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## History 367: Soviet Russia

### Meeting Time and Place

MWF 11:00-11:50am  
Croft 107

### Course Description

This course examines Russia's short 20<sup>th</sup> century, beginning with the Russian Revolution of 1917 and ending with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. We will grapple with the complexities of how the Russian Empire disintegrated during 1917-1921, and how it essentially re-formed during the following years as a socialist "multinational federation." In our look at the 1920s and 1930s, we will examine how the creators of this Union of Soviet Socialist Republics attempted to solve the problems of the old imperial state, along with the new problems that emerged from the massive upheavals of World War I, Revolution and Civil War. We attempt to understand how individuals and social and ethnic groups responded to, made sense of, and participated in, this new political formation, and how they reacted to a new series of violent transformations - the collectivization of agriculture, industrialization, the Terror of 1936-38, and finally World War II. In the period after Stalin's death, we will examine the multiple attempts to reform, re-create, maintain, and eliminate the system that he had established. Once again, we will look at seemingly "old" problems, tempered by "new" circumstances. When Gorbachev attempted to eliminate the Stalinist system entirely during the late 1980s, it was the loss of a patriotic, some would say, "imperial," identity that then made him one of the most hated political leaders in Russian history.

### Required Books

The following books are available at the campus book store. You may also purchase new/used copies online if you find this to be a more affordable option. Please be sure to purchase the correct edition if mentioned below.

**Ronald Suny**, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Soviet Successor States*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

**Fedor Gladkov**, *Cement*

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

**Venedikt Erefeev**, *Moscow to the End of the Line*

There are also a few additional short readings posted on the course's Blackboard site, which are identified with a "BB" on the calendar below.

## Required Films (TBA)

We will also be watching three films over the course of the semester, which will be scheduled in the evening. You are expected to attend these screenings. If other academic-related events interfere, you are responsible for making other arrangements with the professor.

## Course Policies

- You must read this entire syllabus. If you do not understand everything on this syllabus, I expect you to ask questions.
- You must participate actively in discussion. You should also become comfortable asking questions in class, and restrict email to questions and concerns of a more individual nature.
- Attendance for each scheduled meeting is mandatory. Your absence will result in a lower grade for the semester. Note, however, that attendance alone does not guarantee you a good participation grade. If you miss class, you are responsible for the consequences (missed lectures, quizzes, exams, etc.).
- You are responsible for all readings listed on the calendar. You must also bring your readings to class during our discussions of them.
- Take-home exams, which are turned in late, will be docked one letter grade per day after the due date. After two full days, you will receive no credit for the exam.
- Plagiarism will not be tolerated, and you will fail this course if caught violating established university policies regarding academic dishonesty. You are required to view the following video regarding the definitions of plagiarism and University of Mississippi policies: [http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/general\\_library/instruction/resources/plagiarism\\_ac\\_honesty.html](http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/general_library/instruction/resources/plagiarism_ac_honesty.html) (you must have Flash Player to render this video properly). I recommend that you also read the official statement in the university's policy handbook: <http://secure4.olemiss.edu/umpolicyopen/ShowDetails.jsp?istatPara=1&policyObjidPara=10817696> (download the pdf file)
- You must proofread all of your written work. Sloppy writing will result in a lower grade for the assignment.
- You must act in a respectful and honest manner toward your fellow students and your professor, and you should expect the same in return.
- As a general rule, grades are not negotiable. I will spend considerable time reading and offering comments on your work. If you would like to discuss further why you received the grade that you did, you are encouraged to do so. If, however, you believe that I graded your work incorrectly, unfairly or inconsistently, you have the right to an appeal according to the following policy: <http://secure4.olemiss.edu/umpolicyopen/ShowDetails.jsp?istatPara=1&policyObjidPara=10818079> (download the pdf file)
- You should avoid using your cell phone in class. I realize that accidents happen, but please remember to turn your phone off upon entering the classroom. I will not tolerate, however, either answering a phone call or texting in class. You will be asked to leave if such an incident occurs.
- If you require special considerations based on a disability, religious observance, or participation in sanctioned extracurricular activities, you must inform me of them immediately.

## **Assignments**

### Quizzes

There will be several “open-book” quizzes during the semester (listed on the calendar), which address the supplementary course readings (i.e., not the textbook). You will be required to demonstrate not only that you completed the readings, but also that you considered the analytical questions addressed therein. Quizzes will consist mostly of short answer questions, with the occasional multiple choice. They should take you no longer than 15 minutes each.

### In-Class Exams

You will take two closed-book exams that integrate material from lecture and the textbook. The format will be similar to the quizzes, but will take approximately 50 minutes to complete.

### Take-Home Essays

You will write two longer essays (3-5 pages) on questions that require you to synthesize course materials.

### Notebook

Note taking is essential for making this course an effective learning experience. Consequently, I would like to see your notes. Once a month, I will collect your notebooks for the weekend and assess how well you are taking notes, with the aim of helping you if your note-taking method is not yielding successful results. We will discuss strategies for effective note taking during the first week of class.

## **Grade Breakdown**

Quizzes:	25%
In-Class Exams:	30%
Take-Home Essays:	30%
Notebook	5%
Participation:	10%

## **Grading Criteria (in hierarchical order) for Your Take-Home Essays**

1. Clear thesis statement and introduction
2. Clearly developed arguments that support the thesis
3. Use of relevant evidence (both the quantity AND quality of the evidence are essential)
4. Clear organization, sentence structure, transitions
5. Proper form and style (this includes the mechanics of grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc.)

An "A" paper shows excellent command of all five aspects with few distracting errors in style.

A "B" paper satisfies points 1-4, but the form and style will sometimes distract the reader's attention.

A "C" paper meets the requirements of points 1-3, but its organization and style leave the reader confused about the intent and/or direction of the argument.

A "D" paper is a "C" that does not use enough evidence (or relies on inappropriate or incorrect evidence (i.e., factual errors)) to support the thesis.

An "F" paper is seriously flawed and lacks a developed argument.

## **Grading Criteria for Class Participation (individually and within groups)**

"A" – active participation

"B" – sporadic, but valuable, participation

"C" – inactive participation

"D" – refusal to participate

"F" – more than 4 absences during the semester

**Calendar** (These dates are subject to change. Please listen closely for any modifications to the calendar, and write them into your copy of the syllabus.)

### **Week 1 – Introduction: The Soviet Union's Short Existence – Problems and Patterns**

Monday, Jan 24: Syllabus, Geography, and Major Problems of the Course

Wednesday, Jan 26: Russia under the Last Tsar and the Search for Modernity (1890s-1917)

Friday, Jan 28: The Revolutionary Movement and the Emergence of Marxism

### **Readings: [55pp]**

- Ronald Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, Introduction and Chapter 1, "The Imperial Legacy," pp. xvi-xx, 3-46.
- Sergei Witte, Letter to Nicholas II on the "Peasant Question" (1898) **(BB)**
- V.I. Lenin, Selection from *What Is to Be Done?* (1902) **(BB)**

## **Section 1: An Era of Destruction**

### **Week 2 – 1917 and the End of the Old Regime**

Monday, Jan 31: From War to Revolution

Wednesday, Feb 2: Everyday Life in 1917

Friday, Feb 4: From Revolution to War

#### **Readings: [28pp]**

- Suny, Chapter 2, “The Double Revolution,” pp. 47-67.
- Nicholas II, Abdication Manifesto (1917) **(BB)**
- Lenin, Selections from *State and Revolution*, (1917) **(BB)**
- Lenin on Dual Power (1917) **(BB)**
- Lenin, “The April Theses” (1917) **(BB)**

### **Week 3 – Civil War and the Formation of the Soviet Union**

Monday, Feb 7: **Quiz 1** (map quiz, Witte, Nicholas II, and Lenin Documents), Discussion

Wednesday, Feb 9: Red, White, Black and Green

Friday, Feb 11: Civil War in the City and in the Country

#### **Readings: [45pp]**

- Suny, Chapter 3, “Socialism and Civil War,” pp. 68-109
- “Instructions for Requisitioning Grain” (1918) **(BB)**
- Lenin, Selections from *All Out for the Fight against Denikin!* (1919) **(BB)**
- Start reading Fedor Gladkov, *Cement* (1925)

### **Week 4 – Politics and Economics during the Soviet 1920s**

Monday, Feb 14: Stalin and the Struggle for Power

Wednesday, Feb 16: NEP and Its Contradictions

Friday, Feb 18: **Quiz 2** (“Instructions,” Lenin, *All Out...*), Discussion

#### **Readings: [49pp]**

- Suny, Chapter 5, “The Evolution of the Dictatorship,” and Chapter 6, “Socialism in One Country,” pp. 139-187.
- Continue reading *Cement*

### **Week 5 – Society, Culture and the Nationalities Question during the Twenties**

Monday, Feb 21: Workers, Peasants and Traders during NEP

Wednesday, Feb 23: Cultural Transformations during the First Decade of Soviet Power

Friday, Feb 25: Constructing a Multinational Socialist Society

#### **Readings: [355pp]**

- Suny, Chapter 7, “NEP Society,” and Chapter 8, “Culture Wars,” pp. 188-232.
- Finish Reading *Cement*
- *Optional Reading*: Suny, Chapter 4, “Nationalism and Revolution”

## **Week 6 – The Socialist Offensive**

Monday, Feb 28: **Quiz 3** (*Cement*), Discussion

Wednesday, March 2: Class War in the Countryside

Friday, March 4: Building Socialism, One Steel Girder at a Time

### Readings: [89pp]

- Suny, Chapter 9, “The Stalin Revolution,” and Chapter 10, “Stalin’s Industrial Revolution,” pp. 235-272.
- Maurice Hindus, Selections from *Red Bread* **(BB)**
- Stalin on the Grain Crisis (1928) **(BB)**
- Stalin on De-Kulakization (1929) **(BB)**
- Personal Letter from a Worker in Magnitogorsk, 1931 **(BB)**
- John Scott, “A Day in Magnitogorsk,” 1933 **(BB)**

Evening Film Screening (date and time TBA):

- Aleksandr Dovzhenko, *Earth* (1931)

## **Week 7 – The Culture of Terror; The Terror of Culture**

Monday, March 7: **Quiz 4** (Hindus, Stalin readings, Magnitogorsk readings, *Earth*), Discussion

Wednesday, March 9: Stalinism as a Social System: The Meanings of the “Great Terror”

Friday, March 11: Stalinist Culture and the Invention of Soviet Reality

### Readings: [47pp]

- Suny, Chapter 11, “Building Stalinism,” and Chapter 12, “Culture and Society in the Socialist Motherland,” pp. 273-315.
- Stalin on Deficiencies in Party Work (1937) **(BB)**
- Nikolai Bukharin’s Trial (1938) **(BB)**

Spring Break: no class March 14-18

## **Week 8 – The Great Patriotic War**

Monday, March 21: Rumors of War

Wednesday, March 23: The Horrors of the Eastern Front

Friday, March 25: **In-Class Mid-Term**

### Readings: [47pp]

- Suny, Chapter 13, “Collective Security and the Coming of World War II,” and Chapter 14, “The Great Fatherland War,” pp. 316-362.

**Mid-Term Essay due before 10:30am on March 28.**

## **Section 2: “Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More”**

### **Week 9 – A Victory for Socialism?**

Monday, March 28: Sifting through the Carnage

Wednesday, March 30: Late Stalinism and the Post-War Freeze

Friday, April 1: Stalin and the Origins of the Cold War

#### **Readings: [51pp]**

- Suny, Chapter 15, “The Big Chill: The Cold War Begins,” and Chapter 16, “Late Stalinism at Home and Abroad,” pp. 363-410.
- Andrei Zhdanov on the Mistakes of the Literary Journal *Zvezda* (1946) **(BB)**
- Stalin Interviewed on Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” Speech (1946) **(BB)**

### **Week 10 – Problems of De-Stalinization: The Communist Party**

Monday, April 4: The Politics of Stalin’s Death

Wednesday, April 6: Khrushchev’s Ascendancy and the “Return to Leninist Norms”

Friday, April 8: **Quiz 5** (Zhdanov, Stalin response to “Iron Curtain,” Khrushchev, Evtushenko), Discussion

#### **Readings: [40pp]**

- Suny, Chapter 17, “From Autocracy to Oligarchy: Khrushchev and the Politics of Reform,” pp. 413-446.
- Khrushchev, The “Secret Speech” (1956) **(BB)**
- Evgenii Evtushenko on Stalin’s Death (1963) **(BB)**
- Start reading Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962)

### **Week 11 – Problems of De-Stalinization: Culture, Society and Foreign Affairs**

Monday, April 11: The Cultural Thaw

Wednesday, April 13: Popular Culture and Private Life under Khrushchev

Friday, April 15: Khrushchev’s Cold War: Cuba, China, Hungary

#### **Readings: [211pp]**

- Olga Shmarova, “On Those Who Do Not Love to Talk about Love” (1953) **(BB)**
- Finish reading *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*

Evening Film Screening (date and time TBA):

- Mikhail Kalatozov, *The Cranes are Flying* (1957)

### **Week 12 – The Brezhnevite System**

Monday, April 18: **Quiz 6** (Shmarova, *One Day in the Life, Cranes*), Discussion

Wednesday, April 20: The Promises of Leonid Brezhnev

Friday, April 22: The Soviet Union and the Socialist World under Brezhnev

Readings: **[31pp]**

- Suny, Chapter 18, “The Paradoxes of Brezhnev’s Long Reign,” pp. 447-475.
- Brezhnev’s Report to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the CPSU (1966) **(BB)**
- “Brezhnev Doctrine,” (1968) **(BB)**
- Start reading Venedikt Erofeev, *Moscow to the End of the Line*

### **Week 13 – An Era of Stagnation? The Soviet 1970s**

Monday, April 25: The Village and the City under “Developed Socialism”

Wednesday, April 27: Dissidence, Officialdom, and the “Typical Soviet”

Friday, April 29: **Quiz 7** (Brezhnev’s Report, Brezhnev Doctrine, and Erofeev), Discussion

Readings: **[164pp]**

- Finish reading *Moscow to the End of the Line*

### **Week 14 – The Soviet Collapse**

Monday, May 2: Gorbachev and the Possibilities for Reform

Wednesday, May 4: Soviet Disintegrations and the End of Empire

Friday, May 6: **In-Class Final**

Readings: **[69pp]**

- Suny, Chapter 19, “Interregnum and the Road To Revolution,” and Chapter 20, “The End of the Soviet Union,” pp. 479-548.

**Final Essay Due before 2:00pm on Monday, May 9.**