

20th-Century Russia

History 3644 Spring 2020/ CRN 20529

Newman Library 124 “Athenaeum”

Instructor:

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GTA

Email:



Office:

Tues 12-2 & by appt.

by appointment

Main Course Website:

<http://amynelson.net/soviethistorys20/>

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

These are exciting times to study Soviet history! More than a quarter-century after the end of the Cold War, the politics of the former Soviet Union play crucial roles on the world stage and figure prominently in the domestic politics of the United States. 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 and the Russian Federation’s relations with other members of the “near abroad.”

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 much of the content for the course by doing research, publishing your findings on your blog, annotating materials online, and discussing them during class. Mr. Adkins and I will curate your research posts into six weekly editions of the motherblog. The motherblog provides the backbone of a networked learning environment which uses blogging, hypothes.is, and other learning technologies to help you construct, elaborate and refine a narrative arc and interpretive framework for Soviet history. This is not a course where content is “delivered” to you! It is a collaborative effort to make sense of a complex and important historical experience in a geographically significant region. This format helps us learn with and from each other as we create the course in an immediately accessible, professional, enduring and transparent medium. We are in this together and you must be present to win.

Course objectives

Assignments and activities 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
- A final self-reflection on the collapse of the Soviet Union and your work in the course

Required Text

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

Your Grade Will be Calculated as Follows:

Blog contributions (4 minimum)*	25%
Responding to classmates' blog posts (18 minimum)**	10%
Responding to comments on your blogposts	
1905 Workshop, Historical Interpretation Activity, Hypothes.is annotations and participation***	10%
First Midterm	20%
Second Midterm	25%
Final essay and self-assessment	10%

***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 6 blogging opportunities in all. You need to post at least 4 times: Once before the 1st MT (that means the first post is required for everyone) and three more before the end of the term.

****Commenting is Caring**

You must read and comment on at least 3 posts **every time the class blogs** (not just when you post). You also should respond to comments people make on your posts.

*****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 disability (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/index/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

WEEK	TOPIC	COMMON MATERIALS
One		
1/21	Course introduction	
1/23	The Imperial Heritage	Freeze Ch. 7, pp. 199-233
Sun 1/26	Create your blog and submit it for syndication to the course website	
Two		
1/28	Imperial Heritage – Pt. 2	
1/30	The Revolutionary Movement	Freeze Ch. 8a, pp. 234-250
Sun. 2/2	1st Blogpost: The Empire That Was Russia EVERYONE MUST POST	Prokudin-Gorskii photograph collection
Three		
2/4	1905: The First Russian Revolution	
2/6	“Constitutional Experiment”	Freeze Ch. 8b, pp. 250-268
	1905 Workshop (in-class activity this week)	
Four		
2/11	World War I / February Revolution	Freeze Ch. 9a, pp. 269-288
2/13	Кто кого? The Revolutions of 1917	
Five		
2/18	The Bolsheviks Come to Power	Freeze Ch. 9b, pp. 288-296
2/20	— First Exam —	
Six		
2/25	New Men and Women	Freeze Ch. 10, pp. 329-340
2/27		Film: “Bed and Sofa”
3/2	Drop Deadline	
Seven		
3/3	Civil War	Freeze Ch. 9c, pp. 296-306
3/5	Revolutionaries to Rulers	Freeze Ch. 10, pp. 307-340
SPRING BREAK		

Eight		
3/17	NEP and Stalin's Rise	
3/19	First Five Year Plan	Freeze Ch. 11a pp. 341-358
Sun 3/22	2nd Blogpost: From Nep to "The Great Turn"	17 Moments (1921, 1924, 1929)
Nine		
3/24	Building Socialism	Freeze Ch. 11b, pp. 358-374
3/26	Fascism and the Interwar Period	
Sun 3/29	3rd Blogpost: Pilots, Purges and Building Socialism	17 Moments (1934, 1936, 1939)
Ten		
3/31	The Great Patriotic War	Freeze Ch. 12, pp. 374-405
	Historical Interpretation (in-class activity)	
4/2	Cold War / High Stalinism	
	4th Blogpost: WWII / High Stalinism	17 Moments (1943, 1947)
Eleven		
4/7	Virgin Lands / Thaw	
4/9	Space Age	Freeze Ch. 13a, pp. 406-434
Sun. 4/12	5th Blogpost: Khrushchev and the Thaw	17 Moments (1954, 1956, 1961) Current Digest; CIA
Twelve		
4/14	Retrenchment at Home and Abroad	Freeze Ch. 13b, pp. 434-450
4/16	Rockers and Dissidents	
Thirteen		
4/21	Détente and War in Afghanistan	
4/23	-- Second Exam --	
Fourteen		
4/28	Chernobyl	
4/30	Glasnost' and Perestroika	Freeze Ch. 14, pp. 451-464
Sun. 5/3	6th Blogpost: Environmental Disaster, Political Ferment, End of Empire	17 Moments (1973, 1980, 1985) Current Digest
Fifteen		
5/5	From Reform to Collapse	
Sun. 5/10	Final Essays Due	