The Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (IERES) is pleased to invite you to:

The Russian Presidential Election of March 2012: Its Impact on Current Politics

with

Peter Reddaway
Professor Emeritus of Political Science and International Affairs, IERES

In 2005-2007, high politics in Russia was heavily influenced by largely covert struggles over who should become president and prime minister in 2008. Putin was subjected to powerful pressures. Sergei Ivanov was evidently dropped by the Putin circle as its presidential candidate only in September 2007. Medvedev was only chosen as his replacement at the last minute - in December. Also, it seems unlikely that Putin was happy to feel he had to become prime minister.

In 2009-2011, similar struggles and uncertainty can be observed regarding the presidential election due in March 2012. Again, a powerful lobby is determined to ensure its political and business survival by persuading or compelling Putin to stay in one of the two top jobs. Again, Putin appears reluctant to stay, even though, as in 2005-2007, he has prepared the ground for doing so if it can't be avoided. As before, he's apparently trying to keep several options open. And as before, it seems likely that the ultimate decision will not emerge until late in the year.

However, Putin's voice may have less weight than it did last time. Although he has successfully deflated Medvedev's hopes of being routinely endorsed for a second term, his own standing in the ruling elite has fallen quite substantially. A growing number of powerful figures and groups oppose quite strongly the idea that he should return to the presidency. They believe that he has led Russia into a political and economic dead-end. A spate of statements to this effect has appeared in the media and on the Internet, along with revelations of Putin's profound corruption. True, no alternative leader has yet emerged. But his opponents' tactics may be to have Medvedev stay on as president, backed by a strong and competent person as prime minister. Other combinations also seem possible. Much may depend on personalities, chance factors, and how factional struggles play out.

Peter Reddaway is an Emeritus Professor of Political Science & International Affairs at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. His specialty is contemporary Russian politics. He retired in 2004. From 1986 to 1989, he directed the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies. From 1965-1985 he taught political science at the London School of Economics.

Thursday, March 3, 2011
2:00-3:30 p.m.
1957 E Street, NW, Suite 412
Please RSVP with your name and affiliation to ieresgwu@gwu.edu.

This event is on the record.