

20th-Century Russia

History 3644 Fall 2014



Instructor:

Prof. A. Nelson

Email:

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Thurs. 1-3 & by appt.

Editorial Team:

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Main Course Blog:

<http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/soviethistoryf14/>

Twitter:

#soviethistory

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 quotes by the president of the Russian Federation speak to a profound, contradictory, and often tragic historical experience with 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 current crisis in Ukraine.

Course Context and Expectations

What Makes this Course?

You do! While this syllabus provides a road map for regular class sessions, a large part of our work together will be a collaborative discussion and analysis of the key developments in Soviet History. Much of this work will take place in a networked learning environment, which will use blogging, Twitter, and other learning technologies to construct, elaborate and refine the contours and content of the course. This is not your parents' history course! I am interested in deepening and expanding our in-class discussions and research endeavors and hope that this experimental course format will help us create the course together in an immediately accessible, professional, enduring and transparent medium. The blogging assignments 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
- Setting-up and maintaining a blog on the VT Wordpress site: <http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/>
- Mothballing your blog at the end of the semester
- Two midterm examinations
- One take home essay on the collapse of the Soviet Union

Required Text

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

Other Required Course Materials

- Links from the course motherblog here: <http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/soviethistoryf14/soviet-history-resources/>
- And here: <http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/soviethistoryf14/contemporary-russia-resources/>

Assignments and Grading

Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Blog contributions (9 minimum)	50%
Responding to classmates' blog posts (33 minimum)	20%
Two midterm exams	20%
Final essay	10%

Academic Integrity

Do not cheat. Do not plagiarize. All assignments shall be subject to the stipulations of the Virginia Tech Honor Code. For more information about the Honor Code and the undergraduate honor system see: <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 <http://www.mps.vt.edu/lgbtq/index.html>.

Class Schedule

Week	Topic	Common Text Reading
One		
8/26	Course introduction	
8/28	The Imperial Heritage	Freeze Ch. 7, pp. 199-233
Two		
9/2	The Revolutionary Movement	
9/4	1905: The First Russian Revolution	Freeze Ch. 8, pp. 234-268
Three		
9/9	Constitutional Experiment & WWI	
9/11	Кто-кого? The Revolutions of 1917	Freeze Ch. 9a, pp. 269-296
Four		
9/16	More revolution...	
9/18	Civil War & War Communism	Freeze Ch. 9b, pp. 296-306
Five		
9/23	NEP and Stalin's Rise	Freeze Ch. 10, pp. 307-340
9/25	— First Exam —	

Week	Topic	Common Text Reading
Six		
9/30	New Soviet Men and Women	
10/2	Collectivization / Industrialization	Freeze Ch. 11a, pp. 341-357
10/3	Drop Deadline	
Seven		
10/7	Pilots, Purges, Building Socialism	Freeze Ch. 11b, pp. 358-373
10/9	Fascism and the Interwar Period	
Eight		
10/14	The Great Patriotic War	Freeze Ch. 12a, pp. 374-392
10/16	Cold War / High Stalinism	Freeze Ch. 12b, pp. 392-405
Nine		
10/21	Virgin Lands	Freeze Ch. 13a, pp. 406-434
10/23	Thaw	
Ten		
10/28	Space Age	
10/30	1968	
Eleven		
11/4	Retrenchment at Home and Abroad	Freeze Ch. 13b, pp. 434-450
11/6	— Second Exam —	
Twelve		
11/11	Baikal / Afghanistan	
11/13	Chernobyl	Freeze Ch. 14, pp. 451-464
Thirteen		
11/18	“Everything was Forever, Until it Was no More”	
11/20	TBA	
— Thanksgiving Break —		
Fourteen		
12/2	From Empire to Federation	Freeze, Ch. 14, pp. 464-488
12/4	Looking Back	

Week	Topic	Common Text Reading
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Fifteen		
12/9	The Current Crisis	
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12/11	— Final Essays Due (Scholar)	
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