

Soviet/Post-Soviet Russia  
HIST 664/NORS 664  
Fall 2012  
TTh 11:30-1  
Gruening 401

Brian Kassof  
bkassof@alaska.edu  
474-6507  
Office Hours: MT 1:30-3  
or by appointment  
Gruening 605A

The goal of this class is to introduce students to the history of the Soviet Union. We will look at both high-level political, economic, and cultural developments, and the everyday lives of the people, from the 1917 Revolution through the end of the Soviet state in 1991. We will examine how the Communist Party tried to create a socialist, industrial Utopia in one of the poorest and most rural countries in Europe, creating a multi-national empire that eventually rose to become a "super-power," before its eventual collapse and disintegration. We will also consider the ways of constructing historical narratives and different historiographic debates about Soviet history. Students should have graduate standing prior to this class, or have permission of instructor.

Course goals: In addition to specific knowledge of the period, students should develop or refine a number of skills, such as the critical reading of texts, both primary and secondary. Students will learn how to recognize the implications and significance of arguments, how different ideas interact and shape one another, and how different historiographic arguments fit together. They will also develop an awareness of how causal factors interact to bring about historical events. They will also improve their skills evaluating the strengths and weakness of different historical approaches, the use of evidence by authors, and the significance of different narrative approaches to history. Students will work on their ability to formulate historical questions, gather evidence, construct an argument, and convey their ideas in oral and written form.

**Evaluation:** Grades will be based on the following criteria, 600 points total.

**Attendance and discussion: 90 points (15%)** Discussion of readings and other materials is an integral part of this class. Students are expected to do all

readings and come to class prepared to discuss them. If you do not participate, I will call on you directly. Because of the nature of the course, regular and timely attendance is essential. Students are allowed two unexcused absences during the course of the semester—additional unexcused absences will impact your grade. Absences for legitimate emergencies and documented health issues will be excused.

**Mid-Term Exam: 90 points (10%)** An in-class mid-term covering material up to and including the Great Break will be given on October 19.

**Take-Home Final: 90 points (15%)** Questions for the take-home final will be distributed in class on Thursday December 9; the final is due at noon on December 16.

**3 Primary Source Reactions: 15 points each (45 points total, 7.5%)**  
During the course of the semester students will be expected to post 3 reactions/questions about primary source readings assigned for class on Blackboard by noon the day before the texts are due. These posts should be at least 4-5 sentences long and can (but do not have to) be based on reading questions I suggest in class. Other students are encouraged to respond to these posts on Blackboard as well.

**On-line discussion board: 45 points (7.5%)** Graduate students are expected to provide written responses to the supplementary graduate readings (these are marked by an asterisk on the syllabus) in a moderated discussion board on Blackboard. Each student will take turns formulating a question about the reading (how it relates to other course materials, what specific insights it provides to Russian history, or similar questions), and the others will respond with entries of at least 200 words. Questions will be due 5 days before the end of the unit—responses are due the last day of the unit.

**Article Review: 90 points (15%)** Students will read and review a connected series of articles on a topic in Soviet history. Your review should address the major historiographic issues at stake, provide an overview of each author's position, and explore the implications of their different approaches. Length--about 8 pp. Due October 5.

A number of article clusters will be posted to Blackboard.

**Research Paper: 180 points (30%)** Students will research and write a 22-25 pp. paper on an approved topic of their choosing. The assignment consists of several components:

Topic and preliminary bibliography: 20 points, due on 9/30

Annotated bibliography: 20 points, due on 11/4

Outline/rough draft: 20 points, due on 11/23

Final draft: 120 points, due on 12/2

Grades:     555-600 A   540-554 A-  
              525-539 B+ 495-524 B   480-494 B-  
              465-479 C+ 435-464 C   420-434 C-  
              405-419 D+ 375-404 D   360-374 D-  
              under 360 F

Grading Rubrics—available on Blackboard under Assignments

**Attendance Policy:**

Attendance and preparation: Students are expected to come to class having read all assigned materials and to be prepared to discuss them. Attendance is mandatory. Students can miss two classes without penalty—this includes classes missed for any reason. Starting with the third missed class, unexcused absences will be penalized at the following rate: first unexcused absence (third absence overall)—2.5% grade reduction; second to fourth unexcused absence—5% grade reduction. After your fifth unexcused absence, you will be dropped from the class.

**Academic Honesty:**

Students are expected to adhere to the student code of conduct (see Fall 2010 Course Catalog, 117). Cheating or dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course, including plagiarism or fabrication. Plagiarism is the appropriation of either specific passages of text or unique ideas from another source without proper attribution. Reusing your own work (without informing the instructor) is also unacceptable. Fabrication is the use of invented materials or the deliberate misrepresentation of materials in your work. Any form of cheating on a course assignment (paper or test) will result in a failing grade for the course and the case will be referred to the appropriate university authorities.

Discussion may sometimes touch on contentious issues. While you are encouraged to express your thoughts and opinions, please remain respectful of your classmates and their views.

**Paper submissions, make-ups, and extra credit:**

All papers must be submitted to me in hard copy. Assignments are due at the start of class on the day indicated. In extraordinary cases I will accept an electronic version of a paper as a time stamp, but you need to get an identical hard

you succeed in the course. I encourage you to come speak to me about any potential problems that you may face in the course—I can't help you if I don't know about it.

Required texts (available at the University Bookstore)

Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*

Sheila Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine, eds., *In the Shadow of Revolution*

Lydia Chukovskaia, *Sofia Petrovna*

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

There will also be a course reader available through University Readers.

September 2--Introductory Session

**Week 1--Setting the Stage**

read Suny, 3-28; Fitzpatrick, 123-31, 169-79; read Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

September 7: Russia on the Eve of World War One  
Reader 3-12

September 9: Radical Russia and Socialism  
Reader 13-22

**Week 2 War and Revolution**

read Suny, 29-33 and Ch. 2; Fitzpatrick 33-39, 49-65

September 14: World War One and the February Revolution  
Reader 23-27

September 16: 1917 and the October Revolution  
Reader 28-37

#### **Week 4 Compromise and Utopia**

read Suny, Ch. 7; Fitzpatrick 195-209

September 28: The New Economic Policy  
Reader 54-66

September 30: Utopian Dreams  
Reader 67-79

\*Martin Malia, The Soviet Tragedy, ch. 1-2 (on reserve)

**paper topics and bibliography due on September 30**

#### **Week 5 The General Secretary and His New Path**

read Suny, Ch. 6, 217-27, 233-46; Fitzpatrick 219-40

October 5: Lenin's Death and the Struggle for Succession  
Reader 80-88

October 7: The Great Break, Part I--Collectivization and Industrialization  
Reader 89-112

**Article Review due on October 7**

#### **Week 6 Cultural Revolution, Social Retrenchment**

read Suny, 209-13, 227-31, 246-51; Fitzpatrick 195-206, 243-76

October 12: The Great Break, Part II--Cultural Revolution  
Reader 113-23

October 14: High Stalinism, Part I--Retrenchment  
Reader 124-32

\*Sheila Fitzpatrick, "What is Cultural Revolution?" (on e-reserve)

#### **Week 7 High Stalinism--A New Civilization?**

read Suny, 269-90; Fitzpatrick 277-89, 305-21, 331-41, 367-83))

**Week 8 Terror and Purges**

read Suny, Ch. 11; Fitzpatrick 324-30, 342-49, 359-64, 394-418  
Lydia Chukovskaia, Sofia Petrovna

October 26:

November 18: The Era of Stagnation (1965-1983)  
Reader 64-87

### **Week 12 Alliance and Dissent**

November 23: The Warsaw Pact  
Reader 88-89

\*Milovan Divas, Conversations with Stalin (excerpts on reserve)

### **Paper outline due November 23**

November 25—No class-Thanksgiving

### **Week 13 Perestroika and the End of the Soviet Union**

read Suny, Ch. 20-21

November 30: The Dissident Movement  
Reader 90-145

December 2: Gorbachev and Perestroika  
Reader 146-62

\*David Remnick, Lenin's Tomb, ch. 3-4 (on reserve)

### **Final research paper due on December 2**

### **Week 14 Post-Soviet Russia**

December 7: The Fall of the Soviet Union  
Reader 163-66

December 9: Russia in the 1990s  
Reader 167-85

\*article on Chechnya (on reserve)

**Take home final due 12/16 at noon. Students will meet with instructor during exam week to discuss their research paper.**