

20th-Century Russia: Pandemic Edition



History 3644 Spring 2020/ CRN 20529

Instructor:

Prof. A. Nelson

Email:

Consultation:

Thurs. 12-2
via Zoom or Slack
By appointment via
Zoom or Slack

GTA:

Mr. A

Email:

Main Course Website:

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

Somewhat Synchronous Interaction For Now:

TTh 9:30-10:45

Greetings all! So much has changed since we parted two weeks ago. I hope this finds you all well and safely hunkered down. We will be resuming our exploration of Soviet history next week, but obviously circumstances are fluid, and no one can predict exactly how this pandemic will unfold. **As your instructor, I am committed to helping you get as much out of the course in its new format as possible. At the same time, my primary concern is your well-being and safety in these challenging times. We will proceed accordingly. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have questions or concerns at any time.** I will send out an announcement soon outlining more details of my provisional plan and soliciting input on where we go from here. Meanwhile, please read through this revised syllabus so you will be ready for the resumption of coursework next Tuesday.

Now, more than ever, this is a course you make, not a course you take.....

We will be shifting more of our focus onto self-directed inquiry and collaborative learning via your blogs and the course website. This means that I will be more of a “guide on the side” and expert consultant than a font of knowledge and narrator of PowerPoints. Now, more than ever, you will be in charge of your learning, and you will have considerable latitude in choosing a path that makes the most sense for your interests and circumstances.

We will move to a weekly blogging model (this is just a minor tweak to the previous plan). At the beginning of the week we will complete an integrative review of the previous week's posts using some combination of our Drive folder, Zoom, Hypothes.is and Slack. Then I will provide you with an introduction and key materials for the next topic. Then you will choose a specific issue or topic to research and write about, using the “[key questions](#)” to identify a suitable analytical framework. At least initially, I will be available virtually at our regular time (TTh 9:30-10:45) via Zoom or Slack. We will revisit the usefulness of these sessions in a week

or so. For now, I am also available for consultation via Zoom or Slack on Thursdays from 12 to 2.

Revised Course objectives

Assignments and activities are (still) 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

In addition, I hope the course can provide a source of support and community for all of us as we make our way through the next several weeks of uncertainty.

Revised 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

Accessing the Required Text

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

I realize many of you did not pack the Freeze text when you went home for Spring Break. Alas, this is the one print / purchased resource you will need for the remainder of the course. You have several options:

- 1) Pat yourself on the back if you DO have access to the book!
- 2) Use the library's [2nd edition of the ebook \(from 2002\)](#) for now. The pages are different, but the chapter numbers are the same (until the final part of the course);
- 3) buy the kindle version or a(nother) used paperback version of the 3rd edition for less than \$11;
- 4) stay tuned for access to a scanned copy of the 3rd edition that the library will make available. There is a huge backlog for scanning, and I have no idea how long it will be before this option is available. I will keep you posted.

Pre-Covid-19 Grading Formula:

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%

Brave New Grading Formula

Letter grade up to Spring Break*	40%
Includes: 1st Blogpost and comments, 1905 workshop, attendance/participation and 1st Midterm	
Final Portfolio	25%
3 more blogposts (six opportunities)** final formatting of your website	
Responding to classmates' blog posts (18 minimum)***	10%
Responding to comments on your blogposts	
Final Exam and Self-Reflection	25%

***I will post a letter grade for your work up to Spring break on Canvas in the next few days. As long as you complete the remaining work for the course your grade can only improve. In other words, from here on out, you have the opportunity to raise your grade as well as some protection against having it lowered due to circumstances beyond anyone's control.**

****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 more blogging opportunities. You need to post at least 3 more times before the end of the term.

*****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.**

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 the current crisis has created particular difficulties for you, please contact me as soon as possible.

Safe Zone

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 all aspects of the course.

Revised Topic and Assignment Schedule:

I am setting this up so we can proceed mostly asynchronously, but will still have the opportunity for synchronous interaction during our scheduled class time if that suits the collective. Here's the initial version of the new schedule:

This week (3/23/3/29):

Tuesday (3/24)

*Blogpost guidelines posted on the website and materials for the week posted on Drive. Start reading the assigned pages in Freeze.

***9:30-10:45:** I will be in my Zoom room and on Slack (you will be getting invitations for both of these) and welcome any of you who can join me. I will plan to give a short (10 minutes max) intro to the week's topic, and field questions about the readings (Freeze and other materials) and blogging prompt.

*Depending on how you all respond to the survey I'm about to send out, we can set up asynchronous activities on the unit's material and then complete or discuss them on Thursday (9:30-10:45).

Wednesday (3/25): Choose a topic and start working on your blogpost!

Thursday (3/26):

9:30-10:45: I will be in my Zoom room and on Slack, at least initially (see above)

12-2: consultation (aka "office hours") via Zoom or Slack. Keep working on your blogpost!

Sunday 3/29 10pm: Blogposts due

Next Week (3/30-4/5):

Monday 3/30: Read and comment on blogposts (even if you didn't post, you still need to comment)

Tuesday 3/31

9:30-10:45: Zoom and / or Slack integrative review of blogposts -- looking at the "key questions" on the website (because these are the kinds of questions you will respond to on the exam).

The next blogpost guidelines will be posted on the website and materials for the week posted on Drive.

I will plan to give a short (10 minutes max) intro to the week's topic, and field questions about the readings (Freeze and other materials) and blogging prompt. Depending on the will of the collective we can set up asynchronous activities on the unit's material and then complete or discuss them on Thursday (9:30-10:45).

Start reading the assigned pages in Freeze

Wednesday (4/1): Choose a topic and start working on your blogpost!

Thursday (4/2):

9:30-10:45: I will be in my Zoom room and on Slack, at least initially (see above)

12-2: consultation (aka “office hours”) via Zoom or Slack. Keep working on your blogpost!

Sunday 4/5 10pm: Blogposts due

Date	Topic	Common Reading
Week 8 (3/17-19)	COVID-19 Break	
Week 9 (3/24-3/26)	Rise of Stalin / The First Five Year Plan (20s)	Freeze Ch. 11a, pp. 341-358
Sun 3/29	2nd Blogpost: From NEP to “The Great Turn”	17 Moments (1924, 1929)
Week 10 (3/31-4/2)	Building Socialism (30s)	Freeze Ch. 11b, pp. 358-374
Sun. 4/5	3rd Blogpost: Pilots, Purges and Building Socialism	17 Moments (1934, 1936, 1939)
Week 11 (4/7-4/9)	The Great Patriotic War / High Stalinism	Freeze Ch. 12, pp. 374-405
Sun. 4/12	4th Blogpost: WWII / High Stalinism	17 Moments (1943, 1947)
Week 12 (4/14-4/16)	Virgin Lands / De-Stalinization / Space Age	Freeze Ch. 13a, pp. 406-434
Sun. 4/19	5th Blog Post: Khrushchev and the Thaw	17 Moments (1954, 1956, 1961); Current Digest
Week 13 (4/21-4/23)	Detents, Dissidents and the invasion of Afghanistan	Freeze Ch. 13b, 435-450
Sun. 4/26	6th Blogpost: Rockers and Reaction	17 Moments (1968, 1973, 1980); Current Digest
Week 14 (4/28-4/30)	Chernobyl / Glasnost’ and Perestroika	Freeze Ch. 14, pp. 451-464
Sun. 5/3	7th Blogpost: Winds of Change Final Portfolio Done	17 Moments (1985, 1991); Current Digest; Chernobyl video module
Week 15 (5/5)	Things Fall Apart	
Sun. 5/10	Final Exam / Reflection	