

Blogging Soviet History

Getting Started...

Your first task is to set up a blog on VT's secure WordPress site.

Follow the directions here: <http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/>. Consult these links to help you customize your blog and familiarize yourself with VT's wordpress site: <https://blogs.lt.vt.edu/support/#>

- ⇒ **As soon as you have a blog, please send the URL to Robyn Walters and she will add it to the mother blog for the course (<http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/soviethistoryf14/>). Do this no later than 5pm Thurs. 8/28**
- ⇒ **Minor things that will make a major difference:**
 1. Choose a user name on Wordpress that is close to your real name. Good = V. Putin. Bad = Vlad99
 2. When you set up your blog check the box that allows search engines to index your site.
 3. On the dashboard, choose "settings" and "discussion" and uncheck the boxes that hold comments for moderation. (You will change this back at the end of the semester.)

Blogging Basics

You are required to blog at least nine times over the course of the semester, and you are required to comment on another person's blog at least three times per week (33 times over the course of the semester). You may, of course post and comment more frequently. Everyone will complete the first three blogposts on the schedule. After that, you may choose your remaining posts (at least six from the eight prompts).

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. 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 here 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 the majority of the course content in your blog posts and in your discussions with each other, both on the blogs 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.

A Motherblog for the Motherland (Родина)

Your individual blogs are syndicated to the main course blog, aka "The Mother Blog" (<http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/soviethistoryf14/>). This means that your weekly post will be "fed" to this site, which will serve as the gateway to our course. Each week, the motherblog's editorial team 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. The class will also identify a "student's choice" post each week, and that post will also get a prominent position ("above the fold") in the weekly edition. Of course there will be rewards for those who achieve these [distinctions](#)) So in effect there will be a weekly digest of the main blog, focusing on a particular set of issues in Soviet history, and we will all contributing articles to each issue. We will also use the course blog at some point during most class sessions.



Fair warning: This is an experimental format and it may be bumpy as we figure things out. It may also be necessary to make adjustments along the way. Please fasten your seatbelt.

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

Mondays before 10 pm — comments on individual blog posts due.

Wednesdays — start working on next blog post.

Wednesdays before 5pm — "Press time" for the Weekly Edition of the Motherblog for the Motherland.

Your Audience

Is the class (and me and the editorial team). 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's 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.

Assignment Schedule

History 3644 F14

FIRST: Create your blog and send the link to Blogmistress RW: _____@vt.edu. Due Thursday, 8/28 by 5pm

1st Blogpost — due Sun. 8/31 (everyone)

Topic: The Empire That Was Russia

⇒ Use the Prokudin-Gorskii photograph collection

2nd Blogpost — due Sun 9/7 (everyone)

Topic: Marxism in Russia

⇒ Use the Marxist Internet Archive

3rd Blogpost — due Sun 9/14 (everyone)

Topic: Revolutions of 1917

⇒ Use Seventeen Moments in Soviet History (1917)

⇒ Use The Digital History Reader Module 3: 1917 — Did the War Cause a Revolution?

4th Blogpost — due Sun 9/21

Topic: Revolutionaries to Rulers

⇒ Use Seventeen Moments in Soviet History (1921, 1924)

Exam Thursday 9/25 — Due Sunday 9/28

5th Blogpost — due Sun 10/5

Topic: First Five-Year Plan

⇒ Use Seventeen Moments in Soviet History (1929)

6th Blogpost — due Sun 10/12

Topic: Pilots, Purges, and Building Socialism

⇒ Use Seventeen Moments in Soviet History (1934, 1936, 1939)

7th Blogpost — due Sun 10/19

Topic: The Great Patriotic War / High Stalinism

⇒ Use Seventeen Moments in Soviet History (1943, 1947)

8th Blogpost — due Sun 10/27

Topic: Khrushchev and the Thaw

⇒ Use Seventeen Moments in Soviet History (1954, 1956)

⇒ Use the Current Digest of the Russian Press

9th Blogpost — due Sun 11/2

Topic: Space age and 1968

⇒ Use Seventeen Moments in Soviet History (1961, 1968)

⇒ Use the Current Digest of the Russian Press

⇒ (DHR, CIA)

Exam Thursday 11/6 — Due Sunday 11/9

10th Blogpost — due Sun 11/16

Topic: **Rockers, Dissidents, War in Afghanistan**

- ⇒ Use Seventeen Moments in Soviet History (1973, 1980)
- ⇒ Use the Current Digest of the Russian Press
- ⇒ Use the ProQuest Newspapers

Thanksgiving Break / Blogging Holiday

11th Blogpost — due Sun 12/7

Topic: **Environmental Disaster, Political Ferment, End of Empire**

- ⇒ Use Seventeen Moments in Soviet History (1985, 1991)
- ⇒ Use the Current Digest of the Russian Press
- ⇒ Use the ProQuest Newspapers

Final essay due Thursday, 11/11 (Scholar)