Blogging Soviet History

How to Connect to the course (3 Options):

1) 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 / personal plan costs $30 / year (https://reclaimhosting.com/shared-hosting/) This is a **great deal** because it gives you complete control over your digital portfolio. You also get free ID protection and great support from real people. You may also have as many sites (and sub-domains) as you want.

Reclaim also offers over 100 applications in addition to WordPress. So if you're interested in Omeka, Drupal, Pressbooks, Scalar – whatever, this is the hosting service for you!
If you just want WordPress you will 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 can work on it without using the C panel.

2) Create a self-hosted blog (website) on WordPress.com:
https://wordpress.com/pricing/
The basic plan is FREE. You will have a WordPress.com subdomain, access to community forums, and the choice of many free themes / templates. The site is yours "forever." For $48/year you get your own domain name and access to email and live chat support.

3) Create a blog (website) on VT's WordPress installation.
It is free, but you will not "own" the URL for your site and you will have to use the WordPress.com community forums for "help." Follow the directions here:
http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/ This link can help you customize your blog and familiarize yourself with VT's wordpress site, but the information is dated and may not be super helpful:
https://blogs.lt.vt.edu/support/documentation/

As soon as you have a blog, please submit the URL and other information here:
https://forms.gle/aZreB7oHhHBYZDg68

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 10 pm Sunday, January 26)**

⇨ **Please read and follow these instructions before filling out the form:**
1. Choose a user name on WordPress that is close to your real name, i.e. A. Nelson **not** HappyHokie99.

2. Make sure to provide the URL of the front side of your blog, i.e. https://emmajeanhistory.wordpress.com/ . Copy the URL that you see as you are reading or looking at your website.

3. Do not delete "the Journey Begins" or "Hello World" post (yet).

4. 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 make sure these two boxes are NOT checked: 1) "Users must be registered and logged in to comment" (under "other comment settings); and 2)"a comment is held for moderation" (under "email me whenever")** You will probably want to adjust these settings at the end of the semester.)

5. 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 post it will show up in the "new recruits" section of the site. It will also be available by clicking on the "First Weekly Edition" category on the righthand sidebar.

6. If you have trouble syndicating your blog, please double check the steps above. If you deleted "the Journey Begins" post, create a new one.

7. If you are still having trouble, please email Clay and make arrangements to meet with him to fix the problem.

Blogging Basics

You are required to blog at least four times over the course of the semester, and you are required to comment on another person's blog at least three times every time there is a blogging opportunity (21 times over the course of the semester). You may, of course post and comment more frequently. **Everyone will complete the first blogpost on the schedule**. After that, you may choose three opportunities from the remaining five.

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. We will be discussing how to properly cite your sources during class. 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 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 much of the course content in your blog posts and in your discussions with each other, both on the blogs, via hypothes.is 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 must comment on at least three posts every time we blog -- even if you don't post that week. You should also **always** respond to comments people make on your posts.

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." This means your posts will be "fed" to this site, which serves as the gateway to our course. Each time we blog, I 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. So in effect there will be a regular digest of the main blog, focusing on a particular set of issues in Soviet history, and we will all contributing articles to each issue. As authors, your goal is to engage your audience and be featured in the digest. 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
Monday before 10 pm — comments on individual blog posts due.
Tuesday – Discussion of posts during class.
Wednesday – Featured Content moved to slider and front page.

Your Audience

Is the class (and me). 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 is 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.