

History 242: The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union
Fall 2014: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 10:00-10:50

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Office hours: Mon 3:00-4:00;
Wed. 1:15-2:00;
Thurs. 9:00-10:00

Course Overview

The history of the Soviet Union has always been a story of great contrasts. In October 1917, when the tsarist regime fell, Russia became one of the most chaotic, dynamic, and fast-changing revolutionary societies in all of history; by the time the USSR collapsed in December 1991, it was a stagnant bureaucratic regime led by a corrupt and entrenched elite. The leaders of the Soviet Union claimed that they had liberated their country from centuries of tsarist oppression, but they ended up unleashing mass repression and state-sponsored violence on a nearly unprecedented scale. The Soviet regime could claim great successes—like the dramatic growth of literacy and the launching of the first man-made satellite in history—but it never lived up to the grand rhetoric of its leaders and became one of the world’s most repressive states.

This course will examine the history of the Soviet Union from the October Revolution of 1917 until the regime’s sudden collapse at the end of 1991, focusing in particular on the country’s social and political history. From the moment that the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917 until the present day, historians have debated the meaning and the legacy of the October Revolution; in every period of Soviet history, the country’s leaders claimed to be following the true path of Communism, while denouncing their rivals (and often their predecessors) for straying from socialism. This class will therefore examine how the nature of the Soviet Union was redefined by each successive generation and will seek to relate each part of the Soviet experience to the larger trajectory of the country’s history. Was Stalinism a departure from the revolution’s original ideology, or the inevitable result of 1917? Was the Khrushchev era an unprecedented liberalization of the regime’s policies, or an attempt to return to the country’s Leninist roots? We will not only seek to answer questions like these, but to examine the ways that everyday citizens experienced Communist rule and to understand how the revolutionary enthusiasm that at times dominated the country’s political discourse ultimately gave way to the cynicism and corruption of the USSR’s final days.

Course Readings

The following books are all on sale at the college bookstore and on course reserve at the library:

- Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*
Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*
Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*
Ronald Grigor Suny, ed., *The Structure of Soviet History: Essays and Documents*
Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*

Many readings for this course are primary documents or secondary texts from Ron Suny's *The Structure of Soviet History* (listed above). On the schedule of readings below, those readings will be listed by name with the notation "[Suny]". Other readings (marked "[Pioneerweb]" on the syllabus) will be available on the course's Blackboard site.

Assignments and Grading

Your grade in this class will be based on the following requirements. Note that you must hand in every assignment listed below in order to pass the class, and that if your grades improve steadily over the course of the semester, I will take that into consideration in deciding your final grade:

Two short document analyses (worth 15% of your grade, or 7.5% each). You will submit two short writing assignments (each 1 to 1.5 pages long); the first (an analysis of the Petrograd Soviet's Order Number 1) will be due by Thursday, September 4, at 10 PM, while the second (an analysis of the marriage and family code) will be due at 10 PM on Sunday, September 21.

A 5-page paper (15% of your grade). This paper will be an analysis and synthesis of our course readings on the October Revolution's aftermath. It will be due at 5 PM on Sunday, October 12.

A 6-to-8-page oral history analysis (20% of your final grade). In the second half of the semester, you will write a 5-to-7-page analysis of the oral history interviews of the Harvard Project, which interviewed Soviet citizens on their life under Stalin in the 1950s. You will need to send me a 2-to-3-page proposal for your paper by November 8; the final version of the paper will be due on November 22.

A mid-term exam (10% of your grade.) This exam will have two sections: an ID section (in which you explain the significance of several people, places, things, or concepts from the first half of the course) and a section in which you identify and explain passages from the course's primary source readings. The mid-term exam will take place in class on Monday, November 3.

A final exam (20% of your grade.) This three-hour exam will have roughly the same format as the mid-term and will take place on Friday, December 19, at 9:00 AM. The ID and primary source sections will only include material from the second half of the class; the exam will also include a section in which you answer one of 2-3 essay questions related to the main themes of the course. This exam should take roughly twice as long to complete as the mid-term.

Class participation (20% of your grade). The final requirement for this course is active and informed participation in class discussions. Unlike some professors at Grinnell, I do not have an ironclad rule about how often each student needs to speak: you should generally average at least one comment or question per class period, but I understand that some of you will always be more reserved than others and that everyone has days when they are less likely to participate. What's more, you should remember that the thoughtfulness of your classroom comments is more important than the frequency with which you speak and that there are many good ways to take part in the discussion (answering a question, recalling a detail from the readings, responding to a classmate, making a connection between the day's reading and earlier discussions, or posing a question to me or your classmates.)

More concretely, remember these general principles about class discussions:

- Like Soviet history, this class is a collective enterprise (although I hope you'll find it vastly more benign than life under Lenin or Stalin!) In general, then, I'll be looking for evidence that you've done the reading, that you're thinking about the themes and issues covered by the class, and that you're making a good-faith effort to improve the classroom experience for everyone enrolled in the course.
- Class participation depends on attendance. I'll therefore keep track of your attendance throughout the semester; missing class once or twice won't affect your grade, but if you have more than two unexcused absences, your participation grade will go down. If you have more than six unexcused absences, you will generally receive a participation grade of F or zero.
- Remember that informed participation depends on preparation and that your contributions to the discussion will always be more compelling if you can provide evidence for your ideas. You should therefore come to class with copies of the day's reading and with your notes on what you've read. (You are of course welcome to bring the readings either in hard copies or on a laptop computer, but you should bear in mind that it is often easier to mark significant passages in primary texts in a paper copy of the readings.) In particular, I recommend that you make note of quotations and details in the readings that you find especially significant or compelling. Referring directly to the course readings will almost always make your participation more effective.
- Preparation for history classes can be subtly different from preparation for courses in other disciplines. Early on in the semester, I will give you handouts on how to read a primary source (a historical document) and how to read a secondary source (a text by a historian). In general, if you're reading a historical document, come to class ready to talk about that document's context: who wrote it, what was the author's audience, and what did the author hope to achieve by writing the document? If you're reading a secondary text, what was the author's main argument, to whom was the author replying, and how did the author seek to prove his or her point? You should also pay close attention to the structure of every text, primary or secondary. What form does the reading take, and why?
- Good class participation can—and should—take many forms. For one thing, you should be willing and able to participate in whatever way will best suit the needs of the class at any given time; if your participation consists entirely of recalling factual details or posing a question to your classmates, I'll encourage you to broaden your horizons. Moreover, the strongest participants in class will be able both to provide the factual details needed for an informed discussion and to analyze those details by explaining their significance. I will encourage all students to participate in class discussions in a variety of ways, and I will be particularly interested in classroom comments that show an especially strong grasp of the readings and an ability to analyze—not just summarize—the day's text.

I will generally give each student a brief written “participation update” each time I send you feedback on a written assignment. I also encourage you to check in with me at any point if you have questions about how you can become more involved in the discussion.

Extension policy

Each student in the class can have one (and only one) 48-hour extension on a writing assignment over the course of the semester; this policy applies only to the 5-page paper due in October or to the 6-to-8-page paper due in November (i.e., it does not apply to the two short document analyses.) To claim this extension, send me a brief email asking for extra time before the assignment's deadline; I will grant this extension automatically, so there is no need for you to explain why you need more time. Keep in mind, however, that once you've received an extension on an assignment, I will not give you an extension on another except in the case of a documented emergency. (Note, too, that you cannot break up your one 48-hour extension into two 24-hour extensions or a 2-hour extension and a 46-hour extension.) In the absence of an extension, late assignments will be penalized one third of a letter grade per day.

The first two written assignments of the semester—the document analyses due on September 4 and September 22—are due by email the night before class. Since we will be discussing these documents in class the next day, it is not possible to get an extension on them (since this would give you an unfair advantage on the paper relative to your classmates.) If you cannot complete one of your short document analyses by the deadline, I will give you the chance to do an analysis of a document from later in the semester instead; however, if you choose to exercise this option, you will not have the chance to get an extension on a later paper except in the case of an emergency.

Paper revision policy

This class is a writing-intensive course that is designed not only to teach students about history, but to help them develop their writing skills. Over the course of the semester, then, you will have two opportunities to revise a paper that you've already handed in and to resubmit it for re-grading. Every student in the class will be required to hand in a second version of the first writing assignment of the semester (the document analysis due on January 26); after spring break, any student who wants to will be able to hand in a revised version of one of their two 5-page papers. If you choose to exercise this option, your final grade for the assignment will be the average of your original grade and the grade for your revised paper. (In other words, if you earn a B– on the first version of a paper and a B+ on the rewrite, you'll earn a final grade of B.)

In exchange for getting the opportunity to resubmit a 5-page paper, you will need to meet three requirements. First, as you begin the revision process, come speak with me to discuss how you plan to address the critique I gave you in my written comments. (Please come to this meeting with a tentative plan for your revisions and a marked-up version of your original paper.) Second, if I suggested that you go to the Writing Lab in my written comments on the first version of your paper, you'll need to do so for me to accept your revised paper. Third, when you send me your revised paper, please include a paragraph discussing how you revised your paper in the text of your email. (Note: although I will of course be happy to meet with you to discuss your revision of the document analysis, you are not required to come talk to me about this assignment.)

Important notes

Grinnell College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. If you have any special needs, please provide documentation of those needs to the Dean for Student Success and Academic Advising, Joyce Stern, whose office is located on the third floor of the Rosenfield Center. Students should then bring me paperwork from Joyce Stern's office within the first few days of class.

Students should also be aware of Grinnell's policy on academic honesty. Plagiarism, it goes without saying, will not be tolerated in this course.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Friday, August 29: Introduction to the Course

Reading: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, intro and ch. 1

Monday, September 1: Prelude to Revolution

Reading: Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, ch. 1 [Pioneerweb]
Semen Kanatchikov, *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, September 3: Red October

Reading: Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, ch. 2
Boris Kolonitskii, "Anti-Bourgeois Propaganda and Anti-'Burzhui Consciousness in 1917" [Suny]

Thursday, September 4: **email me a 1-to-1.5-page analysis of Order Number 1 by 10 PM**

Friday, September 5: The Revolution in Documents

Reading: primary documents from the Suny reader, pp. 33-48
Order Number 1 [Suny]
Kerenskii's statement in the Soviet of Workers' Deputies [Suny]
Tsereteli's speech on returning from Soviet exile [Suny]
The April Theses [Suny]
Tsereteli and Lenin's exchange [Suny]
report from Kovno Guberniia [Suny]
Lenin's letter to the Central Committee [Suny]

Monday, September 8: Remembering the Revolution

Film: *October* (Sergei Eisenstein, dir.) (film showing at 1:00 PM on Sunday, September 7; the film is also on reserve in the AV Center)

Monday, September 8: individual meetings to discuss your papers (times TBA)

Wednesday, September 10: Civil War!

Reading: Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, ch. 3
“Lenin’s Decree on Peace” [Suny]
“Decree on the Land” [Suny]
“Decree on Suppression of Hostile Newspapers” [Suny]
“Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia” [Suny]

Friday, September 12: The Militarization of the Soviet State

Reading: “Iulii Martov’s Letter to A.N. Stein” [Suny]
“Lenin’s Letter to V. V. Kuraev, E. B. Bosh, and A. E. Minkin” [Suny]
Lev Trotskii, “Report on the Red Army” [Suny]
Assignment: email me a revised version of your Order Number 1 analysis (by 5:00 PM)

Monday, September 15: Revolution and Civil War in Context

Reading: Peter Holquist, “‘Information is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work’: Bolshevik Surveillance in its Pan-European Context” [Suny]

Wednesday, September 17: Faction-Fighting and the Rise of the Dictatorship

Reading: Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, ch. 4
Aleksandra Kollontai, “The Workers’ Opposition” [Suny]
Resolutions of the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party [Suny]
V. I. Lenin, “Letter to the Congress” (first part) [Suny]

Friday, September 19: Russian Society during NEP

Reading: Sheila Fitzpatrick, “The Problem of Class Identity in NEP Society” [Pioneerweb]
Alan Ball, “Private Trade and Traders during NEP” [Pioneerweb]

Sunday, September 21: **email me a 1-to-1.5-page analysis of the code of laws on marriage and the family (by 10:00 PM)**

Monday, September 22: The Contradictions of NEP

Reading: Eric Naiman, “The Case of Chubarov Alley” [Pioneerweb]
The Code of Laws on Marriage and Divorce, the Family and Guardianship [Suny]

Wednesday, September 24: An Overview of Stalinism

Reading: Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, ch. 5-6

Friday, September 26: Collectivization and De-Kulakization

Reading: Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]
documents in Suny reader, pp. 230-244:
Stalin, “Dizzy with Success” [Suny]
Lev Kopelev, “The Last Grain Collections” [Suny]

Monday, September 29: The Stalin Dictatorship

Reading: Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: In the Court of the Red Tsar*, pp. 1-57,
93-101 [Pioneerweb]
Oleg Khlevniuk, “Stalin as Dictator: The Personalisation of Power” [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, October 1: Stalin’s Personality Cult

Reading: Robert Weinberg and Laurie Bernstein, *Revolutionary Russia: A History in Documents*, pp. 165–170 [Pioneerweb]
Sarah Davies, “Stalin and the Making of the Leader Cult” [Pioneerweb]
Sarah Davies, “The Leader Cult in Official Discourse” [Pioneerweb]

Friday, October 3: Everyday Life and the Communist Party

Reading: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp. 1-66

Monday, October 6: A New Society?

Reading: Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp. 67-114

Wednesday, October 8: Ostracized Citizens and Broken Families

Reading: Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp. 115-189, 218-228

Friday, October 10: Nationalism in the USSR

Reading: Terry Martin, “An Affirmative Action Empire” [Suny]
Terry Martin, “Modernization or Neotraditionalism? Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism” [Pioneerweb]

Sunday, October 12: five-paper paper is due by 5:00

Monday, October 13: A Woman of the 1930s

Reading: excerpts from the diary of Galina Shtange [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, October 15: The Purges

Reading: Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, pp. 282–289 [Pioneerweb]
Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp. 190-217
James Harris, “The Purging of Local Cliques in the Urals Region, 1936-7”
[Pioneerweb]

Friday, October 17: Voices of the Purges

Reading: Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]
Nikolai Bukharin, “Letter to Stalin” [Suny]

FALL BREAK: OCTOBER 17 TO OCTOBER 26

Monday, October 27: The War and After

Reading: Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, pp. 336-361 [Pioneerweb]
Suny reader, pp. 289-297, 336-342:
Suny’s chapter intro, pp. 289-293 [Suny]
Popular reactions to the beginning of the war [Suny]
The Nazi Soviet Pact [Suny]

Wednesday, October 29: From War to Cold War

Reading: Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*, chapters 1-2

Friday, October 31: Stalinist Values after the War

Reading: Vera Dunham, “The Big Deal” [Suny]
Cynthia Hooper, “A Darker ‘Big Deal’” [Pioneerweb]

Monday, November 3: **MID-TERM EXAM**

Wednesday, November 5: The Death of Stalin

Reading: Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, “Stalin’s Last Struggle” [Suny]
Miriam Dobson, “1953: ‘The Most Painful Year’” [Pioneerweb]
Evgenii Evtushenko, *A Precocious Autobiography*, excerpts [Suny]

Friday, November 7: Khrushchev’s Rise to Power and the Beginnings of De-Stalinization

Reading: Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, pp. 413–446 [Pioneerweb]
“Nikita Khrushchev’s ‘Secret Speech’ to the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union” [Suny]

Saturday, November 8: **2-page proposal for HPSSS paper is due by 5:00 PM**

Monday, November 10: Reform, Reaction, and Khrushchev's Hare-Brained Schemes

Reading: Zubok, chapter 6; Khrushchev's remarks on modern art [Pioneerweb]
 look at the website *Seventeen Moments in Soviet History* (see Pioneerweb for
 instructions)

Wednesday, November 12: A Novella of The Thaw

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

Friday, November 14: The Soviet Family under Khrushchev

Reading: Edward Cohn, "Sex and the Married Communist: Marital Infidelity, Family
 Troubles, and Communist Party Discipline in the Post-War USSR, 1945-
 1964" [Pioneerweb]
 Deborah Field, "Irreconcilable Differences: Divorce and Conceptions of Private
 Life in the Khrushchev Era" [Suny]

Monday, November 17: Khrushchev's Cold War

Reading: Zubok, chapters 4-5

Wednesday, November 19: The Space Race

Reading: Amy Nelson, "Cold War Celebrity and the Courageous Canine Scout"
 [Pioneerweb]
 Slava Gerovitch, "The Human Inside a Propaganda Machine: The Public Image
 and Professional Identity of Soviet Cosmonauts" [Pioneerweb]

Friday, November 21: **NO CLASS**

Saturday, November 22: **Harvard Project Analysis is due at 5:00 PM by email**

Monday, November 24: The Brezhnev Era

Reading: Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, pp. 447-475 [Pioneerweb]
 John Bushnell, "The 'New Soviet Man' Turns Pessimist" [Suny]
 James R. Millar, "The Little Deal: Brezhnev's Contribution to Acquisitive
 Socialism" [Suny]

Wednesday, November 26: Détente and Cold War

Reading: Zubok, chapter 7-8

Monday, December 1: Dissent in the 1960s and 1970s

Reading: “Trial of a Young Poet: The Case of Joseph Brodsky” [Pioneerweb]
 “‘The Case of Boris Kochubiyevsky” [Suny]
 “Letter from Vladimir Vysotskii to Petr Dimichev” [Suny]

Wednesday, December 3: Life under Brezhnev

Film showing: *The Irony of Fate* (Eldar Riazanov, dir.) (available online)

Friday, December 5: The Final Years of the USSR

Reading: Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, pp. 479-514 [Pioneerweb]
 Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]
 excerpt from Mikhail Gorbachev’s memoirs [Suny]

Monday, December 8: Experiencing Reform

Film showing: *My Perestroika* (Robin Hess, dir.) (available online; showing TBA)
Reading: Nina Andreeva, “I Cannot Give Up My Principles” [Suny]

Wednesday, December 10: Gorbachev’s Cold War

Reading: Zubok, chapters 9-10

Friday, December 12: The End of the USSR

Reading: Zubok, epilogue
 Alexander Dallin, “Causes of the Collapse of the USSR” [Suny]
 “‘The August Coup” [Suny]
 Mikhail Gorbachev, “Speech of Resignation” [Suny]

Assignment: if you choose to revise one of your papers, the rewrite is due today at 5 PM

FINAL EXAM: Friday, December 19, at 9:00 AM