

Course Syllabus

Imperial Legacies: Real and Imagined Borders in Abkhazia Region of Georgia

Malkhaz Toria, Assistant Professor
Iliia State University, School of Arts and Science
E-mail: malkhaz_toria@iliauni.edu.ge

Course Description and General Objectives

This course aims to explore the origins of real or imagined borders within Georgian society under the rule of Tsarist and Soviet Empires. Especially, we will focus on the Abkhazia region of Georgia, a disputed territory that brings together various types of border making. Politics of bordering and belonging was really crucial part of national – Georgian and local – Abkhazian identity rhetoric in later 80s of 20th century, which finally determined the Georgian-Abkhazian armed conflict (1992-1993). The war that resulted in ethnic cleansing, the expulsion of thousands of ethnic Georgians from the Abkhazia region.

During the course we will try to elaborate answers to key questions of the course:

How exactly the Russian and Soviet Empires impacted the process of political and cultural mapping of the region? How they contributed to forming contested identities and drawing dividing lines between Abkhazian and Georgian population?

First, the course will be devoted to construction of adequate theoretical framework and introduction of key concepts based on allied disciplines, fields and subfields of humanitarian and social sciences (history, cultural research, memory studies, border studies, post-colonial studies). Therefore, the course will cohere around key concepts such as imperialism, imperial legacies, post-colonialism, nationalism, discourse, cultural practices, power, borderland, hybridity, etc. Then, one of the main purposes of this course will be to encourage students to open up discussions and critical analysis about modern and historical configurations of political and symbolic boundaries in the region. What is more important, the course subject will be considered from national-Georgian and regional – Abkhazian perspectives. This will unsettle prejudices and challenge fixed assumptions regarding ethnic minorities in Georgia. Apart from this, the Abkhaz question will be observed in a comparative perspective as a broader topic in parallel with other societies, which have similar experience. In this respect, the Balkan region seems an adequate comparison, since the issue of influence of imperial legacies (Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian) on formation of the Balkan cultural landscape is significant.

Specific Learning Objectives

After completion of the course students should be able to define and interpret various theories and cases concerning the subject of the course from the critical viewpoint; list key definitions and concepts; elaborate and define impact of Russian and

Soviet Empires on the process of drawing dividing lines and forming contested national projects in the region; analyze and explain how the drawing borders affects on every day life of local population (politics of exclusion and ethnic cleansing); identify and show dynamics of shaping political and symbolic borders in the region; discuss the problem from both Georgian and Abkhazian angles without stereotypes and prejudices; demonstrate the Abkhazian case in a wide context and compare with similar cases throughout the region or the world.

Course Requirements and Assignments

In each meeting, along with lecture, there would be short responses to readings (1-2 pages) by students. Usually I will assign readings for coming week. These reflections about key aspects of given texts will be disseminated through a university blog created for this class and to which professor and students will contribute. Apart from this, in each class two students will deliver presentations (10 minutes each) on the week's topic and reading material. Lectures and presentations will be followed by questions and class discussions (10-15 minutes in length). Throughout a semester students have to write mid-term paper (5-8 pages) about a topic of their choice. A heavy emphasis is placed on conducting group research projects. Each group will consist of 5-6 students. For their final evaluation, should choose one of three topics provided by me and submit a paper of 10-15 pages.

Grading

Attendance and participation in discussions – 20%;

Mid-term paper – 20%

Group research project - 20%

Presentations – 10%

Group research project/final paper– 30%

Lectures and Reading Assignments

Week 1: Imagining Russian/Soviet Imperial Legacies and Boundaries in Georgia (Theoretical Framework and Key Concepts)

Hobsbawm, E. (1997) 'The End of Empires' in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building: The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*. Ed. by Karen Barkey, Mark Von Hagen. Colorado: Westview Press, pp. 12-18

Jersild, A. (2002) *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845-1917*. Monreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-

Queen's Press, pp. 3-11

Michaelis, P. (2004) 'Prisoners of the Caucasus: From Colonial to Postcolonial Narrative' in *Russian Studies in Literature*, vol. 40, no. 2, Spring 2004, pp. 52-77.

Ram, H. Shatirishvili, Z. (Jan., 2004) 'Romantic Topography and the Dilemma of Empire: The Caucasus in the Dialogue of Georgian and Russian Poetry' in *Russian Review* Vol. 63, No. 1, pp. 1-25.

Said, E. (1979) *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 1-31

Tilly, Ch. (1997) 'How Empires End' in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building: The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*. Ed. by Karen Barkey, Mark Von Hagen. Colorado: Westview Press, pp. 1-11

Week 2: Borders and Cultural Landscape of Georgia Before Russian Domination

Gachechiladze, R. (1996) *The New Georgia: Space, Society, Politics*. Texas A&M University Press, pp. 17-25

Lortkipanidze, M. (1990) *Abkhazia and Abkhazians*. Tbilisi: Metsniereba.

Rayfield, D. (2012) *Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia*. London: Reaktion Books, pp. 222-250

Suny, G. (1994) *The Making of Georgian Nation*. Indiana University Press, pp. 42-62

Week 3: Tsarist Colonization and "Russification Project: Cultural Disintegration of Georgian and Abkhazians (?)"

Gachechiladze, R. (1996) *The New Georgia: Space, Society, Politics*. Texas A&M University Press, pp. 26-30

Jersild, A. (2002) *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845-1917*. Monreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's Press, pp. 59-88; 126-144

King, Ch. (2008) *The Ghost of the Freedom: A history of the Caucasus*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-53

Suny, G. (1994) *The Making of Georgian Nation*. Indiana University Press, pp. 62-95

Week 4: Borders and State Formation: Abkhazia within the First Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921)

Andersen, A. (2014) *Abkhazia and Sochi: The Roots of the Conflict 1918-1921*. Asteroid Publishing, selections

Gachechiladze, R. (1996) *The New Georgia: Space, Society, Politics*. Texas A&M

University Press, pp. 31-32

Rayfield, D. (2012) *Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia*. London: Reaktion Books, pp. 323-338

Week 5: Soviet Occupation of Georgia; Soviet Nationalities Policy and Abkhazian Autonomy

Blitstein, P. (2001) 'Nation-Building or Russification? Obligatory Russian Instruction in The Soviet Non-Russian School, 1938-1953' in *As State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. Ed. by Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 253-274

Cornell, S. (2002) *Autonomy as a Source of Conflict Caucasian Conflicts in Theoretical Perspective*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, selections

Martin, T. (2001) 'An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism' in *As State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. Ed. by Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 67-92

Smith, G (1996). 'The Soviet State and Nationalities Policy' in *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*. Ed. By Graham Smith. New York: Longman, pp. 2-22

Suny, R. (1993) *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 84-126

Week 6: "Territorialisation of Memory" and Modeling Abkhazia as an "Ethnic Landscape": Emerging Conflicting Historical Narratives of Belonging/not Belonging

Burke, P. (1980) "History as Social Memory", in *Memory, History, Culture and the Mind*, Edited by T. Butler, New York, 1980. pp. 97-108

Kuzio, T. "History, Memory and Nation Building in the Post-soviet Colonial Space", *Nationalities Papers*, 30/2, 2002, 244-245.

Smith, A. (1999) *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 57-96

Zarecka, I. (2007) *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory*. Transaction Publishers, selection

Week 7: Mid-term Exam

Week 8: Collapse of Soviet Union and Nation Building in Georgia

- Cornell, S. (2001) *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflicts in the Caucasus*, London: Routledge, Selection
- Motyl, A. (1997) 'Thinking About Empire' in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building: The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*. Ed. by Karen Barkey, Mark Von Hagen. Colorado: Westview Press, pp. 19-39
- Smith, G. 'Post-Colonialism and Borderland Identities', in *Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands*, edited by G. Smith et. al., 1-22. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Suny, R. (1993) *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 127-162
- Walker, Ed. (2003) *Dissolution: Sovereignty and Breakup of the Soviet Union*. Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 55-100
- Walker, Ed. (2006) 'The long Road from Empire: Legacies of Nation Building in the Soviet Successor States' in *From Empire to Nation*, Edited by Joseph Eshterick, Hasan Kayali, Eric Van Young; Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 298-339
- Zürcher, C. (2005) 'Georgia's Time of Troubles, 1989 – 1993' in *Statehood and Security: Georgia after the Rose Revolution*, edited by Bruno Coppieters and Robert Legvold, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005. pp. 83-117

Week 9: Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict and Ethnic Cleansing

- Derluigan, G. (1998) 'The Tale of Two Resorts: Abkhazia and Ajara Before and Since the Soviet Collapse' in *The Myth of "Ethnic Conflict": Politics, Economics, and "Cultural" Violence*, edited by Beverly Crawford and Ronnie D. Lipschutz, Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, pp. 261-292
- Goltz, Th. (2006) *Georgia Diary: A chronicle of War and Political Chaos in the Post-Soviet Caucasus*. M.E. Sharpe, Selections
- Nodia, G. (1998) 'Causes and Visions of Conflict in Abkhazia'. Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper Series, University of California, Berkeley
- Zucher, Ch. (2007) *The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict, and Nationhood in the Caucasus*. New York and London: New York University Press, pp. 115- 151; 209-230

Week 10: Post-war Reality: Politics of Exclusion and Dividing Lines between Abkhazian and Georgian "Spaces"; Legitimizing Ethnic Cleansing

Achugba, T. On the Problem of National Identity of population of South-East Abkhazia.
<<http://www.abkhaziya.org/server-articles/article-87d3c166c7f9911853819db0af7bb420.html>>

Kaufman, St. (2001) *Modern Hatreds The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, Cornell University Press, pp. 1-83

Week 11: Living in Exile: Refugees' Memories and Imaginings of Homeland

Essays from the History of Georgia, Abkhazia from ancient times till the present days,
Edited by J. Gamakharia, Tbilisi,: Intelekti, 2012, selections

Kukhalashvili, R. (Ed) *We Will Go Back: Refugee Women's Histories*. Tbilisi: Kolori,

Trier, T; Lohm, H; Szakonyi, D. (2010) Under Siege: Inter-ethnic Relations in Abkhazia.
Hurst, selection

Zukhbaia. V, (1997) *Sokhumi*. Tbilisi: Tbilisi University Press

Week 12: Rose Revolution 2003, Struggle with Soviet Legacies and Russian-Georgian War in 2008

Asmus, R. (2010) *A Little War That Shook the World: Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*. Palgrave, Macmillan, selections

Popjanevski ,J. (2009) 'From Sukhumi to Tskhinvali: The Path to War in Georgia' in *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia (Studies of Central Asia and the Caucasus) edited by Svante. E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr*. M.E.Sharpe, pp. 143-161

Wertsch, J and Karumidze, Z. (2009) 'Spinning the past: Russian and Georgian accounts of the war of August 2008' in *Memory Studies* 2/3, 377-391.

Wheatley, J. (2005) Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution. Ashgate, pp. 171-216

Week 13: Abkhazia - a Shared Space of Multiple Belongings

Czyzewski, K. (2007) 'Line of Return: Practicing 'the Borderland' in *Dialogue with Czeslaw Milosz*, Michigan Quarterly Review, Vol. 46 Nbr. 4, October 2007, online, available:

<http://www.newschool.edu/tcds/wr09reader_memory/11_Czyzewski_TheLinofRet

urn.pdf>(accessed 22 January 2014)

Francis, C (2011) *Conflict Resolution and Status: The Case of Georgia and Abkhazia (1989-2008)*. ASP - Academic & Scientific Publishers, Selections

Week 14: Presenting the Result of Group Research Projects