

History 377 History of the Soviet Union

Professor Scott Smith
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Course Description:

This course explores Soviet history from 1917 to the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. Chronologically, the emphasis is on the main lines of the Soviet experience from the 1920s through the 1970s. Particular thematic attention is paid to the revolutionary aspiration to build a socialist society and create a new Soviet person; to the development of the characteristic ideology, practices, and institutions of the Communist Party and Soviet state; and to the experiences of ordinary Soviet citizens, mainly Russians.

Books:

The following books are available for purchase at the college bookstore. Readings marked by an asterisk are available through the course reserves on the Nicholson library website.

Gregory Freeze, ed., *Russia: A History*

Jeffrey Brooks and Georgiy Chernyavskiy, *Lenin and the Making of the Soviet State: A Brief History with Documents*.

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times*.

Veronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaja, and Thomas Lahusen, eds., *Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s*.

J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Soviet Elite, 1932-1939*.

Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945*.

Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever Until it was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*.

Requirements and Grading Policies:

1) I conceive this course as a collective exploration of Soviet history, and your energetic, thoughtful, and constructive engagement with the course material will be crucial to the success of our explorations and to the success of the course. Each student in the course must complete all required course readings and post a response to one of the discussion questions each week, preferably before Wednesday. In addition, each student must post a second comment each week, in which he or she responds to a point, question, or suggestion made that week by another student or by me. I will not grade your posts individually, but I will evaluate your comments over the course of the semester for their degree of engagement with the material, responsiveness to the discussion questions and contribution to our collective discussions, and overall quantity and quality. The semester is divided into four periods, and you will receive up to fifty points for your engagement in the course material for each period. The periods are: weeks 1-3, weeks 4-7, weeks 8-11, and weeks 12-14. Together, these participation grades will count for twenty percent of your final grade in the course (200 out of 1000 points).

2) You will write three papers this semester. Five-page papers are due Friday, March 21 and Friday, April 18, and an eight-page paper is due Friday, May 2. I will post essay questions for the five-page papers, and you will not be expected to do additional reading or research beyond the course syllabus. I will not post essay questions for the eight-page paper: you will be free to work on any problem in Soviet history that interests you, and you will be required to formulate your own question in consultation with me and to explore it by reading and research beyond the course syllabus. I will evaluate your papers by assessing (a) the clarity, prose style, and organization of the essay, and (b) the degree to which you have developed a persuasive central argument and supported it effectively with specific historical evidence. On the third paper, I will also consider (c) the quality and depth and quality of research demonstrated in the paper. Papers submitted late will be penalized unless I grant an extension, which I will do only in the event of serious illness, personal emergency, or extraordinary circumstances. Late papers will be penalized one grade every two days (e.g. a paper that would have received an A drops to A- if it is submitted within two days of the due date, to B+ if it is submitted within four days of the due date, and so on). No paper submitted late will be reduced below the passing grade of D, however, so it is always in your interest to submit a paper, no matter how late. Each paper will count for twenty percent of your final grade in the course.

3) The final examination in the course will take place at a time of your choosing on May 28 or May 29. You will receive a study guide and broad essay topics in advance of the exam, which will ask you to write an interpretive essay that explores the entire course of Soviet history. You will have two hours for the exam, which will count for count for twenty percent of your final grade in the course.

4) Final grades in the course will be determined by the following scale:

Participation in course discussions	200 points
First five-page paper	200 points
Second five-page paper	200 points
Eight-page paper	200 points
<u>Final exam</u>	<u>200 points</u>
Total	1000 points

900-939 points = A-	940-1000 points = A	
800-829 points = B-	830-869 points = B	870-899 points = B+
700-729 points = C-	730-769 points = C	770-799 points = C+
600-699 points = D	0-599 points = F	

5) Please note that I adhere strictly to the college policy on academic honesty. Students guilty of academic dishonesty or plagiarism will fail the course and be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. The college policy on academic honesty and a short discussion of plagiarism may be found in the college catalog. We will discuss what constitutes plagiarism before the first paper, but you should contact me if you have any questions regarding the policy or my expectations.

Disability Statement:

Students with documented disabilities who may need special accommodations, who have any medical information I should know of, or who need special arrangements in the event of medical evacuation, should make an appointment with me during the first week of the term.

Schedule of Reading Assignments:

Week 1: The Revolution of 1917

2/18-2/22

Read:

Freeze, *Russia*, pp. 200-250.
 Brooks and Chernyavskiy, *Lenin and the Making of the Soviet State*, pp. 1-17, 37-62.
 Steve A. Smith, "Petrograd in 1917: the view from below," in Daniel H. Kaiser, ed., *The Workers' Revolution in Russia, 1917*, pp. 59-79.

Week 2: The Formation of the Soviet State

2/25-2/29

Read:

Freeze, *Russia*, pp. 250-62.
 Brooks and Chernyavskiy, *Lenin and the Making of the Soviet State*, pp. 17-22, 63-79, 94-115.
 Karl Kautsky, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, chapters 1, 5, 8, available at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/index.htm>
 V. I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, preface and chapters 1 and 2, available at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/prrk/index.htm>

Week 3: How to Build Socialism? Politics and Economics in the 1920s

3/3-3/7

Read:

Freeze, *Russia*, pp. 263-90.
 Brooks and Chernyavskiy, *Lenin and the Making of the Soviet State*, pp. 22-31, 115-161.
 Stephen F. Cohen, *The Last Bolshevik: Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, pp. 123-49, 184-208.

Week 4: How to Build Socialism? Visions of Cultural Revolution in the 1920s

3/10-3/14

Read:

Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936*, pp. 1-13, 43-48, 101-43.
 Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*, pp. 208-49.
 Alexandra Kollontai, "Theses on Communist Morality in the Sphere of Marital Relations" and "Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle" at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/index.htm>
 Leon Trotsky, "Habit and Custom," "Civility and Politeness as a Necessary Lubricant"

in Daily Relations," "The Struggle for Cultured Speech," "Vodka, the Church, and Cinema," "The Family and Ceremony," and "Alas, We are not Precise Enough!" at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/women/index.htm> and <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/1921-mil/ch15.htm>

Week 5: Building Socialism

3/17-3/21

Read: Freeze, *Russia*, pp. 291-318.

Week 6: Everyday Life in the 1930s

3/24-3/28

Read: Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp. 1-138
Garros, *Intimacy and Terror*, pp. 111-163, 253-89.

Week 7: Everyday Life in the 1930s (2)

3/31-4/4

Read: Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp. 139-89.
Garros, *Intimacy and Terror*, pp. 167-215.

Week 8: The Great Terror

4/7-4/11

Read: Getty and Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, pp. 1-64, 70-80, 140-51, 156-79, 197-98, 205-6, 217-22, 229-268, 272-76, 282-99.

Week 9: The Great Terror (2)

4/14-4/18

Read: Getty and Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, pp. 300-30, 364-79, 392-421, 437-80, 525-29, 553-86.
Robert C. Tucker and Stephen F. Cohen, eds., *The Great Purge Trial*, selections.

Week 10: The Great Fatherland War

4/21-4/25

Read:

Freeze, *Russia*, pp. 319-35.
Merridale, *Ivan's War*, pp. 1-335.

Week 11: Khrushchev and the Thaw

4/28-5/2

Read:

Freeze, *Russia*, pp. 335-368.
Merridale, *Ivan's War*, pp. 336-379.
Nikita Khrushchev, "Speech to the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU," available at:
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1956khrushchev-secret1.html>

Week 12: Really Existing Socialism (1)

5/5-5/9

Read:

Freeze, *Russia*, pp. 368-382.
Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, pp. 1-157.

Week 13: Really Existing Socialism (2)

5/12-5/16

Read:

Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, pp. 158-298.

Week 14: The End of the Soviet Union

5/19-5/27

Read:

Freeze, *Russia*, pp. 401-421.