

# 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Russia

History 3644 Spring 2018 / CRN 18553



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Major Williams 425  
Thurs. 1-3 & by appt.

## Course Description

“Anyone who does not regret the passing of the Soviet Union has no heart. Anyone who wants it restored has no brains.”

–Vladimir Putin

From the 2000 presidential campaign

“Above all, we should acknowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century.”

– Vladimir Putin,

Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, April 25, 2005

We live in exciting times! Investigations into Russia’s meddling in the US presidential election and the uncertainty surrounding relations between Russia and the United States under a new administration have been key concerns in our political life for the last year. 2017 also marked the centennial of the revolutions that brought the Soviet Union into being and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the country’s demise. The above quotes by the president of the Russian Federation speak to the profound, contradictory, and often tragic historical legacy of the Soviet project and its far-reaching implications for the contemporary world. That history is the subject of this course. Beginning with the twilight of the Romanov dynasty and ending with the dawn of the post-communist order, we will explore the unique and compelling drama that was the Soviet experience. We will pay particular attention to the revolutionary origins of the communist state, Stalin’s campaign to modernize the country’s economy, the Soviet Union’s role in World War II, the dawn of the space age and reform movements in the postwar period, and the collapse of communism in the early nineties. By the end of this course, you should have gained considerable insight on Mr. Putin’s enigmatic assessment of a country that no longer exists. Learning about the Soviet experience, and the historic relationship between various regions and ethnic groups will also help you make sense of the ongoing crisis in Ukraine.

## This is a course you **make**, not a course you **take**... ..

While this syllabus provides a road map for the topics we will cover this semester, a large part of our work together will be a collaborative discussion and analysis of the key developments in Soviet History. **You will create most of the content for the course** by doing research, publishing your findings on your blog, and discussing them with other members of the class. We – the editorial team and the class as a whole, will curate that content into a weekly edition of the motherblog. The motherblog serves as the backbone of a networked learning environment which will use blogging, Twitter, and other learning technologies to help you construct, elaborate and refine a narrative arc and interpretive framework for Soviet history. This is not a “regular” history course! It is a collaborative effort to make sense of a complex and important historical experience in a geographically significant region. This format will help us learn with and from each other. We will create the course together in an immediately accessible, professional, enduring and transparent medium. We are in this together and you must be present to win.

### Course objectives

The blogging assignments are intended to leverage the freely accessible resources of the World Wide Web as well as the digitized collections of the Virginia Tech libraries in order to:

- Develop your skills in historical analysis
- Develop your skills identifying, using and citing historical sources
- Develop understanding of the key developments and dynamics of Soviet History

### Course Requirements

- Interest in Soviet history and commitment to knowing more about it
- Willingness to explore collaborative networked learning by completing the required web work and participating in F2F class sessions
- Setting-up, developing and maintaining a blog of your research
- Two midterms / self assessments
- A final self-reflection on the collapse of the Soviet Union and your work in the course

### Required Text

- **Russia. A History, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition** Oxford University Press, 2009), Gregory L. Freeze, ed.

### Your Grade Will be Calculated as Follows:

Blog contributions (6 minimum)*	40%
Responding to classmates' blog posts (27 minimum)**	10%
Participation and in-class activities***	10%
First midterm and reflection	10%
Second midterm and reflection	15%
Final essay and self-assessment	15%

**\*Blogging is learning....**

Everything you need to know about the spirit and logistics of blogging is contained in the “Blogging Soviet History” handout. Just note two things here:

- 1) Individual posts and comments are not graded, but will be considered holistically as evidence of your general commitment to the course and its content.
- 2) There are 9 blogging opportunities in all. You need to post at least 6 times: Twice before the 1<sup>st</sup> MT (that means the first two posts are required for everyone); Three more before the 2<sup>nd</sup> MT, and one more before the final.

**\*\*Commenting is Caring**

You need to read and comment on at least 3 posts **every time the class blogs** (not just when you post).

**\*\*\*More About Making the Grade**

Because this is a course you make, rather than one where content is delivered to you, you must actively contribute to our learning community for it to thrive. We will be learning with and from each other, and our interactions (on-line and F2F) are essential to making the course work, as is consistent preparation for those interactions. Our networked format expands and amplifies what we do in class, it does not replace class. You cannot “make-up” classes that you miss. I will consider the following then calculating the “participation and in-class activities” component of your grade:

- 1) Class attendance is mandatory. Excessive absences (more than 3) will result in a lower overall grade in the class.
- 2) Participation in class discussions and activities is mandatory. Many of these activities are collaborative efforts. If you fail to prepare or participate you are letting others down as well as yourself.
- 3) I will evaluate the attendance and participation component of your grade at the end of the term based on your self-assessment and my assessment of your regular, capable contributions to the class sessions and online class activities. Being present is only a start. You need to be engaged to receive “full credit” for this element.

**Academic Integrity**

The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states:

**“As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”**

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code. For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit: <http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

**Special Needs**

If you need accommodations because of a dis/ability (learning disability, attention deficit disorder, psychological, physical, etc.), if you have emergency medical information to

share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment to see me as soon as possible.

### Safe Zone

My office is a certified [Safe Zone](#), and I am committed to creating a more inclusive and accepting environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning communities and their allies. For more information on LGBTQ services and opportunities, please visit [https://ccc.vt.edu/advocacy/Cultural\\_Community\\_Centers/lgbtq-center/lgbtq.html](https://ccc.vt.edu/advocacy/Cultural_Community_Centers/lgbtq-center/lgbtq.html)

**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.**

## Schedule and Assignments

<u>WEEK</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>COMMON MATERIALS</u>
<b>One</b>		
1/16	Course introduction	
1/18	The Imperial Heritage	Freeze Ch. 7, pp. 199-233
Th. 1/19	➔ Create your blog and submit it for syndication by 9am	
<b>Sun 1/21</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Blogpost: The Empire That Was Russia</b> EVERYONE MUST POST	<b>Prokudin-Gorskii</b> <b>photograph collection</b>
<b>Two</b>		
1/23	The Revolutionary Movement	
1/25	1905: The First Russian Revolution	Freeze Ch. 8, pp. 234-268
<b>Three</b>		
1/30	Constitutional Experiment	
2/1	World War I	Freeze Ch. 9a, pp. 269-273
<b>1905 Workshop (in-class activity)</b>		
<b>Four</b>		
2/6	Кто кого? The Revolutions of 1917	Freeze Ch. 9c, pp. 273-296
2/8	More Revolution....	
<b>Sun 2/11</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Blogpost: Revolutions of 1917</b> EVERYONE MUST POST	<b>17 Moments (1917); DHR</b> <b>Module 3</b>
<b>Five</b>		
2/13	Civil War & War Communism	Freeze Ch. 9b, pp. 296-306
<b>2/15</b>	<b>— First Exam —</b>	
<b>Six</b>		
2/20	TBA	
2/22	NEP and Stalin's Rise	Freeze Ch. 10, pp. 307-340

<b>2/25</b>	<b>3rd Blogpost: Revolutionaries to Rulers</b>	<b>17 Moments (1921, 1924, 1929)</b>
<b>2/26</b>	<b>Drop Deadline</b>	
<b>Seven</b>		
2/27	New Men and Women	
3/1	Collectivization and Industrialization	Freeze Ch. 11a, pp. 341-357
<b>SPRING BREAK</b>		
<b>Eight</b>		
3/13	Purges, Pilots and Building Socialism	
3/15	Fascism and the Interwar Period	Freeze Ch. 11b, pp. 358-373
<b>3/18</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Blogpost: Pilots, Purges &amp; Building Socialism</b>	<b>17 Moments (1934, 1936, 1939)</b>
<b>Nine</b>		
3/20	The Great Patriotic War	
3/22	Cold War / High Stalinism	Freeze Ch. 12, pp. 374-405
<b>Historical Interpretation (in-class activity)</b>		
<b>3/25</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> Blogpost: WWII / High Stalinism</b>	<b>17 Moments (1943, 1947)</b>
<b>Ten</b>		
3/28	Virgin Lands	
3/30	Thaw	Freeze Ch. 13a, pp. 406-434
<b>4/1</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> Blogpost: Khrushchev and the Thaw</b>	<b>17 Moments (1954, 1956) Current Digest</b>
<b>Eleven</b>		
4/3	Space Age	
4/5	1968	Freeze Ch. 13b, pp. 434-450
	<b>7<sup>th</sup> Blogpost: The Soviet Sixties</b>	<b>17 Moments (1961, 1968) Current Digest; CIA</b>
<b>Twelve</b>		
4/10	Exam Prep	
<b>4/12</b>	<b>Second Exam</b>	
<b>Thirteen</b>		
4/17	Retrenchment at Home and Abroad	
4/19	Afghanistan	
<b>4/23</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> Blogpost: Rockers, Dissidents, and War in Afghanistan</b>	<b>17 Moments (1973, 1980) Current Digest</b>
<b>Fourteen</b>		
4/24	Chernobyl	
4/26	Glasnost' and Perestroika	Freeze Ch. 14, pp. 451-464

**4/29**      **9<sup>th</sup> Blogpost: Environmental Disaster, Political Ferment, End of Empire**      **17 Moments (1985, 1991) Current Digest, Proquest Newspapers**

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**Fifteen**

5/1      The Current Crisis      Freeze, Ch. 14, pp. 464-488

**5/4**      **Final Essays Due**

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