

To: The Human Rights Seminar  
From: Kim Lane Scheppele  
Re: Russia Readings

1 September 2009

For our seminar on 10 September, here are some background readings which may help you to understand the complexity of the problem of human rights in Russia. The three articles I have provided for this seminar give a quite different impression of Russia than you will get from the news media in the US.

In the American news media, you see a Russia that is creeping toward authoritarianism, with human rights as a casualty. The strong Russian state shows little regard for its own people, and even less for those who advocate the cause of human rights. The Russia one sees from America is horrible on human rights, bad for reformers and fatal to those who would question the centralization of power.

In these articles, though, you will get a different picture of the daily life of human rights in Russia. Instead of being a strong, centralized and authoritarian state, Russia is here portrayed as a nearly failing state. Russia in these articles has had a long and painful and only partially successful struggle to recover a state that can actually accomplish its tasks of governance after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the process, Russian courts have attempted to patch up the lives of people painfully affected by the dislocations of the transition by working with limited resources and tremendous ingenuity in a difficult environment.

The three articles for our seminar are:

- Lauren McCarthy, *Beyond Corruption: An Assessment of Russian Law Enforcement's Fight against Human Trafficking*, SSRN Working Paper.
- Peter Solomon, *Judicial Power in Russia: Through the Prism of Administrative Justice*, 38 *Law and Society Review* 549 (2004).
- Kim Lane Scheppele, *Double Accounting: The Dual Registers of Narrative Explanation and Monetary Compensation after the Moscow Theater Siege*. Draft article.

If you find this too much to read, read all of the McCarthy paper, pp. 554-562 and 571-574 of the Solomon paper and pp. 1-3 and 13-22 of the Scheppele paper.

See you all next week for a discussion about Russia!