

## **VLADIMIR PUTIN**

**OSHER LIFE-LONG LEARNING INSTITUTE, UC BERKELEY**

**SPRING 2024: APRIL 3 – MAY 8, 2024 (Wednesdays, 1:00pm – 3:00pm), by ZOOM**

**INSTRUCTOR: GEORGE W. BRESLAUER, PROFESSOR, UC BERKELEY**

**ABSTRACT:** Born in Leningrad in 1952, Vladimir Putin, now almost 72 years old, has been in power for twenty-four years. The policies he pursued at home and abroad are very different from those adopted by Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980s and Boris Yeltsin in the 1990s. Yet the perception of him in the West varies among observers. Is he a Russian imperialist or a defiant statesman? How did his views and inclinations evolve over time, in response to events at home and abroad? To what extent did his background in the KGB shape his approaches to domestic and foreign policy? We will trace Putin's biography from childhood through to the present, all along asking how he came to be the man who invaded Ukraine in 2022 and has prosecuted that war with little regard for civilian casualties.

There are any number of books about Putin, some of them worthy of your time. In my opinion, the most recent and best biography is Philip Short's, *Putin* (Henry Holt and Company, 2022). It is highly detailed and very long: almost 700 pages of text, followed by 140 pages of endnotes. But it is based on massive numbers of interviews and new documentary evidence. The author is also judicious in his use of evidence and attentive to the contexts in which Putin's personality and beliefs evolved. It also has the virtue of bringing the story up through the invasion of Ukraine. I will be using this book to sort through the evidence of Putin's life journey, always asking the question: who WAS and IS this guy??

**April 3: Images of Putin among foreign observers**

**April 10: Putin's childhood, adolescence, and early career launch: 1952-1980**

**April 17: KGB operative becomes rising public administrator, 1980(?) -1999**

**April 24: President Putin: domestic policies and perspectives, 1999-2021**

**May 1: President Putin: foreign policies and perspectives, 1999-2021**

**May 8: The War Against Ukraine, 2022-present**