the format will be posted in a separate document on Moodle.

Deadline: February 25, noon.

Movie review #2 15%

You will watch the Kazakhstani movie *Келинка тоже человек* (available for free [here](#)) and write a review to reflect on gender roles and identities in Kazakhstan. Your task will be to write a short summary of the movie and introduce the main characters as well as present an analysis by using the concepts found in some of the readings on gender dynamics, in particular, those of Week 11. The word limit is from 800-1000 words. Additional information about the format will be posted in a separate document on Moodle.

Deadline: April 1, noon.

Field report 25%

This assignment can be completed in groups of 2 or 3. Students will have to produce a field report about the structure and responsibilities of their local Akimat. The idea is to help students to make better sense of the country's government's structure and the relations between the local government organs and communities. More details about the format and expectations will be provided in a separate document on Moodle. Deadline: March 11, noon.

Final exam 35%

The exam will be based on class lectures and assigned readings seen since the beginning of the semester. It will consist of two short essays. More details about the format will be provided in a separate document on Moodle and during lectures.

Deadline: April 26, noon.

COMPONENTS OF FINAL MARK

Evaluation Format	Weight	Date
Reading annotations	10%	Ongoing. (Almost) every Friday
Quiz	5%	27-28 January, noon.
Movie review 1	15%	February 18, noon
Movie review 2	15%	April 1, noon
Field report (Group of 2-3)	25%	March 11, noon
Final exam	30%	April 26, noon

GRADING

A	95-100	Excellent, exceeds the highest standards in the assignment or course.
A-	90-94.9	Excellent, meets the highest standards in the assignment or course.
B+	85-89.9	Very good, meets the highest standards in the assignment or course.
B	80-84.9	Good, meets most of the standards in the assignment or course.
B-	75-79.9	More than adequate, shows some reasonable command of the material.
C+	70-74.9	Acceptable, meets basic standards for the assignment or course.
C	65-69.9	Acceptable, meets some of the basic standards for the assignment or course.
C-	60-64.9	Acceptable, while failing short of meeting basic standards for the assignment or course in several ways.
D+	55-59.9	Minimally acceptable.
D	50-54.9	Minimally acceptable, lowest passing.
F	0-49.9	Did not satisfy the basic requirements of the course.

COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION (Optional annotation)

January 11 – 17

[Live presentation of the syllabus+ Q&A](#), Wednesday January 13, 19:00.

Heathershaw, John. 2010. "Central Asian Statehood in Post-Colonial Perspective". In Kavalski, Emilian (Ed). Stable outside, fragile inside: post-Soviet statehood in Central Asia. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate; 87-101.

WEEK 2 LATE SOVIET PERIOD

January 18 – 24

- Dadabayeva, Gulnara and Dina Sharipova. 2016. "Novy Uzen Riots in 1989: Ethnic Conflict or Economic Nationalism?", *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* 26; 225-245.
- Bennigsen, Alexandre. 1988. "Unrest in the World of Soviet Islam". *Third World Quarterly*, 10(2); 770-786.

WEEK 3 TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE AND INSTITUTION BUILDING (NO ANNOTATIONS)

JANUARY 25 – JANUARY 31

- Cummings, Sally. 2005. *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite*. I.B.Tauris; 14-57.
- Nurumov, Dmitry and Vasil Vashchanka. 2016. "Constitutional Development of Independent Kazakhstan". In R. Elgie, S. Moestrup (eds.), *Semi-Presidentialism in the Caucasus and Central Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan; 143-172.

QUIZ. OPENS WEDNESDAY 27, CLOSSES THURSDAY 28.

WEEK 4 NATIONALISM

FEBRUARY 1 – 7

- Burkhanov, Aziz. 2017. "Kazakhstan's National Identity-Building Policy: Soviet Legacy, State Efforts, and Societal Reactions", *Cornell International Law Journal* 50(1).
- Isaacs, Rico. 2016. *Film and Identity in Kazakhstan*. I.B. Tauris. Chapter 4, p. 123-152.

WEEK 5 FORMAL INSTITUTIONS

FEBRUARY 8 – 14

- Janenova, Saltanat and Colin Knox. 2018. "Public councils in Kazakhstan: a case of emergent participative democracy?", *Central Asian Survey* 37 (2), 305-321.
- Siegel, David. 2018. "The Political Logic of Cadre Rotation in Post-Soviet Central Asia." *Problems of Post-Communism* 65(4); 253-270.

READ : [Какие центры силы управляют Казахстаном?](#)

WEEK 6 INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS (NO ANNOTATIONS)

FEBRUARY 15 – 21

- Blavatsky, Pavlo. 2020. Obesity of politicians and corruption in post-Soviet countries. *Economic Transition and Institutional Change*. Online First. 1– 14.
- Oeilinik, Anton. 2015. "Power distance, sub-ethnic groups, and teams of civil servants: Overlooked factors of administrative reform in Kazakhstan?" *Public Policy and Administration* 30(2); 182–205.
- Junisbai, Barbara. 2010. "A Tale of Two Kazakhstans: Sources of Political Cleavage and Conflict in the Post-Soviet Period". *Europe-Asia Studies*, 62(2); 235-269.

MOVIE REVIEW #1 DUE 18TH FEBRUARY, AT NOON.

WEEK 7 POLITICAL LEGITIMATION

FEBRUARY 22 – FEBRUARY 28

- Fauve, Adrien. 2015. "Global Astana: Nation Branding as a Legitimization Tool for Authoritarian Regimes." *Central Asian Survey* 34 (1); 110–24.
- Schatz, Edward. 2009. "The Soft Authoritarian Tool Kit: Agenda-Setting Power in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan." *Comparative Politics* 41(2): 203–22.

WEEK 8 POLITICAL TRANSITION

MARCH 1 –7

Burkhanov, Aziz, Serik Orazgaliyev and Eduardo Araral. 2020. "Political Culture and Power Transition: The Case of Kazakhstan". In Jean-François Caron (ed). *Understanding Kazakhstan's 2019 Political Transition*.

Caron, Jean-François and Viktoriya Malikova. 2020. "Understanding Anti-Regime Activists' Failures During the 2019 Kazakhstan Presidential Election". In Jean-François Caron (ed). *Understanding Kazakhstan's 2019 Political Transition*.

WEEK 9 RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS

MARCH 8 – 14

Beyssembayev, Serik. 2016. "Religious Extremism in Kazakhstan: From Criminal Networks to Jihad". *Central Asia Fellowship Papers* No. 15, February. <https://centralasiaprogram.org/archives/9484>

Thibault, Hélène. 2019. "The Art of Managing Religion in a Post-Soviet Soft Authoritarian State", In Jean-François Caron (ed). *Kazakhstan and the Soviet Legacy Between Continuity and Rupture*. Palgrave-Macmillan; 155-179.

FIELD REPORT DUE 11TH MARCH, AT NOON.

WEEK 10 SOCIAL DYNAMICS

MARCH 15 - 21

Kosnazarov, Daniyar. 2019. "#Hashtag Activism: Youth, Social Media, and Politics," In Marlène Laruelle (Ed.) *The Nazarbayev Generation: Youth in Kazakhstan*.

Burkhanov, Aziz & Yu-Wen Chen. 2016. "Kazakh perspective on China, the Chinese, and Chinese migration", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39(12); 2129-2148.

SPRING BREAK MARCH 22-28

Enjoy!

WEEK 11 GENDER (NO ANNOTATIONS)

MARCH 29 – APRIL 4

Kandiyoti, Deniz. 2007. The politics of gender and the Soviet paradox: neither colonized, nor modern?, *Central Asian Survey*, 26(4); 601-623.

Mambetov, Madi. 2019. "О токсичной маскулинности", *Manshuq*, January 29, <https://manshuq.com/life-toxic-masculinity-01-2019>

Kudaibergenova, Diana T. 2018. "Project Kelin: Marriage, Women, and Re-Traditionalization in Post-Soviet, Kazakhstan. In M Najafizadeh, L Lindsey, Eds. *Women of Asia: Globalization, Development, and Social Change*. Routledge.

MOVIE REVIEW #2 DUE 1ST APRIL, AT NOON.

WEEK 12 FOREIGN POLICY

APRIL 5 – 11

Ambrosio, Thomas. 2020. "Security Hedging After Nazarbayev? The Future of Kazakhstan's Alignment with Russia". In Jean-François Caron (ed). *Understanding Kazakhstan's 2019 Political Transition*.

Vysotskaya, Alena and Guedes Vieira. 2016. "Eurasian integration: elite perspectives before and after the Ukraine crisis", *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32(6); 566-580.

SPECIAL LECTURE: OSCE OFFICE IN NUR-SULTAN, TIME TBD.

WEEK 13 POLITICAL ECONOMY

APRIL 12 – 18

Heathershaw, John and Alexander Cooley. *Dictators without borders: power and money in Central Asia*; p. 1-52.

Dossym Satpayev and Tolganay Umbetaliyeva. 2015. "The protests in Zhanaozen and the Kazakh oil sector: Conflicting interests in a rentier state". *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 6; 122-129.

Ybrayev, Zhandos. 2020. COVID-19 in Kazakhstan: Economic Consequences and Policy Implications.
<https://centralasiaprogram.org/archives/16542>

WEEK 14 MEDIA

APRIL 20 – 26

Lewis, David. 2016. "Blogging Zhanaozen: hegemonic discourse and authoritarian resilience in Kazakhstan", *Central Asian Survey*, 35(3); 421-438.

Nikolayenko, Olena. 2015. "Youth Media Consumption and Perceptions of Electoral Integrity in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan", *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 23(3); 257-276.

FINAL EXAM DUE APRIL 26, AT NOON.