

**History 342: Stalinism**  
Every Day, 3:00 to 4:50  
Fall 2020

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Office hours: 10-11 on Tues.

***Course Description***

Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili—the Georgian revolutionary and politician more commonly known as Joseph Stalin—is best remembered as one of the most brutal dictators in world history, an important leader of the Russian Revolution who went on to preside over the Great Terror of the 1930s and the Soviet victory in World War II. Extending from the end of the post-Lenin succession struggle to the dictator’s death in 1953, the Stalin era was noteworthy not just for the repressiveness of its politics, but for a dramatic series of economic and social transformations that almost completely reshaped Russian society. Over the course of 25 years, the USSR’s government launched a far-reaching program of industrialization, forced the country’s peasants to abandon their individual holdings for larger collective farms, pursued policies of discrimination and persecution against the supporters of Russia’s old regime, and attempted to reforge each of the country’s citizens into the New Soviet Man.

This seminar will examine the social, cultural, and political history of the USSR during this period, with a particular focus on the 1930s. Like most Grinnell history seminars, it will begin with a series of common readings on the main themes of its subject; in the second half of the term, students will complete a 15-to-20-page research paper on a subject of their choice, most likely involving work with an oral history project known as the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. In this way, the seminar will function not only as an introduction to Stalinism, but as an opportunity to pursue the craft of historical writing through the production of a major research paper.

***Brief Note on the Unusual Circumstances Surrounding the Class***

When I first designed this class, and when you first thought about which seminars in history you might like to take, no one imagined that Grinnell College and other institutions would be holding classes online. This isn’t the way that any of us would like to be holding class, but I’m confident that we can make this course a rewarding experience for everyone. Here are some important principles that will guide the class:

- Whether we’re all in Grinnell or we’re all scattered across the country, it’s my job to help you learn. I will be as accessible as I can in the weeks ahead. I will hold regular office hours, but please feel free to contact me at any time if there are issues connected with the class (or with your Grinnell education) that you’d like to discuss. Send me an email, and we can arrange a time to talk by phone or by Webex.
- Technology and online learning will present challenges very different from those connected to regular classes. Please do not hesitate to let me know at any point if you’re running into any kind of difficulty with the course, whether you’re experiencing a technological problem or find that some kind of adjustment might help you given your particular learning style. I’ll do everything I can to make virtual learning as effective as

possible for everyone, so please don't hesitate to let me know if things aren't working or if there's anything additional I can do to help you or your classmates.

- Given that we're all new to online college courses, I may need to make changes to the syllabus to improve the learning experience for the class. If I do so, however, I will do so in a way that makes things more flexible or that takes advantage of technology in more effective ways.
- Finally, I will make an effort to create an asynchronous alternative to our synchronous class sessions if technology issues, the pandemic, or other challenges of the current moment lead to problems for you. Just be in touch.

### ***Class Times***

Please hold 3:00 to 4:50 time slot open each day for class activities. During the first half of the term we will generally meet four times per week (not always for the full two hours), and I will reserve this time for extra office hours on days we do not meet. During the second half of the term we will meet less frequently as a full class, but I will continue to hold office hours during this time when I am not scheduling individual meetings or group peer review sessions then.

### ***Office Hours***

I will hold office hours from 10 to 11 each Tuesday, and also during our regularly scheduled class time on any day when we are not meeting (with the likely exception of Election Day).

You'll be able to reach me by using this link (unless you prefer to meet by phone):

<https://grinnellcollege.webex.com/meet/cohned>. (These will be drop-in hours, so there's no need for an appointment.)

You can also feel free to contact me at any time to schedule an appointment. Although I have more committee meetings to attend than I'd prefer, I have a lot of time in the morning and early afternoon and would be happy to meet with you at a mutually convenient time.

### ***Course materials***

All of the readings for this course will be available online, through Pioneerweb. Some will be available in the documents section and some will be linked through announcements on the main course page.

Students who want more detail on the Chicago Style of formatting a research paper should consult *The Chicago Manual of Style* or Kate Turabian's *Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.

### ***Grading and Assignments***

There are three main requirements for this course:

- **The seminar paper** (50% of your final grade.) This paper will most often be a 15-to-20-page research paper based on work with primary sources on Russian history during the Stalin period. (Many such sources have been translated into English, so Russian language skills—while always helpful—are not expected required. Most often, I recommend that

you work with the oral histories in the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System.) Your paper will be due by email on Thursday, December 20, at 5:00 PM.

- **Class participation** (35% of your grade). This part of your grade will be based on attendance, the regularity and insightfulness of your participation in discussion, your participation in peer review sessions in the weeks after break, and your timely completion of a series of preliminary assignments connected to the seminar paper.
- **Document analysis and paper proposal** (15% of your grade). You will be required to write a five-page analysis of the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, to complete a five-page proposal for your seminar paper, and to complete a preliminary assignment leading to the project proposal. The first of these assignments will be due on Thursday, November 12, by noon; the second will be due by noon on Wednesday, November 25 (the day before Thanksgiving.) (Note that if a student performs better on the seminar paper than on these preliminary assignments, I reserve the right to weight it a little more highly. I give these assignments because they increase the odds that you will complete a successful seminar paper.)

### ***Important notes***

My goal is to create as inclusive a classroom as possible and to meet the needs of all of my students. I therefore encourage students with documented disabilities, including invisible or non-apparent disabilities such as chronic illness, learning disabilities, and psychiatric disabilities, to discuss reasonable accommodations with me. You will also need to have a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to the Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, Jae Hirschman.

I will also, of course, excuse absences related to religious observance and will be flexible with deadlines that conflict with any religious holidays. Please let me know early in the semester if you expect to miss class because of a religious observance.

### **SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS**

Thursday, October 29: Introduction to the Course

Reading: Golfo Alexopoulos, "Portrait of a Con Artist as a Soviet Man" [Pioneerweb]

Friday, October 30: Stalinism: The Beginnings

Reading: David Hoffman, *The Stalinist Era*, intro and chapters 1-3 [Pioneerweb]

Monday, November 2: What was Stalinism?

Reading: David Hoffman, *The Stalinist Era*, chapters 4-5 and conclusion [Pioneerweb]

Tuesday, November 3: **NO CLASS (GO VOTE!)**

Wednesday, November 4: Everyday Life under Stalin

Reading: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp. 1-114 [Pioneerweb]  
David Brandenberger, "A Background Guide to Working with the HPSSS Online" [Pioneerweb]

Thursday, November 5: Stalinist Social History

Reading: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp. 115-229 [Pioneerweb]

Friday, November 6: Intro to the Harvard Project

Reading: 1-2 interviews from this site (see Pioneerweb for details):  
<https://library.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/static/collections/hpsss/index.html>

Monday, November 9: Harvard Project Investigations

Assignment: Spend 90-120 minutes investigating the Harvard Project. Make sure you spend some time getting to know an interview in more detail; spend some time looking at possible topics for a paper.

Tuesday, November 10: Theories of Stalinism

Reading: Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]  
Igal Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck, "Rethinking the Stalinist Subject" [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, November 11: **NO CLASS! (extra office hours)**

Thursday, November 12: the Harvard project

Assignment: submit your 5-page Harvard Project analysis by noon; be ready to discuss its main themes (following instructions posted online) in class

Friday, November 13: Diaries in the USSR

Reading: Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, pp. 1-114 [Pioneerweb]

Monday, November 16: Hellbeck and Soviet diaries

Reading: Hellbeck, pp. 115-347 [Pioneerweb]  
(everyone read ch. 5, ch. 8, and 1 other, to be decided in class)

Tuesday, November 17: The Gulag

Reading: Steve Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]  
Alan Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town: Forced Labor and its Legacy in Vorkuta*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, November 18: **no class**

Thursday, November 19: The Stalin Personality Cult

Reading: Jan Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]  
Sarah Davies and James Harris, *Stalin's World*, 133-183 [Pioneerweb]

Friday, November 20: **Preliminary assignment is due (including a tentative bibliography, a one-page description of your project, and a list of HPSSS quotations)**

Monday, November 23: Networks and Institutions in Stalinist Politics

Reading: Yorm Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Substate Dictatorship: Networks, Loyalty, and Institutional Change in the Soviet Union*, pp. 1-115 [Pioneerweb]

Tuesday, November 24: The Great Terror

Reading: Oleg Khlevniuk, "The Objectives of the Great Terror, 1937-1938" [Pioneerweb]  
James Harris, "The Purging of Local Cliques in the Urals Region" [Pioneerweb]  
Wendy Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Wednesday, November 25: **Research paper proposal is due by 12:00 PM**

Thursday, November 26: **THANKSGIVING (no class)**

Friday, November 27: **no class**

## WEEK 5

Tuesday, December 1: individual meetings

Wednesday, December 2: full class meeting

Friday, December 4: **10-page draft is due at 5:00 PM to me and your peer review group**

## WEEK 6

Monday, December 7: Peer review groups will meet

Tuesday, December 8: Peer review groups will meet

Thursday, December 10: full class meeting

Friday, December 11: **Full draft of paper is due at 5:00 PM**

**WEEK 7**

Monday, December 14: Peer review groups will discuss papers

Tuesday, December 15: Peer review groups will discuss papers

Thursday, December 17: whole class meets to discuss progress

**EXAM WEEK**

Tuesday, December 22: **FINAL PAPER IS DUE**