

Blogging Soviet History

Connecting to the course:

You have some options here. Consider the following and then act accordingly.

- 1) Create a blog (website) on VT's WordPress installation. It is free and secure, but maybe not permanent. Follow the directions here: <http://blogs.it.vt.edu/>. Consult this link to help you customize your blog and familiarize yourself with VT's wordpress site: <https://blogs.it.vt.edu/support/documentation/>
- 2) Create a self-hosted blog (website) on WordPress.com: <https://signup.wordpress.com/signup/> . You have the option of a free account (there will be some advertisements and limits on the kinds of themes you can use) or, a premium account for up to \$99/ year (no ads, better support, option of using premium themes – which cost additional \$).
- 3) Get a student account through Reclaim Hosting (<https://reclaimhosting.com/>). Reclaim is a full-service web host geared specifically for academic communities. All of my websites are there, including the main course website. A student / individual plan costs \$25 / year (<https://reclaimhosting.com/shared-hosting/>) but if you use this discount code: **anelson\$16** you will get a \$5 rebate.

This is a **great deal** because it gives you complete control over your digital portfolio. You decide what goes on your domain and how long it stays there. You may also have as many sites as you want, for just \$25 / year. Reclaim also offers much more than WordPress. If you are a web geek or aspiring web geek, you will be awed by all of the applications they support and how much fun you could have playing with them. If you just want WordPress you'll need to whizz through (ignore) lots of the bells and whistles of your control panel (C panel). From the C panel you want to “install Wordpress” and then choose a URL for your blog. Once you get your blog set up you should be able to work on it without using the C panel.

- ⇒ **As soon as you have a blog, please submit the URL here:**
<http://goo.gl/forms/F5irNVqiHP>
The form is also on the main course website.
- ⇒ **We will add it to the mother blog for the course (Do this no later than 5pm Thursday, January 21st)**

⇒ **Minor things that will make a major difference:**

1. Choose a user name on Wordpress that is close to your real name: Good = A. Sullivan Bad = happyhokie99
2. When you set up your blog check the box that allows search engines to index your site.
3. On the dashboard, choose "settings" and "discussion". You may keep the boxes checked that ask for a user to provide an email (this will not display when the comment is published) but please, please, please uncheck the boxes that hold comments for moderation. (you will probably want to change this back at the end of the semester.)
4. Check the main course website to confirm that your blog has been syndicated. Your blog's title will appear on the "contributors" page. It may take up to 24 hours for this to happen, so please be patient. After you submit your first research post it will show up in the "new recruits" section of the site. It will also be available by clicking on the "Week 1" category on the right hand sidebar.
5. If you have trouble syndicating your blog, please double check the steps above. If you deleted the first "hello world" post, create a new one.
6. If you are still having trouble, please contact David Atkins(davidla5@vt.edu).

Blogging Basics

You are required to blog at least seven times over the course of the semester, and you are required to comment on another person's blog at least three times per week (33 times over the course of the semester). You may, of course post and comment more frequently. **Everyone will complete the first two blogposts on the schedule.** After that, you may choose your remaining posts according to the following distribution: Three posts before the 1st Midterm; Three additional posts before the 2nd MT; and 1 Post before the final essay.

There is no assigned length or format for your blogging. You may use and include texts, images, video and audio files in your posts. If there are suggested materials for the week (i.e. "[Seventeen Moments in Soviet History \(1917\)](#)" or [The Current Digest of the Russian Press](#)), you need to use them as the foundation for your post, but can and should use other resources as well. Hyperlinking in the blog format simplifies the "citation" process, so take advantage of that to incorporate a range of materials and perspectives into your posts.

The main assignment here is to engage the course materials thoughtfully and substantively, to use them to develop your understanding of the key developments and dynamics of Soviet history, to become more adept at historical analysis and more proficient locating and using historical sources, and to explore and play with the blogging modality. Although the Freeze text is assigned as a foundation and "safety net," you will be creating the majority of the course content in your blog posts and in your discussions with each other, both on the blogs and in class.

Commenting Basics

Reading and responding to other students' blog posts gives you the opportunity to ask questions about a particular topic, elaborate on a point made in the blog post, relate the material in your own post (or another student's) to the post you're commenting on, and generally reflect on how

the post helps you better understand Soviet history. You need to comment on at least three posts every time we blog (even if you don't post that week).

Professionalism and VT's Principles of Community will guide our engagement with each other in the web-based components of the course as well as in our class meetings.

A Motherblog for the Motherland (Родина)

Your individual blogs are syndicated to the main course blog, aka "The Mother Blog" (<http://amynelson.net/soviethistory16/>). This means that your weekly post will be "fed" to this site, which serves as the gateway to our course. Each week, the motherblog's editorial team will identify exemplary posts to highlight on the slider at the top of the blog. These posts, and others that display exemplary analysis, research, and insight will be awarded a "red star." Some posts will also be placed in the "Comrades' Corner," for further discussion during class. The class will also identify a "student's choice" post each week, and that post will also get a prominent position ("above the fold") in the weekly edition. Of course there will be rewards for those who achieve these distinctions) So in effect there will be a weekly digest of the main blog, focusing on a particular set of issues in Soviet history, and we will all contributing articles to each issue. We will also use the course blog at some point during most class sessions.



One Week in the Life of the Motherblog

In order for this to work, we will need to stay on the following schedule:

Sundays before 10pm — individual blog posts due.

Mondays — read and comment on other blog posts

Mondays before 10 pm — comments on individual blog posts due.

Wednesdays before 5pm — "Press time" for the Weekly Edition of the Motherblog for the Motherland.

Thursdays — start working on next blog post.

Your Audience

Is the class (and me and the editorial team). But it also includes EVERYONE. All the time (because it's on the World Wide Web). So put your best, most accomplished, mature and professional foot forward. Don't put anything on line that you wouldn't want your grandmother or Stephen Colbert to read. And if you do make a mistake, or realize something is not quite right with what you posted, please fix it. One of the many beauties of the blog is that it's easy to touch-up and re-edit a post.

Evaluation

Individual blog posts and comments are not graded, but will be considered holistically as evidence of your general commitment to the course and its content.