

**HISTORY 362-01  
HISTORY OF THE USSR  
Spring, 2009  
PROFESSOR WEISENSEL  
MAIN 307  
OFFICE HOURS: 2:30-4:30 MWF  
X6570**

This course presents a survey of the history of the USSR from the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, through the Revolution of 1991 ending the USSR, to the present-day Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This field, like all scholarship, is alive and filled with controversies. No idea is allowed to go by without challenge. Our course will emphasize those controversies. The course then will be a survey of the events of Soviet history and the controversies in interpreting those events.

With some exceptions "high" politics (i.e., the personalities and personal acts of Nicholas II, Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev) will not be the focus of the course. Rather we will emphasize:

1. The question of context or origin. What was the world and domestic context that impacted Soviet leaders and influenced their decisions?
2. The question of people's motivations. Did people do what they were supposed to do because they were forced ("state control"), or because they wanted to ("voluntary loyalty")? Could both have been true?
3. The citizen-government relationship. How responsive to the needs and wants of the public was the single-party system?

We all are aware how the American media would answer the questions above, especially the last two. We however will try to rise above the pressures of our cultural assumptions about right and wrong, and normal and abnormal, and deal with the Soviets/Russians on their own terms and in their own context.

Each student will be expected to come to class and to read the assigned materials. The class meets three times per week, MWF, 2:20-3:20. There will be required two short essays (4 pp. each), two in-class quizzes and one research paper. They are spaced throughout the course and are indicated in the syllabus. The research paper (10-12 pp.) will be on a topic of your choice. For this third essay all I ask is that you begin with the premise, "Soviet history is frequently reinterpreted." For the two short essays I will turn out the questions far ahead of the deadlines. The readings we do together in class will provide you with ideas and materials for the two essays (i.e., there will be no extra readings required for them). I will comment on drafts of essays before the deadlines, but the version you turn it at the deadline will be the one to get the grade. An important part of your grade (20%) will come from your class participation/attendance. An in-class oral report (on a subject we don't have time to discuss or read about together) as well as attendance and regular and quality contribution to the class discussion will constitute this part of your grade.

Late papers are strongly discouraged. Please note that incompletes will not be considered for this class except under extraordinary circumstances. Class attendance is

required. If you are absent more than a couple of times, it will adversely affect your grade.

Your grade will be determined as follows:

- a. 2 essays- 30%;
- b. 2 quizzes- 20%
- c. Research paper- 30%
- b. class participation/attendance- 20%

READINGS (At the Macalester Bookstore, Lambert Building):

1. Suny, ed., The Structure of Soviet History. Oxford paperback;
2. Andreev-Khomiakov, Bitter Waters. Westview paperback;
3. Brooks, Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Princeton hardback;
4. Suny, The Revenge of the Past. Stanford U. Press paperback;
5. (Recommended Only!) Suny, The Soviet Experiment. Oxford U. Press paperback;
6. Readings will also include articles, chapters and documents from journals and other books. They are all available on the Moodle site for this course (indicated as "Moodle").

1. Week of Jan. 26-30.

Course Introduction. Influence of the Pre-Soviet (Tsarist) Past? World War I and 1917.

- a. Zile, documents (sent to you as an email attachment; read only the documents that are circled);
- b. Mironov, "Peasant Popular Culture and the Origins of Soviet Totalitarianism" in Frank and Steinberg, eds. Cultures in Flux (Princeton, 1994), pp. 54-73 (sent to you as an email attachment).

2. Week of Feb. 2-6.

The People and the Two Revolutions of 1917.

What was the relationship between the Bolshevik Party and the Russian masses in 1917? Was the Bolshevik Revolution an elite-led coup d'etat? Or, did ordinary people have something to do with it? If so, what?

- a. Kolonitskii, "Antibourgeois propaganda...", in Suny, The Structure of Soviet History, pp. 22-32;
- b. Documents (pp. 32-47), Suny, The Structure of Soviet History.

3. Week of Feb. 9-13.

First quiz, Feb. 13th (c. 15 minutes).

The People in the Russian Civil War and "War Communism", 1918-21.

Did "conditions"("context") cause the brutalities of the Russian Civil War? Or, were these brutalities only a logical extension of Lenin's elitist philosophy (do whatever is necessary to establish the perfect world, communism, no matter how people suffer)?

- a. Holquist, "Information is the Alpha and Omega...", in Suny, Structure, pp. 50-62;
- b. Suny, Structure, Ch. 2, selected documents;
- c. Channon, "The Bolsheviks and the Peasantry...", in Waldron, The Soviet Union (2007), pp. 73-104 (here starts the documents in Moodle)

4. Week of Feb. 16-20.

NEP (The "New Economic Policy"), 1921-28.

NEP. Nationality and the Creation of the USSR.

Was NEP a "road not traveled?" That is, did it have intrinsic merits (its support by the populace?, its advantages over confrontation as the modus vivendi in foreign relations?, etc.) that could have been the permanent basis of Soviet economic life? Or, was it merely a "resting place" along the road to complete forced communism?

- a. Martin, "An Affirmative-Action Empire," in Suny, Structure, pp. 93-103.
- b. Suny, Structure, Ch. 3 Selected documents;
- c. Zile, Ideas and Forces (Zile #4.pdf) (Moodle).

5. Week of Feb. 23-27.

Feb. 23. First essay (4 pp.) due in class.

The Stalin Revolution.

Is the Stalin Revolution the product of a misshapen, totalitarian personality (Stalin's)? Or, were there "processes" at work widely which required a change to rigid discipline and forced production?

- a. Timasheff, "World Revolution or Russia," in Suny, Structure, pp. 188-198;
- b. Brooks, Thank You, Comrade Stalin! (Princeton, 2000), start.
- c. Andreev-Khomiakov, Bitter Waters (Westview, 1997), start.

6. Week of Mar. 2-6.

Stalin's Society (I).

Was the Stalin regimentation of society necessary? Or, was it a gross abuse of human rights that never should have happened? How do we judge? The Case of Collectivization.

- a. Angelina, "The Most Important Thing," in Fitzpatrick and Slezkine, In the Shadow of Revolution (Princeton, 2000), pp. 305-321;
- b. Conquest, "Dekulakization," in The Harvest of Sorrow (1986);
- c. Brooks, Thank You, Comrade Stalin!, continue.

7. Week of Mar. 9-13.

Mar. 13. Second essay (4 pp.) due in class.

Stalin's Society(II).

Was the power of Stalin complete? Did people have any recourse at all? Did they protest?

- a. von Geldern, "The Centre and the Periphery," in Suny, Structure, pp. 177-88;
- b. Brooks, Thank You, Comrade Stalin!, read through Ch. 6;
- c. Andreev-Khomiakov, Bitter Waters, read through Ch. 6.

8. March 14-22. Spring Break.

9. Week of Mar.23-27.

The GULAG. The "Great Fatherland War," and Soviet Society.

How did Soviet society change as a result of the "Great Fatherland War" (World War II)?

- a. Suny, Structure, Ch. 4. Selected documents.

- b. Andreev-Khomiakov, Bitter Waters, finish.
- c. Brooks, Thank You, Comrade Stalin!, Chs. 7-8.

10. Week of Mar.30-Apr. 3.

Second Quiz Apr. 3rd (15 minutes).

Postwar Recovery. Soviet Union in the Cold War. First, Autocracy (Khrushchev): The Case of the "Secret Speech (1956)."

Were there cleavages in Soviet Cold War opinion? Or, did everyone agree with Stalin?

- a. Suny, Structure, Ch. 6;
- b. Arbatov, The System, Ch. 3;
- c. Zubok and Pleshakov, Inside the Kremlin's Cold War (Harvard, 1996), Chs.

TBA.

11. Week of Apr. 6-8.

Then, Oligarchy (Brezhnev). Party over Personality under Brezhnev. The Machine Runs into Trouble.

Is there a connection between Soviet economic (and political) policy and "running down" in the country?

- a. Suny, Structure, Ch. 7. Selected documents;
- b. Arbatov, The System, 6-7;

Apr. 10. No Class. Good Friday.

12. Week of Apr. 13-17.

Brezhnev and Oligarchy. Preparing the Revolution.

- a. Bonnell and Freidin, "Televorot," in Suny, Structure, pp. 406-423;
- b. Matthews, Poverty in the Soviet Union, 2-3;

April 13th. Third (Independent Research) essay draft (10-12 pp.) due in class.

- c. Zile, Ideas and Forces, selected docs. (Zile #6.pdf).

13. Week of Apr. 20-24.

The "Gorbachev Revolution," and the Reaction of Soviet Society to It. Does the relationship between law and society change under the "reformer" Gorbachev? Can totalitarian states reform themselves and yet remain themselves?

- a. Suny, Structure, Ch. 8. Selected documents;
- b. Gooding, "Perestroika as a Revolution from Within," in Waldron, ed., The Soviet Union, pp. 449-70;
- c. Suny, The Revenge of the Past (Stanford, 1993), skim Chs. 1-2, read Ch. 3.

14. Week of Apr. 27-May 1.

Gorbachev's Revolution and the End of the USSR.

- a. Hochschild, The Unquiet Ghost. Russians Remember Stalin, Ch. TBA.
- b. Z, "To the Lenin Mausoleum," in Suny, Structure, pp. 533-
- c. Suny, The Revenge of the Past, Ch. 4.

15. Week of May 5.

Sum Up.

Final (revised) version of the research paper essay is due in my office by 5 p.m. on May 9th.